

# **SUBJECT REVIEW REPORT**

**JOURNALISM UNIT**



**FACULTY OF ARTS  
UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBO**

27<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> May 2008

**Review Team :**

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## **1. SUBJECT REVIEW PROCESS**

Initiated by the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Directors (CVCD), the Quality Assurance Mechanism for national universities was introduced to the system in 2002. Divided as Subject and Institutional Reviews, the process incorporates internal and external assessment of Universities/Departments of study, promoting and safeguarding public confidence in the country's system of higher education.

The Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council (QAAC) of the UGC/Ministry of Higher Education bears the overall responsibility for the conduct and sustenance of quality assurance activities in universities.

Subject Reviews which deal with individual academic departments of national universities, consider eight key aspects in reaching judgements on the maintaining of quality within such departments. These relate to Curriculum Design, Content and Review, Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods, Quality of students (including Student Progress and Achievement), the Extent and Use of Student Feedback (Qualitative and Quantitative), Postgraduate Studies, Peer Observation, Skills Development, Academic Guidance and Counselling.

A Panel of Reviewers appointed by the QAAC reviewed the Communication and Media Studies Unit of the Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo, and 27<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup> May 2008.

The Review Team comprised:

Prof. Chandrasiri Rajapaksha, Department of Mass Communication, University of Kelaniya  
Dr. Tudor Weerasinghe, Department of Mass Media, Sripalee Campus, University of Colombo

Mr. Chandana Dissanayake, Department of Languages, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

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

### ***History of the Journalism Unit (Communication and Media Studies Unit)***

The Journalism Unit was established in February 1991, by the Council of the University of Colombo to function under the authority of the Dean/Faculty of Arts. In May 1992 the University in collaboration with the Asia Foundation inaugurated the First Degree level programme in journalism in the University of Colombo. It was also the First Degree level programme in journalism in any university in Sri Lanka. The Journalism Degree course curriculum was designed in 1991 by the curriculum development Committee that included then the Vice Chancellor Prof.G.L. Peiris as Chairman, Prof.H.N.C. Fonseka, Dean/Faculty of Arts, Dr.Sarath Amunugama, Kalakeerthi Mr.Edwin Ariyadasa, veteran journalist Mr.Shavindra Fernando, Former news Editor- Rupavahini, Prof.Tilak Hettiarachchi, Prof. Jayadeva Uyangoda, Prof. J.B.Dissanayaka, Mr. Romesh Fernando (then Lecturer).

Film and Television Studies were introduced at the Unit along with practical components in 1988. With the introduction of the Course Units System, the entire syllabus was revised to meet the modern requirements in the field of communication and media studies, in 2004.

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

#### **3.1. Aims**

The vision of the Communication and Media Studies Unit (CMSU) derives from that of the University of Colombo, which as a metropolitan national university with links to the first university college, strives to be a center of excellence of regional and international repute, that will create and sustain a culture of learning and critical inquiry and foster service and commitment to democracy in a plural society.

Since its inception, the Journalism unit has been committed to establish an active study programme covering a wide range of topics within the field of Communication and Media Studies.

The main objective of the CMSU is to help create skillful media personnel and to develop a sophisticated media culture and give the public an understanding on media and communication studies.

The Communication and Media Studies Unit aims

- to give an overview of communication and media process
- to give an understanding of the socio-cultural impact of the media
- to create awareness about the regulatory framework of ethics and Media Law
- to deliver to students an intellectual grounding in the field of Communication and Media Studies
- to equip students with practical skill needed in the field of Communication and Media Studies
- to inspire and train students to achieve greater professional orientation in the media field
- to develop the research component in the field of Communication and Media Studies
- to develop Communication and Media Studies as an interdisciplinary efficiency
- to bring about multi-layered capacity in students
- to create an opportunity to engage students in Communication and Media Studies in the labour- force locally as well as globally
- to develop the subject area and the academic scope of Communication and Media Studies to face the contemporary challenges in the country and at global level

In this context, the Communication and Media Studies Unit considers as its broader aims the following :

Providing degree Programmes in Communication Studies, developing students' knowledge, skills.

Providing opportunities for students to develop their talents, skills through research and practical training.

Providing opportunities for Academic Staff to develop their careers through research at national and international levels.

### 3.2 Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course units, students will be able to,

- Understand the whole process of Communication and Media Studies.
- Get practical awareness.
- Understand how the gained theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge can be applied to their world of work.

### Programme Details

The Communication and Media Studies Unit offers the following programs/ courses.

#### B.A. General in Communication and Media Studies.

Programme	Duration	Current Student Population
CMS1101 Introduction to communication	1 <sup>st</sup> year 1 <sup>st</sup> semester	311
CMS1202 Introduction to media Studies	1 <sup>st</sup> <sup>nd</sup> year 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester	311
CMS 2111 Theories of Communication	2 <sup>nd</sup> year 1 <sup>st</sup> Semester	45
CMS 2112 Print media reporting and Editing	2 <sup>nd</sup> year 1 <sup>st</sup> Semester	265
CMS 2113 Language of Moving image TV & Film	2 <sup>nd</sup> year 1 <sup>st</sup> Semester	32
CMS2214 Development Communication	2 <sup>nd</sup> year 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester	195
CMS 2215 Video Production techniques	2 <sup>nd</sup> year 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester	32
CMS 2216 Radio Theory	2 <sup>nd</sup> year 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester	88
CMS 2222 Gender and Media	2 <sup>nd</sup> year 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester	104
CMS3140 Advertising & Public Relations		118
CMS 3141 Print media –Feature Journalism	3 <sup>rd</sup> year 1 <sup>st</sup> Semester	249
CMS 3142 Writing for TV and Film	3 <sup>rd</sup> year 1 <sup>st</sup> Semester	24
CMS 3243 Communication & Contemporary issues	3 <sup>rd</sup> year 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester	211
CMS 3244 Radio Programme Production	3 <sup>rd</sup> year 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester	88
CMS 3245 Critical studies in Film	3 <sup>rd</sup> year 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester	24

The Communications and Media Studies Unit hopes to offer the following course units as electives in the near future.

- Culture and Communication
- Science and Health Communication
- Political Communication and Analysis of Television and Film

### Diploma in Journalism

In addition to its Undergraduate courses, the Communication and Media Studies Unit offers a one year Diploma in Journalism in Sinhala, Tamil and English Media.

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Current Student Population</b>
Diploma in Journalism-Sinhala Medium	104
Diploma in Journalism-Tamil Medium	46
Diploma in Journalism – English Medium	24

## **Students and Staff**

### **Students**

One thousand seven hundred and eighty eight students followed course units of Communication and Media Studies in 2007 as part of their Bachelor of Arts Degree Programme.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Student Population</b>
Year I	455
Year II	424
Year III	909

### **Academic Staff**

Academic staff is listed below with their status, appointed year, qualifications and their other responsibilities.

<b>Name and Qualifications</b>	<b>Present position</b>	<b>Other responsibilities</b>	<b>Date of appointment</b>
Kamal Waleboda B.A.,M.A.(Kelaniya)	Senior Lecturer – II	Head of Department Former Senior Student Counselor Member of Sarvodaya	01.01.2000
Dharmasena Pathiraja B.A.(Peradeniya. M.A.(Cey), Ph.D.(Monash)	Senior Lecturer – I	Visiting Research Associate Monash Uni :Film Maker ,TV Producer/Director	1.25.2002
Samantha Herath B.A.(Colombo), M.A.(Bangalore),Commonwealth Scholar	Senior Lecturer – II	Member of the Book Review Committee-National Library Services Board and Ministry of Cultural Affairs Television Awards, Raigam Tele Awards Member Cinema Critics Association, Member of the Sri Lanka Lyric Writers Association	11.01.2002
Dr.Ajantha Hapuarachchi Ph.D Kelaniya. Post Doc ,HCU, India	Senior Lecturer II	Member and HEB, Ministry of Health Jury member of SIGNIS, President's and Raigam Member of Syllabus committee –NIE	01.01.1998

### **Non-academic Staff**

One Senior Staff Assistant and one Labourer serve the CMSU.

Ms. Maheshwari Gunawardana – Senior Staff Assistant

Mr. Chaminda Laksiri – Labourer, Gr. II

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

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

#### ***Strengths***

- The present curriculum carries a broad spectrum of subject areas/topics which are useful in producing quality graduates in the given discipline
- The curriculum caters well to the course requirements re. print and electronic mass media
- Theoretical as well as practical components have been incorporated into the curriculum in a balanced manner.

#### ***Weaknesses and recommendations***

- In some instances, the subject matter of the different course units overlap – eg. CMS 1101-Introduction to Communication, CMS 1202 – Introduction to Media Studies, CMS 2111-Theories of Communication. This should be remedied through curriculum revision.
- A research component is currently lacking within the CMS curriculum. Its addition would enhance the quality/value of the programme offered.
- All course units must be accompanied by an adequate course description for the benefit of students. This was found to be lacking in some cases at the CMSU.
- The last complete curriculum revision at the CMSU has taken place in the year 2004. It would be necessary to repeat this exercise for maintaining quality of the programmes offered.

**Level of judgement : *Satisfactory***

### **4.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment methods**

#### ***Strengths***

- The availability of qualified, competent Academic Staff is the greatest strength in teaching, learning and assessment.
- The availability of students with a high Z Score (and thereby higher intelligence/competence) is an asset which would carry the programme forward.
- The metropolitan location of the CMSU enables easy interaction with print and electronic media organizations situated within its proximity and provides opportunity for effective conduct of the practical components of course units. This advantage is not available to many other universities.
- The Unit practices Continuous and End of Term Assessment, with weightages given at 40% and 60% respectively and this is satisfactory. Variety was noted in the methods of assessment which is appreciated.
- The availability of adequate building facilities is another strength possessed by the CMSU. These buildings are located in a manner that enables peaceful pursuance of intellectual endeavour.

- The assistance offered by the Unit's Non-academic staff in conducting the Degree Programme as well as the Diploma Programme in Journalism should be commended.

### ***Weaknesses and recommendations***

- The intellectual assets available at the Unit as well as its advantage of location have not been utilized to conduct a Special Degree Programme. Such a programme is an immediate necessity of the CMSU and should be commenced early.
- The availability of intellectual assets should be complemented by the provision of adequate material assets. The amount of equipment currently available at the unit is woefully inadequate. The CMSU does not possess any multimedia or overhead projector facilities, which is surprising, given the nature of its discipline and its period of existence since 1991. The only television camera available at the Unit has been out of order for a long period and there is no genuine interest on the part of the Academic Staff to repair this piece of equipment. The availability of funds within the Unit should enable the immediate purchase of the required equipment and additional grants could be obtained from the University's allocation for capital expenditure.
- The advantage of location is yet to be fully exploited by the CMSU. More practical components can be introduced within course units and covered on a regular basis with the assistance of print and electronic media organizations within Colombo city limits. This is essential since the present curriculum displays a bias towards theory vis-à-vis practice. It appears that the situation diminishes the enthusiasm of the students towards the courses offered and encourages regurgitation of lecture notes and lesser participation at lectures.
- A Systematic selection of course units by the students does not take place under the current setup. For example, some students have not followed a relevant course unit prior to the selection of a related another of a higher level at a latter stage. This was observed with regard to course units on film and television. A more systematic approach in guiding students in the selection of courses is necessary.
- An adequate number of current publications must be made available for students'/staff's reference purposes. It is clear that the publications currently available at the Main/Unit Libraries are insufficient. Further, a proper mechanism to allow regular borrowing/reference of CMSU Library material should be instituted with speed.
- The Unit should be equipped with an up-to-date audio-visual library with free access to material for students'/staff's benefit.
- Services of external resource persons should be obtained for quality enhancement of the current programmes of study. This would not be difficult, given the advantageous location of the CMSU. This way too, students could be exposed to the new and ever expanding technology in the field of mass communication.
- Students should be allowed access to more handouts which shall supplement their knowledge gained through lectures.
- The choice of students too should be considered in registering them for CMS course units. At present, this choice is limited by circumstances related to timetabling.

### **Level of judgement : *Satisfactory***



### **4.3 Quality of students, Student progress and Achievements**

#### ***Strengths***

- The current student population at the Unit possesses high intellectual capacity and competence to handle the course units offered. It is easy to engage in productive interaction with them.
- Students are keen to explore new avenues available in the field of mass media and this needs to be encouraged further in liaison with media organizations.
- Students' request for the commencement of a Special Degree Programme in Communication and Mass Media indicates willingness for high level engagement in academic activities.
- Radio and television programmes produced by students as part of the practical component of the course are of a high standard and should be commended.
- Among the alumni of the CMSU are well-known media personalities of the country and this points to commendable student progress and achievement.
- In their interaction with the Review Team, students expressed their views with confidence, intelligence and understanding.
- The external students of the CMSU who follow the Diploma in Journalism are enthusiastic and competent.

#### ***Weaknesses and recommendations***

- Opportunity for further development of students' talents is hindered by the dearth of (systematic organization of) exposure to practicals and this should be remedied.
- Since there is a bias towards the teaching of communication theory in the curriculum, students' chances of securing productive employment is hindered. These students must be exposed to the existence of new technology in the field of mass media with access to short term training/workshops/internships with the assistance/funding obtained from external agencies.

**Level of judgement : *Satisfactory***

### **4.4 Extent and Use of Student Feedback**

#### ***Strengths***

- There is some evidence of obtaining student feedback re. quality of courses, output and delivery.

#### ***Weaknesses and recommendations***

- The use of student feedback is not carried out on a systematic, regular basis at the CMSU. Only one Lecturer was able to display evidence of its use in concrete terms and even here the process was not regular. As students' requirements, aspirations, focus and problems are reflected through such a procedure, it is recommended that the CMSU begins the obtaining and analysis of student feedback for the overall benefit of the programmes offered.
- Student-Teacher relationship currently witnessed at the Unit should be further improved, as this appears to be inadequate. It does not appear that the students and staff work towards a common goal.

**Level of judgement : *Unsatisfactory***

#### **4.5 Postgraduate Studies**

##### ***Strengths***

- Currently, members of Academic Staff of the CMSU offer their services as Visiting Resource Persons to other Universities within the Western province in conducting Postgraduate programmes. The existence of such expertise which extends to the rest of the university system is commendable.

##### ***Weaknesses and recommendations***

- Currently, the CMSU does not offer any Postgraduate programmes of its own. This is partly due to the fact that it is a Unit and not an Academic Department. Further, the lack of sufficient technology hinders the conducting of such Postgraduate courses.

With further planning, upgrading and acquisition, the CMSU would be able to conduct Postgraduate programmes in the near future. For this purpose, dialogue should be initiated at the Faculty level and the matter then should be taken up with the University Senate and the Council. Given the advantageous context which surrounds the CMSU with regard to location and external assistance, such a plan would be timely and feasible.

**Level of judgement : *Satisfactory***

#### **4.6 Peer Observation**

##### ***Weaknesses and recommendations***

- There is no evidence of proper implementation of a Peer Observation mechanism at the CMSU. While it appears that its benefit has not been realized by the Academic Staff here, it is also clear that healthy dialogue on academic and other matters at the Unit is minimal. This may be the reason for the non-initiation of peer observation at the Unit.

It is recommended that the quality of the Unit's current programmes be improved via constructive criticism and worthwhile analysis of the performance of the Academic Staff. While the relatively senior Academic Staff could guide the others, both parties need to function with an openness which encourages healthy debate of teaching mechanisms etc.

**Level of judgement : *Unsatisfactory***

#### **4.7 Skills Development**

##### ***Strengths***

- The qualified, experienced Academic Staff of the Unit have initiated activities which enhance the students' skills in producing programmes for broadcast/telecast. Some of these have been produced as part of Continuous Assessment, yet are of a standard befitting national level broadcast/telecast, which is praiseworthy.
- There is evidence that at least occasionally, the CMSU seeks the expertise of media personnel and veterans in the field to conduct workshops for skills development. One such workshop has been conducted with the assistance of the Government Film Unit.

- Evidence indicates that the students have undertaken collaborative projects with media units of government schools in Colombo and its suburbs, thereby not only enhancing their media-related skills, but also those of secondary level students.
- Discipline-related publications by the Academic Staff are of a high quality. Disciplines other than Mass Communication have also been covered in some publications which is commendable.

#### ***Weaknesses and recommendations***

- Provision of up-to-date equipment for the development of students' media-related skills is a must, as the Unit's currently available pieces of equipment in no way suffice for the development of any skill.
- Since students are compelled to use their own funds for sometimes costly audio/video productions, a suitable mechanism should be implemented to provide them with funding. In addition to University funds, external agencies could be approached for the purpose of funding as well as training.
- Students should be encouraged to bring out publications in print, which are of research interest to their peers and the wider community. Since Mass Communication has now become a subject for the G.C.E (Ordinary Level) and the G.C.E (Advanced Level) Examinations, such publications would find a ready market and shall be economy-wise feasible.
- The research-related output of the Academic Staff needs to be enhanced further as this is currently insufficient quantitatively.

**Level of judgement : *Good***

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

#### ***Strengths***

- Two members of the Academic Staff of the CMSU are currently serving the University as Student Counselors. In addition, one Senior Lecturer of the Unit has served in the capacity of Senior Student Counselor in the recent past. These members of the Academic Staff see to the counseling needs of the students of the CMSU in a capable manner.

#### ***Weaknesses and recommendations***

- More counseling in the form of guidance in selecting CMS course units could be offered to students. This way, the current lapses on the part of some students in not seeking appropriate background knowledge for the study of advanced courses can be minimized. This type of counseling can be offered to students at entry-level, with the intervention of the Academic Staff of the CMSU.
- At all times, it should be ensured that the students have access to the Academic Staff to have their academic/personal issues addressed. Else, the students will be at the mercy of their seniors for these purposes, who no doubt offer help, yet are not fully competent to guide the juniors with regard to such matters.

**Level of judgement : *Good***

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Aspect Reviewed	Judgment Given
Curriculum Design, Content and Review	Satisfactory
Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods	Satisfactory
Quality of students, including Student Progress and Achievement	Satisfactory
The Extent and Use of Student Feedback Qualitative and Quantitative	Unsatisfactory
Postgraduate Studies	Satisfactory
Peer Observation	Unsatisfactory
Skills Development	Good
Academic Guidance and Counseling	Good

*Overall Level of Judgment is suspended*

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Team of Reviewers wishes to recommend the following :

- That the Communication and Media Studies Unit be upgraded to the level of an Academic Department. The reasons for this recommendation are threefold. The creation of such a Department would pave the way for the conducting of a Special Degree Programme, which is currently in high demand. In addition, the new Department could undertake to conduct a Postgraduate Degree programme, which too is a current need. Further, as a more autonomous entity, such a Department would be able to effectively acquire expertise and wherewithal needed for the maintaining of quality in its programmes of study.
- That as part of quality enhancement measures, the Unit adheres to a consistent pattern of curriculum revision; that such curriculum revision be in keeping with the contemporary needs of the discipline of mass communication; that a more systematic approach be followed in allowing the students a wider choice of course units; that the research component of the undergraduate programme be speedily instituted.
- That mechanism for Peer Observation and obtaining Student Feedback be put in place as early as possible.
- That the purchase of audio-visual equipment, e-library material and printed publications required by the Unit's study programmes be expedited.
- That better team-effort and healthy debate of academic issues be promoted among the Academic Staff of the Unit; that regular meetings of the Academic Staff be convened for the purpose.