

SUBJECT REVIEW REPORT

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ECONOMICS



***FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE
UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBO***

24th to 26th February 2010

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1. SUBJECT REVIEW PROCESS

Subject review evaluates the quality of education within a specific subject or discipline. This review evaluates the quality of education within the specific discipline of Business Economics being offered by the Department of Business Economics of Faculty of Management & Finance, University of Colombo. The review focused on the report prepared by the Department of Business Economics. Based on the report, the team evaluated the study program concerning the criteria set out by the Quality Assurance Council (QAC) of the Ministry of Higher Education.

The self-evaluation report consisted of ten sections, i.e., introduction; Students, staff and facilities, Curriculum design content and review, teaching, learning and assessment methods, Quality of students, student progress and achievement; Extent of student feedback, Postgraduate studies; Peer observation; Skills development, Academic guidance and counselling. The quality of education within the discipline was evaluated in the light of the aims and learning outcomes given in the course outlines prepared for each course/subject.

The review focused on the following eight aspects of education:

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

The evaluation of the above eight aspects of the program were done by obtaining the information from the following sources:

1. The self-evaluation report submitted by the Department
2. Meeting with the Vice Chancellor, Dean, Head of the Department, academic staff members, non-academic staff members, undergraduate and passed out students
3. Observation of teaching
4. Observation of relevant documents (Course Outlines, hand outs, question papers, answer scripts, mark sheets, evaluation sheets etc. Student Feedback Questionnaire, Minutes of the Departmental Meetings)
5. Observation of the Department and other facilities (computer centre, lecture rooms, Main Library, Canteen, Career guidance Unit, Physical Education Unit, Career Guidance Unit etc.)

Each subject review aspect of education was judged by making one of the three standards/levels namely, good, satisfactory and unsatisfactory. For the purpose, strengths, good practices and weaknesses in relation to each aspect were considered. An overall judgment was made from the three options, i.e., confidence, limited confidence and no confidence by taking into account the status of the judgments given for all the eight aspects of the academic program.

The dates the review team visited were 24th, 25th and 26th February, 2010. The agenda of the subject review is annexed.

2. BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY, FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT

University of Colombo

The University of Ceylon was established by the State Council on April 1942. The first Vice-Chancellor of the new University, Sir Ivor Jennings, hoisted the flag on July 1942 at the College House where his office and the central administration were located. The nucleus of the University was formed by amalgamating the Ceylon Medical College founded in 1870 and the Ceylon University College founded in 1921, both of which were incorporated into the University. Therefore, the history of the university goes back to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

On the recommendation of the College Council, the Government declared a land in Buller's Road, Colombo, as a University site in March, 1924. A Draft University Ordinance was prepared in June 1925. In early 1926 controversy arose over the location of the University. The Governor's committee in February 1927 reported in favour of the Uyanwatte site in the Dumbara Valley, near Kandy and recommended that the University should be of the 'unitary' type in teaching and residential facilities.

By 1950 the University of Ceylon had a reputation as an important centre of excellence in the Commonwealth. The Higher Education Act of 1966 established a National Council of Higher Education (NCHE) and later in 1972 under the University of Sri Lanka Act No. 1 of 1972 all universities were brought under one umbrella and made Campuses of a single university established as the University of Sri Lanka. The University of Ceylon, Colombo was named the Colombo Campus of the University of Sri Lanka. This system prevailed until 1977. University autonomy was weakened and as a result, a new Act was introduced in 1978. Under the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978 all Campuses of the then single University became independent Universities. Accordingly, the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka regained its autonomy in 1978.

It had Faculties of Medicine, Arts, Science, Education and Law. A Faculty of Graduate Studies was created by an Ordinance of the UGC in 1987, to further strengthen post-graduate education. Subsequently, the Faculty of Management and Finance was established. The Sri Palee Campus of the University was established by a Gazette notification in 1996. Institutes with financial autonomy were created by the earlier Act of 1972. When the single university was dissolved in 1978, the Postgraduate Institute of Medicine, the Institute of Workers' Education (IWE) and the Institute of Indigenous medicine were affiliated to the University of Colombo. The Institute of Computer Technology (ICT) was established in 1987. Subsequently, the ICT was renamed as the University of Colombo School of Computing (UCSC) in 2002 and the IWE was renamed as Institute of Human Resource Advancement (IHRA) in 2006.

The University now has 7 Faculties with 41 Academic Departments, a Campus, a School, 6 Institutes and 5 centres.

Vision

A centre of excellence of global repute, through building synergies between knowledge, education, research and entrepreneurship for national development and democratic values in a plural society

Mission

To be a centre of excellence in learning and knowledge creation with commitment to providing human resources of high ethical standards and social responsibility who are innovative with independent thinking and analytical skills, contributing to national development.

Faculty of Management & Finance

Established in May 1994, the Faculty of Management and Finance remains as the youngest faculty of the University of Colombo. Historical development of this faculty dates back to 1979 when the Department of Commerce and Management Studies of the University of Colombo was set up. As a department which operated under the Faculty of Arts, the Department of Commerce and Management Studies grew rapidly in 1980s and thereby became the department which accommodated the highest number of undergraduates in the Faculty of Arts.

In line with the increasing student population and the rapidly growing needs of Sri Lankan business community, the necessity for establishing a new faculty for this particular field of study began to be felt in late 1980s. The issue was discussed and debated among university authorities, teachers, students and other stakeholders of the University of Colombo for several years. As an initial step of expediting the process of establishing the new faculty, two academic departments, namely the Department of Commerce and the Department of Management Studies, were formed in 1993 under the purview of the Faculty of Arts. Finally, this long-lived dream of all interested parties materialized in May 1994 with the inauguration of the Faculty of Management and Finance. During the past fifteen years undergraduate population of the faculty grew rapidly. Currently, the total number of undergraduates registered in the faculty exceeds 1,600.

In its historical evolution, the Faculty of Management and Finance reached yet another juncture in May 2007. In place of the two academic departments which were in existence for many years, six new academic departments were established: i) Department of Accounting; ii) Department of Business Economics; iii) Department of Commerce and Finance; iv) Department of Human Resources Management; v) Department of Management and Organization Studies and vi) Department of Marketing. This intra-faculty institutional development has provided its undergraduates with the opportunity and resources for specializing in different fields of study including Accounting, Business Economics, Finance, Human Resources Management and Marketing.

Mission

To be the most prominent and leading faculty in Sri Lanka for high quality academic and executive programs, research and consultancy in management and business studies within a creative and collaborative environment towards developing managerial competencies for betterment of the society.

Department of Business Economics

The Department of Business Economics, together with its five sister departments, was established on 09th June 2006 by an extraordinary gazette of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. However, it started functioning as an academic department in the Faculty with effect from 01st of May 2007. At the inception, the department's academic staff comprised of an associate professor, three senior lecturers and five lecturers. Currently, the

department offers the Degree of Bachelor of Business Administration in Business Economics (BBA in BE).

In addition to offering the special Degree, the department is currently playing a key role in the entire BBA Degree Program as a service department. In terms of the number of core courses offered in the first two years of the present BBA Degree Program, known as Level I, the contribution of the Department of Business Economics is nearly one-third, arguably the highest contribution by a single department in the faculty (see 3.2).

From the beginning, the department remains as the one with the least number of students (see 2.1.1). So far, only a single batch of fourteen students has graduated from the department. The second batch of students has completed their studies, but is yet to get their final results.

Like all the other departments in the Faculty, the Department of Business Economics is only nearly three years old and this self evaluation report is based on its performance, functioning and operations within its short lifespan of two years and nine months.

Vision

Inspired by the vision of the University of Colombo, the Department strives to be one of the most prominent Departments of Business Economics in the South Asian Region

Mission

To serve the nation and to contribute to its economic progress by producing high-quality, well-trained and employable graduates, conducting high quality research and disseminating knowledge through a dedicated, excellent and well trained staff within a learner friendly environment.

3. AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

3.1 Aims

- To equip the students with a sound conceptual understanding on both 'internal' and 'external' business economic environment, which will make them more effective managers in the corporate world
- To improve the quality of teaching by adopting more appropriate and context-based teaching methods
 - To broaden staff development opportunities for the academic as well as non-academic staff
 - To strengthen the partnerships with private and public sectors and other relevant institutions (yet to be implemented)
- To conduct useful empirical and theoretical research with a view to creating a continuous research dialogue in the area of Business Economics and relevant disciplines
- To establish proper channels to disseminate knowledge
 - To introduce motivational factors for the department staff and to avoid the demotivational factors

3.2 Learning Outcomes

On completion of the BBA in BE Degree Program, the students will have:

- gained the conceptual understanding needed to analyze various economic phenomena inside and outside a business firm
- gained a conceptual understanding and some hands-on experience of various elements of management functions of a business firm
- developed teamwork and leadership qualities required to be successful managers
- developed communication skills required to express their views as managers

4. FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW TEAM

4.1. Curriculum Design, Content and Review

The Bachelor of Business Administration in Business Economics Special degree is a four year (08 semesters), fulltime degree program, conducted by the Department of Business Economics and its medium of instruction is English. The curriculum design of this program consists of two distinct components namely; Level 1 and Level 2. The duration of each of this level is 02 years (04 semesters). Minimum 400 undergraduates join the FMF annually and they go for their specialization in the 3rd and 4th years (04 Semesters). Undergraduates joining the FMF have to follow initially the level 1 program (carries 60 credit values), irrespective of their specialization they intend joining at level 2 (carries 60 credit values). In other words, level 1 program is a common program for every undergraduate to follow before they go for their specialization. It is revealed that, emphasis has been given to the following course clusters in designing level 1 curriculum; Basic Disciplinary Courses, Environmental Learning Courses, General Skill Courses and Management and Business Skills Courses.

The existing level 1 program comprises 31 core courses and 14 Optional courses and they are distributed among 04 semesters, assigning different credit values subject to a minimum of 1 and maximum of 03 per course. There are two optional, non-credit courses as well, i.e. MGT 1000 Sinhala, and MGT 1001 Tamil. The 45 courses at Level 1 are offered by six departments in addition to the DSC Unit coming under the FMF. For a successful completion of Level 1, an undergraduate has to earn a total of 60 credit values, comprising of both Core (54 credit values) and Optional (06 credit values) courses prescribed for level 1. This flexibility, made available for the undergraduates at level I, facilitates the undergraduate to have an idea about his/her selection of specialization and plan for the same at a very early stage and to acquire relevant basic knowledge in the respective discipline by choosing and following the appropriate courses.

There are 08 specialization areas available for the undergraduates at Level II and the undergraduates can choose one of them as their specialization area. The 08 areas of specialization available for the undergraduates at Level II are as follows:

Bachelor of Business Administration

Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting

Bachelor of Business Administration in Business Economics

Bachelor of Business Administration in Finance

Bachelor of Business Administration in Human Resource Management

Bachelor of Business Administration in Marketing

Bachelor of Business Administration in Management and Organization Studies

Bachelor of Business Administration in International Business

The Level II curriculum comprises of 09 Core courses, assigning 22 credit values, (offered by all departments in the FMF, including the Department of Business Economics), 10 Major compulsory courses, assigning 20 credit values (offered by the Department of Business Economics alone), 10 Major optional courses, assigning 22 credit values (offered by the Department of Business Economics alone) and 11 Other optional courses, carrying 20 credit values (offered by the other departments in the FMF other than the Department of Business Economics).

The undergraduates who specialize Business Economics have to successfully complete all Core courses (20 credits) all Major compulsory courses (20 credits) and the balance 20 credits to make the total number of 60 credits at Level II to earn from the Major optional and/or Other optional courses. Major optional courses include BEC 2105 Research Method II, BEC 2225 Independent Project, and BEC 2500 Dissertation as well. An undergraduate is allowed to offer courses, subject to a maximum of 20 credit values during a semester. In the Final semester, only Major compulsory and Major Optional courses are available. Core courses and Other Optional courses are not available during this semester.

The credit distribution among the different categories of courses offered by the departments in the FMF for the completion of the Business Economics special degree is shown in the table

Department of	Total Credits offered	Core Courses(CC)	Major Compulsory Courses(MCC)	Major Optional Courses(MOC)	Other Optinal Courses(OOC)
Business Economics	44	02	20	22	00
Accounting	10	04	00	00	06
Finance	07	02	00	00	05
Management & Organizational Studies	13	09	00	00	04
Marketing	04	00	00	00	04
Decision Science*	03	03	00	00	00
Human Resource Management	01	00	00	00	01
Total	82	20	20	22	20

* not a department

The curriculum structure designed for the Business Economics special degree has a few good characteristics to be highlighted; there is a good blend of a combination of courses both in level I and level II. The Level I program contains, 31 Core courses carrying 54 credit values and 14 Optional courses carrying 15 credit values. There are two non-credit Optional courses as well.

There is a variety of combinations of courses carrying different credit values ranging from one to three, for the undergraduates to offer at their choice and earn the required number of credit values during Level I. The 31, Core courses are comprised of, 02 three credit courses, 19, two credit courses, and 10 one credit courses.

The 14 Optional courses are comprised of, 02, zero credit courses, 03, two credit courses and 09, one credit courses.

All six departments contribute for the requirements to be fulfilled, stipulated by the FMF for the Level I program as follows.

Department of:

Business Economics: 04 courses of two credit values

Accounting: 03 courses of two credit values and 01 course of one credit value

Decision Science (Unit): 06 courses of two credit values

Management & Organizational St.: 20 courses: 02 courses of zero credit values, 17 courses of one credit value and 01 course of three credit values

Human resource Management: 01 course of one credit value and 02 courses of two credit values

Marketing: 03 courses of two credit values and 03 courses of 01 credit value

Finance 03 courses of two credit values

This situation creates opportunities for both lecturers and undergraduates to share and exchange knowledge while making opportunities for all the undergraduates joining the FMF to come to know the faculty staff before they go for the specialization in Level II.

The curriculum design seems revised a number of times by the Faculty in order to address problems encountered by both undergraduates and lecturers at time to time. The large number of courses at Level I, which carried 01 credit value, had been reduced to a minimal 19 courses (Core 10, Optional 09). Out of these 19 one credit courses 15 are offered by the Department of Management and Organizational Studies.

The Level I program being a faculty based program the influence could make by one department to change the structure of the same seem minimal. However the Department of Business Economics had diagnosed a number of weaknesses in the level I program and had suggested improvements to overcome these weaknesses in the near future. At the same time, it is worthy to mention the struggle by both undergraduates and lecturers have to undergo with the increased number of assignments, tests and examinations falling within a semester and the least involvement of both these parties can extend with the other academic and extracurricular activities.

As a whole, when considering both level I and II the contribution of each department and the DSC (offers 07 core courses) in fulfilling the stipulated requirements are shown in Table II.

Table II Categories of courses and their credit distribution at Levels I and II

Level	Accounting Courses					Business Economics Courses					Management Courses				
	C	OP	MC	MO	OO	C	OP	MC	MO	OO	C	OP	MC	MO	OO
I	03	-	-	-	-	04	-	-	-	-	09	12	-	-	-
Credits	08	-	-	-	-	08	-	-	-	-	11	10	-	-	-
II	02	-	-	-	03	01	-	10	10	-	04	-	-	-	02
Credits	04	-	-	-	06	02	-	20	20	-	09	-	-	-	04
Total															
Courses	05	-	-	-	03	05	-	10	10	-	13	12	-	-	02
Credits	12	-	-	-	06	10	-	20	20	-	20	10	-	-	04

Level	Human Resource Mgt.					Marketing Mgt.					Financial Mgt.				
	C	OP	MC	MO	OO	C	OP	MC	MO	OO	C	OP	MC	MO	OO
I Credits	02 04	01 01	- -	- -		05 07	01 02	- -	- -	- -	02 04	01 02	- -	- -	- -
II Credits	- -	- -	- -	- -	01 02	- -	- -	- -	- -	02 04	01 02	- -	- -	- -	03 07
Total	02 04	01 01	- -	- -	01 02	05 07	01 02	- -	- -	02 04	03 06	01 02	- -	- -	03 07

C= Core, Op=Optional, MC=Major compulsory, MO= Major Optional, OO= Other Optional
Table III Core courses offered and the credit values assigned for both Levels I&II by the six departments and the DSC unit in the FMF

Areas/Level	ACC	BEC	MGT	HRM	MKTG	FIN	DSC	Total
I & II Core/Credits	12	10	20	04	07	06	15	74
%	16.21	13.51	27.02	5.41	9.46	8.11	20.28	100

ACC=Accounting, BEC=Business economics, MGT= Management, HRM=Human Resource Management, MKTG= Marketing Management, FIN=Financial Management, DSC= Decision Science

When considering the total credit values assigned to Core courses in both Level I & II, it reveals that, 27% credit values are assigned for Management, 20% credit values are assigned for Decision Science, 16% credit values for Accounting, 14% for Business economics, 9.% for Marketing Management, 8% for Financial Management and 5% for Human Resource Management. The justification for assigning 13% credit values for the Business Economics while, assigning 16% credit values for Accounting under the category of Core courses cannot be justifiable as the degree program is in the discipline of Business Economics. However, this prima facie deficiency is compensated when taking into account the credit values assigned (17% from the total 120 credits assigned for the degree program) for the Major Compulsory Business Economics related courses. Yet, the variation of credit values assigned among the operational areas, (ACC 16%, MKTG 9%, FIN 8%, HRM 5%), cannot be justifiable. The credit values assigned to ACC (16%) is more than three folds credit values assigned for HRM (5%).

In view of the number of strengths and their impact on the improvement of quality, relevance and weaknesses, our judgment on this aspect is ‘SATISFACTORY’.

4.2. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods

As stated above the Bachelor of Business Administration Business Economics special degree program consists of two distinct programs, namely; Level I and Level II. The 02 year, Level I program does not come under one department but is a responsibility of all the six departments coming under the FMF.

In a batch there are around 400 undergraduates joining the FMF and they are to follow level I program during the first and the second years. For the purpose of teaching the 400 number undergraduates are divided into 03 or 04 groups to make 100 to 125 undergraduates in each group. Lectures are conducted in English medium and according to the undergraduates in Level I, majority undergraduates struggle with the language deficiency and some students leave the program at the very early stage. The English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU) conducts the language courses for the undergraduates and it is mandatory passing English

level 03 by an undergraduate to become eligible for the degree at the end of the four years. The ELTU, at the very beginning conducts a placement test for English and makes undergraduates aware of their level of English proficiency. Depending on their level of English proficiency the undergraduates have the freedom to follow English classes, conducted by the ELTU and meet the requirement at their leisure to become eligible for the degree they intend earning.

Apart from the language deficiency among the undergraduates, the undergraduates are unhappy about the way the level I program is conducted in the FMF. The undergraduates understand the importance of level I program as it is planned methodically, but the big numbers in each group and not having enough space and required facilities along with inability to follow lectures in English seem weakened the enthusiasm among undergraduates. The performance shown by the undergraduates in the level I program has a significant influence on the final results of the program as the level I program is assigned 60 credit values and that amounts to 50% credit values of the entire degree program.

There is hardly any course manual provided to the undergraduates in their level I program. Level I undergraduates have become no one's baby and there is an Academic Coordinator who can solve problems which are with very little scope, encountered by the undergraduates and the undergraduates eternal problems are related to lecture room space, reading materials, and language barriers. There is hardly any formal mechanism to air their grievances. The student associations are not functioning right now and hence there is no student representation in the Faculty Board.

There are seven lecturers attached to the Department of Business Economics and among them six are males. There is one Professor, and four senior academics. It is evidenced that the undergraduates are very much happy about the teaching and the academic and non academic staff of the department.

The numbers of undergraduates joining the Business Economics specialization program seem less and it had been less than 20 since its inception. Almost all the undergraduates seem attending lectures. The Review team had the opportunity of observing few teaching sessions at level II program. Undergraduates continuously and actively participated and interacted with the lecturer. Almost all the undergraduates spoke highly about the lecturers, their dedication and commitment.

The main library is equipped with required facilities and the staffs in the library seem helpful to the readers in what ever the way they can. Sufficient numbers of copies of recommended books are available in the library and undergraduates have access electronically to foreign journals and the undergraduates are happy about the services rendered by the library. Unavailability of reading room facilities, and space for other academic activities i.e. discussions, getting ready for presentations etc. seem inadequate in the faculty premises.

Facilities available for computer and IT related courses are minimal, for 1600 students only 90 computers are available and out of them only around 60 -70 computers are in working condition. The internet facility is available for these computers but it frequently seems slow and inaccessible due to virus attacks and maintenance deficiencies. There are only two instructors attached to the FMF and there is hardly any lecturer to conduct lectures on IT in the FMF. The computer laboratories open at 0830 hrs. during working days and close at 1600

hrs. Two instructors are inadequate for the work load to be carried out in a faculty where the student population is around 1600.

The assessment methods adopted by the department seem acceptable. Continuous Assessment and End Semester Examinations are conducted for almost all courses and 30% and 70% marks are allocated respectively, for both these assessment methods.

Judgment is 'GOOD' with regard to this aspect.

4.3 Quality of Students including Student Progress and Achievements

The FMF, UoC receives around 400 undergraduates annually through UGC with a comparatively higher "Z score" (1.7 – 2.5) earned at the Advanced Level Examination conducted by the National Evaluation and Examination Department of Sri Lanka. Most of the undergraduates joining the FMF, UoC are the undergraduates who have requested it as their first choice at the time of making their applications to get admitted to the universities. A number of good reasons are there for this choice:

1. Majority undergraduates after completing their A/L examinations join professional programs conducted by Non State Institutions and these institutions are located in and around the capital city of Colombo.
2. Undergraduates joining the FMF, UoC enjoy the convenience of following classes in the professional programs during weekends while reading for the degree in the FMF during week days.
3. On the other hand, the university of Colombo is the oldest University in Sri Lanka and it has earned a good reputation over a period of 100 years.

The other reason may be the convenience in all respect as the university is located in the heart of the city and most of the industries are located in and around Colombo.

However, according to the Dean of the FMF, 85% of the undergraduates joining the faculty are the ones who have shown merit performance at their A/L examination.

The Department of Business Economics can conveniently cater to a minimum of 50 to 75 undergraduates at a time for its specialization. The FMF selects undergraduates for each specialization commencing from the 3rd year on the following criteria:

1. The student's priority preference
2. The high performance earned at Level I, along with the merit performance earned for the basic mandatory courses prescribed by the FMF to join a particular specialization program.

When considering the number of undergraduates' making their priority preferences for Business Economics specialization at Level II seem minimal. In the first batch (2006/2007) only 01 undergraduate had requested Business Economics specialization as his first preference, out of 14 who had followed the program in that particular year. All the other 13 undergraduates' preferences had been for some other stream of specialization in the FMF. In the 2nd batch (2007/2008) of undergraduates 05 out of 18 had requested for Business Economics specialization as their first preference.

When comparing the performance shown by the students at their A/L examination and the performance demonstrated at the degree level by the same student, seem, far below than expected. In the first batch (2006/07) of undergraduates (14) only one undergraduate had

been able to earn a Second Class Lower Division pass. All the other 13 undergraduates have earned a simple pass after following a four year degree in the university. There may be a number of reasons contributing to this poor performance demonstrated by the undergraduates in the FMF. One reason may be, the medium of instruction and examination being the English language. Almost all the undergraduates joining the FMF must have done their studies at Primary, Junior Secondary and Senior Secondary levels in their mother tongue: Sinhala/Tamil. At these levels, the English language is considered the second language and the competency demonstrated by majority undergraduates in English language at the time of joining the university is obviously poor. Following lectures and expressing views at the examinations, all of a sudden, must have created some inconvenience.

Another reason for poor performance at Level I may be the unwieldy work load the undergraduate has to handle during a semester, at Level I. If the undergraduate is to successfully complete the degree within a period of 04 years, it is mandatory an undergraduate to successfully complete 31 core courses carrying 54 credit values and the balance 06 credit values to be earned from a 14 optional courses available during Level I. There are 04 semesters in Level I and in an average an undergraduate has to successfully complete 7.75 Core courses and a number of Optional courses (will vary from 03 courses carrying 02 credits each to 06 courses carrying 01 credit each). If, assumed, there is 01 Mid Semester Test and 01 End Semester examination per course, if 11 (08+03) courses are to be followed and completed during a semester an undergraduate will have minimum of 22 tests within a semester (06 months = 26 weeks) OR if 14 (08+06) courses are followed, 28 tests within a semester (26 weeks). In some courses, there are case analysis, role plays, presentations and some other various academic activities in which as well the undergraduates have to take part.

On the other hand, although it is not the Faculty concern, one should not forget that, almost all these undergraduates are following the professional programs conducted by non-state owned institutions. These institutions as well are conducting examinations bi-annually for which these undergraduates appear.

Attendance seems poor (around 60%) at Level I program. There are around 125 to 200 undergraduates in each group, and this factor as well contributes to the overall performance and the progress of student achievements. Attendance at Level II program seems at an acceptable level and an absence of one undergraduate in the class room is noticeable as the numbers in each batch is smaller. However, some undergraduates being employed the poor attendance is unavoidable.

When taking all these factors into consideration the poor quality and slow progress in achievement levels of undergraduates seem unavoidable. Appropriate precautionary measures taken at the Faculty level, especially matters in relation to Level I program and at the departmental level especially matters in relation to Level II program cannot be neglected or postponed.

Amongst all these constraints, the present batches of undergraduates show positive signs of improving their performance and hence the academic staff members of the Department of Business Economics are pretty sure about the first classes and second classes the undergraduates would gain at the final results. At the same time there are a few junior undergraduates who have already decided and waiting eagerly to follow Business Economics as their specialization. In this context, the department of Business Economics cannot any

more keep silent without making the appropriate industry made aware of its products. The industry is unaware of the Business Economics Special graduates and their unique characteristics when comparing them with the Economics Honours Arts graduates coming from the Faculty of Arts. This may be the high time for the Department of Business Economics to launch an awareness program about the Business Economics Special graduates, with no possible delay. The collaboration of the Central Bank, other Public and Private Financial Institutions along with the Inland Revenue department and National Statistics Department may be useful. Appropriate guidance to organize seminars, symposiums, and discussions on current Business Economics issues and research on Business Economics field will be an eye opener of everybody in the field. In this exercise the undergraduates may play the main role with the proper guidance of the academic staff in the department. In addition encouraging the undergraduates to do mini research and publishing them in what ever the way possible also will make the industry aware of the calibre of the undergraduates the Department of Business Economics intend producing. This attempt may be an initial stepping stone for the undergraduates to get into the industry.

Judgment is 'GOOD' with regard to this aspect.

4.4. Extent and use of Student Feedback

The lecturers are very much interested in getting the feed back from the students about their teaching performance. This must have helped undoubtedly the lecturers in the department in their academic improvements. The present practice is to get the feed back from the students by the lecturer himself for each course they conduct during a semester. A questionnaire has been developed and the department intends executing the same with the consent of the staff members in the department. For easy understanding of the undergraduates the questions are in all three languages: English, Sinhala and Tamil. The staff members are of the opinion that it will be a progressive step towards the development of the department. In addition the lecturers get a verbal feedback while the session is being conducted. There were documentary evidences to prove that the lecturers have taken the feed back about their performance in the class room activities. Field tours and social events are taking place in the department through which the student teacher relationship is strengthened. As the number participating in each lecture is small (around 15) getting direct feed back is not a problem for the teacher concerned. However, a formal student feedback mechanism is important implemented in order to improve the teaching learning process.

Undergraduates do maintain a close rapport with their lecturers in the department as the lecturers are freely available on almost all the days in their rooms with or without prior appointments made. The Head of the department and all the lecturers practice the open door policy where the students are encouraged to meet their lecturers and solve their problems with least delay. In addition meetings with undergraduates are also held and the problems are discussed at the departmental level. But this system is not regular. The Business Economics Students Society as well is functioning in a small way through which the student representatives air their grievances. It was noted that, only Level II program undergraduates enjoy this facility and the Level I program undergraduates are a little backward in making use of this opportunity. Undergraduates in level I program express their difficulties to their lecturers at the end of the lecture. A regular faculty level communication mechanism is required to listen to the grievances of Level I undergraduates.

Judgment is 'GOOD' with regard to this aspect.

4.5. Postgraduate Studies

Post graduate studies of the FMF is organized and conducted under one Unit and this is known as "Post Graduate and Mid Career Development Unit." The program Coordinator is a Faculty staff member and he is responsible for the implementation of the programs. In addition to the postgraduate programs conducted by the Postgraduate and Mid Career Development Unit of the FMF the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) of the UoC as well is conducting postgraduate programs. The Senior Staff members in the Department of Business Economics are involved with the academic activities in the Post Graduate programs conducted by both these entities. The Head of the Department of Economics is one of the academic coordinators of the MBA program conducted by the Postgraduate and Mid Career Development Unit. In addition they are also involved with the programs conducted by the Institutes attached to the University. i.e. Institute of Human Resource Advancement. The lecturers attached to the Department of Business Economics also are heavily involved in acquiring higher degrees in order to get their career path developed while continuously making academic contributions locally and abroad. There was ample evidence to prove the contributions they had made for the academia during the recent past. Their contributions have been well recognized locally and abroad and it is worthy of reporting here about it as a point of appreciation.

Judgment for this aspect is 'GOOD'.

4.6 Peer Observation

There is a strong understanding among the academic members about the importance of having a Peer Observation as a powerful tool for improving the quality of teaching. It was observed that the overall attitude of the academic staff members about the peer observation is positive. Therefore, an attempt has been made recently to develop a mechanism for Peer Observation in the department. A formal check list has been developed and according to the Head of the Department the evaluation will be commenced from this semester. However, the lecturers have had an informal Peer evaluation mechanism in an informal manner and there were evidence to that effect. The Check list which has been prepared and due to be implemented from this semester looks into three main aspects, namely; Teaching process, Learning process and Content and Planning for learning and teaching. Apart from this, moderation of question papers and second marking of answer scripts by a senior academic is continuously being done. The Senior staff members in the department maintain a cordial rapport with its Junior staff members and this practice as well has created a conducive working environment within the department. In respect of the Visiting lecturers, Head of the Dept is keen to observe their academic delivery. Review team was convinced with the teaching materials prepared and distributed among the undergraduates and they are often subjected to review by the senior staff members.

Judgment is 'SATISFACTORY' with regard to this aspect.

4.7. Skills Development

The curriculum structure pays adequate attention to develop a number of skills among undergraduates by introducing a number of courses into level I and level II programs. The basic skills identified by the department to be developed among the undergraduates are: Critical and Analytical skills, Quantitative skills, IT handling skills, Written and oral

communication skills and Leadership skills. A number of courses as well have been introduced at both Levels I and II in order to develop these skills. To develop Critical and Analytical skills there are 06 courses included in the curriculum. In addition, to develop Quantitative skills the number of courses included is 06. For IT handling skills, 05 courses are included and for Written and oral communication skills 03 courses are included. For Leadership and Team work there is 01 course. The skills developed among undergraduates during the degree program are assessed at different instances through Assignments, based on analysis of data, facts trends, or incidents, case analysis, interactive group discussions, Group assignments, group presentations etc. etc.

The panel of reviewers had the opportunity to observe few presentations of the undergraduates in the specialization program and it was evidenced that the undergraduates' dedication and commitment towards getting their skills developed is at a very higher level.

However, it is evidenced that the undergraduates do have fewer opportunities to develop their IT related skills due to the poor maintenance and non availability of required number of computer machines in the FMF. There are two computer laboratories in the FMF and there are 94 machines available and from them only 70 machines are in working conditions. 24(25%) machines are out of order and only two Computer Instructors are available for the FMF. As licensed virus guards are not installed, most of the machines are subject to virus threats. When there are teaching sessions taking place in one computer laboratory the other machines in the same laboratory cannot be used due to the disturbances it could cause to teaching. In the other laboratory there are only 20 machines in the working condition and if one hour is allocated for each undergraduates there will be only 160 (20x08 hrs.) computer hours available a day for the undergraduates to make use of this laboratory. The laboratories are kept open only from 0830 hrs. to 1600 hrs. on working days due to unavailability of work force and unavoidable national security reasons. The FMF has nearly 1600 (400X4) undergraduates and having another laboratory with another 100 machines with the required number of Senior Instructors/Lecturers along with technicians and keeping the laboratory open from 0600 hrs. to 1800 hrs. at least until the security embargo is relaxed will be a great consolation for the undergraduates. As it is, the hours available to use the laboratories during the day time is limited, because the undergraduates are involved with their other academic activities and laboratories at most of the day time are used for teaching purposes. Making available the internet facilities to the undergraduates is also a must which is right now at a very negligible level. This problem has to be handled at the faculty level with least delay.

The faculty also needs to make available space for the undergraduates to get prepared for their presentations and discussions. The facilities available for these undergraduate level academic activities in the FMF are minimal.

BEC 2105 Research Methods, BEC 2500 Dissertation, BEC 2225 Independent Project being Major Optional courses and not being made compulsory for all the undergraduates in Level II, majority undergraduates will not get an opportunity to get the skills developed attached to these courses.

Judgment is 'SATISFACTORY' with regard to this aspect.

4.8 Academic Guidance and Counseling

The University appoints a separate Senior Student Counselor from among the senior academic members for the entire university and at the faculty and departmental levels as well there are appointed Student Counselors. These Student Counselors are male and female academic staff members in the faculty. The Senior Student Counselor summons monthly meetings with the faculty representatives and discusses matters regarding students' welfare. The faculty representative brings matters relating to the students in that particular faculty and tries to find solutions for the problems. The student welfare division as well listens to the grievances of the undergraduates and tries to help students by way of listening to them and suggesting solutions. Mahapola and student bursaries are handled by the students' welfare division. There is a scholarship program organized by the Senior Student Counselor as well with the patronization of the Alumni Association of the university. The Marshal system is in operation in the university and this division is responsible for the maintenance of the student discipline in the university. The Senior Student Counselor works closely with these Marshals in connection with student disciplinary matters. Orientation program for the fresh undergraduates, organized by the Faculty focuses on the information to be made available for them. Hand books explaining faculty academic programs along with By-laws are provided to the undergraduates during the orientation program and the Senior Student Counselor provides "Athwela" explaining the other facilities and student welfare activities available for the undergraduates.

However, nonexistence of an Academic Guidance program at the faculty level seems a serious draw back in the system. Undergraduates seek redress for the problems they encounter in the initial times from their senior colleagues and at the last resort they go for the Student Counselors for redress. This situation may be prevailing due to the unawareness among the fresh students about the role of the Student Counselors and their inaccessibility, as the student Counselors are full time academic members in the faculty. Perhaps, the purpose of meeting may be a serious confidential matter, to be discussed with the student counselor but, the student counselor may not have had developed an acceptable level of rapport with these undergraduates to bring forward such a matter which demands serious confidentiality. On the other hand these student counselors have not been provided a proper training to handle matters relating to student guidance and they are not provided with suitable rooms and other facilities to maintain records for future references.

There is no provision made available anywhere in the system to make some fund allocations available for the Senior Student Counselor to launch activities relating to student counseling. This situation again confines the student counseling only to a talking business.

There is a Career Guidance Unit and a Cultural Centre in the university. Majority undergraduates do not know their roles and therefore the services these units render confines to a very limited number of undergraduates.

The Physical Education Unit suffers a lot for not getting its vacancies filled with suitable personnel. Apart from that, a very limited number of undergraduates take part in university sports activities. On one hand the equipments and the required personnel are unavailable and on the other the undergraduates are all the time busy with their academic exercises with little time available for them to spend on these aspects. Faculty wise programs, with the collaboration of Career guidance Unit, Cultural Centre, Physical Education Unit, and the Student Counseling Unit may be useful to develop the personalities of the undergraduates.

JUDGMENT IS 'SATISFACTORY' for this aspect

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:

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

5. CONCLUSIONS

1. Curriculum Design, Content and Review

Good Practices/Strengths

1. Having a wide range of inter-departmental courses in a variety of subject disciplines for the undergraduates to choose at his liberty
2. The real course unit system with better understanding of the same being practiced in the department
3. The curriculum being revised at time to time taking into consideration the developments taking place in the discipline
4. Having a blend of combination of courses under different categories, namely; Core, Major Compulsory, Major optional and other optional.
5. The degree program being conducted in English medium

Weaknesses

1. The undergraduates being unfamiliar with the course unit system and an academic counseling program being not available in the Faculty/Department
2. The industry being not tapped adequately and not being able to identify the target market when designing the Curriculum of the Business Economics special degree program
3. Having a comparatively large number of Core courses carrying single credit values especially in Level I makes the workload for both undergraduates and lecturers heavier on one hand and on the other the administration of such a program will be difficult and inefficient
4. Imbalanced credit values assigned for different operational areas with least rationale behind it

2. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods

Good Practices/Strengths

1. Teaching learning and assessment methods adopted in achieving learning outcomes are at an acceptable level
2. Having a Professor with a set of qualified and committed academic and a non academic staff in the department

3. Facilitating Students with field visits, guest lectures, and seminars
4. Use of Continuous Assessments and End Semester Examinations to assess student performance
5. Cordial and positive interrelationship maintained among students, lecturers and non academic staff
6. The exemplary academic leadership demonstrated by the present Head of the Department

Weaknesses

1. Non-availability of course manuals prepared by the academics for the benefits of the undergraduates especially in Level I
2. Not being able to identify the potential target market and determine the profile of the product. .

3. Quality of Students, including Student Progress and Achievement

Good Practices/Strengths

1. The number of undergraduates who specialize Business Economics being small the quality of the degree program may be maintained
2. Based on our limited observation during the review period, the attitudes and behavior of undergraduates are generally positive.
3. The degree of employability of the graduates seems at a higher level.
4. There is an increasing trend with regard to English competency towards the end of the program.
5. Opportunities available for the students to earn merit performance at their studies are higher

Weaknesses

1. Not being able to identify the target market to which the product will be produced
2. Non identification of problems being faced by the undergraduates in Level I at the faculty level
3. Non existence of a mechanism at the faculty level to identify the real problems encountered by the undergraduates at level I
4. Undue delay in finalizing and releasing, especially the final year results

4. Extent and Use of Student Feedback

Good Practices/Strengths

1. Having a structured questionnaire method of getting students' feedback about the quality of teaching.
2. Practice of student representatives participating in the Faculty board meetings.
3. Open Door policy practiced by the staff in the department

Weaknesses

1. Non existence of a formal comprehensive scheme to monitor the quality of the teachers.

5. Postgraduate Studies

Good Practices/Strengths

1. Contributions made by the academic members in the department in several postgraduates programs conducted by the FMF and by the other institutions coming under the university
2. Research culture created and the academic environment prevailing within the department
3. Enthusiasm and commitment among the academic staff members to acquire high credentials in the academia
4. Having a academically updated and research oriented academic staff in the department

Weaknesses

1. Non existence of a mechanism to educate the society with modern trends in the Business Economics field
2. Non existence of an e-learning system in the FMF/Department through which the masses can be made educated through extension courses in the lines of Business Economics

6. Peer Observation

Good Practices/Strengths

1. Having an positive understanding among the academic staff members about formal peer observation system
2. Steps being taken to implement a formal peer observation mechanism in the near future
3. Having a senior level staff in the department to get required guidance for improvement

Weaknesses

1. The discipline of Business Economics being a new subject area to the Sri Lankan business society and not being able to get the required guidance from the industry

7. Skills Development

Good Practices/Strengths

1. Steps being taken to include skills based courses into the curriculum
2. Opportunities being made available for the students to get their skills sharpened through Students activities. i.e. Presentations, and Extra Curricular activities
3. Ample opportunities available in the environment as the university being located in the heart of the industrial city.

Weakness

1. Unawareness among undergraduates about the opportunities available for them to develop their skills while being in the university E.g. most of the undergraduates are unaware of the Career Guidance Unit and what can be gained from it, as undergraduates.
2. A very minimal number of undergraduates take part in sports activities
3. lesser emphasis given to Industrial Training, Research Methodology/Dissertation by making them Major optional courses which deny opportunities for majority undergraduates to sharpen their analytical and presentation skills

8. Academic Guidance and Counseling

Good Practices/Strengths

1. Having Senior Student Counselors for the University
2. Having Faculty and departmental level Student Counselors
3. Awareness programs conducted by the Senior Student counselor
4. Having a Academic Coordinator and Personal Tutors appointed for Level I at the faculty level
5. Cordial relationship maintained between lecturers and undergraduates in the level II program

Weaknesses

1. Student Counselors are not provided a separate room to discuss problems of the undergraduates and little authority is assigned to the faculty student counselors in solving problems at their levels
2. Non availability of records maintenance by the faculty student counselors for future reference
3. Non existence of a formal training provided for the Student Counselors
4. Non existence of a Academic Guidance Program at the faculty or Departmental Level
5. Non existence of a separate fund for student counseling activities

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made by the Review Team for further improvement of the programs being offered by the Department as the Review Team felt they will be useful. The Level I program being a Faculty based program, the department may convince the Faculty Board where necessary, by bringing out the deficiencies in the Level I program which may affect the final product of the department.

1. Re-consider about the duration of the level I program, it seems, more time may be allocated for the undergraduates to concentrate on specialization during level II
2. Reconsider about the courses to be included in the level I program giving serious emphasis to the specialization; the undergraduates are expected to follow in level II
3. Rearrange the curriculum structure giving emphasis to the sequence of introducing courses with the academic maturity of the students in the program
4. Make available a number of optional and elective courses in both common and specialization programs
5. Inter – Faculty courses may be useful introducing
6. Maintain a balance in the number of courses being offered under Core, Major Compulsory, Major Optional and other optional among different semesters
7. Sinhala for Tamil students and Tamil for Sinhale students may be useful introducing with the help of the Cultural Centre in the University
8. Include a well prepared English program with the assistance of the ELTU which could help the weaker students to improve their English knowledge which will in turn help increasing the confidence towards language competence and minimizing the dropout rate of the degree programs offered by the FMF
9. Use an in house, standard, user friendly terminology in categorizing courses in Level I and Level II

10. A user friendly curriculum design especially during Level I may be necessary developed and introduced for easy understanding of the undergraduates in order to gain maximum output by effectively utilizing the time they spend in the university
11. Make stronger the research culture of the Department by encouraging undergraduates to carry out more research in their specialty areas
12. A well designed academic counselling program will be helpful conducting for the undergraduates especially towards the end of the 1st semester of Level I. This would help undergraduates diversifying their thinking and go for different disciplines than confining only to one track, Accountancy or Finance etc.
13. Introduce a career guidance program for the students with the collaboration of the Career Guidance Unit in the University
14. Appoint a Career guidance coordinator to improve liaisons with the Career Guidance Unit in the university in order to assist undergraduates in a number of ways
15. Make more opportunities for the undergraduates to go for Industrial Training through which student could develop a wide range of skills
16. Confidence among students about the services rendered by the Medical centre of the university seems needed improved through better medical care and treatment
17. Sufficient space for the Department and the Academic Staff Members along with internet facilities are necessary provided
18. Expedite releasing final year results

7. ANNEXURES

Annex 1. AGENDA OF THE REVIEW VISIT

Day 01 – 24th Feb.

0830 – 0900 Meeting with the Vice Chancellor
0900 – 0915 Welcome address by the Dean/FMF
0915 – 0945 Meeting of the Panel of Reviewers
0945 – 1000 Finalizing the agenda for the for the Subject Review
1000 - 1030 An introduction to the Degree Program
1030 - 1200 Presentation of the contents in self Evaluation Report
1200 - 1300 Lunch
1300 – 1400 Meeting the Academic Staff Members of the Department
1400 – 1430 Visiting the Library
1430 – 1500 Meeting the ELTU Staff
1500 – 1515 Tea
1515 – 1545 Observing Students' Presentations
1545 – 1615 Meeting of the Panel of Reviewers

Day 02 – 25th Feb.

0900 – 0930 Observing Teaching (Dr. HNPI)
0930 - 1000 Observing Teaching (Prof. HDK)
10030 - 1015 Tea
1015 - 1045 Meeting with the BBA in BE students (Third & Final Years)
1045 - 1130 Meeting the students in Level I (First & Second years)
1130 - 1200 Meeting the Non - academic staff members of the department
1200 - 1300 Lunch
1300 - 1400 Observing the facilities in the Department and the Faculty
1400 - 1445 Meeting the Career Guidance Unit Staff
1445 - 1500 Tea
1500 - 1630 Observing the Documents
1630 – 1700 Meeting with Alumni
1700 – 1730 Meeting of the Panel of Reviewers

Day 03 – 26th Feb..

0900 – 0930 Meeting of the Panel of Reviewers
0930 – 1030 Meeting with the Student Counselors
1030 – 1045 Tea
1045 – 1130 Meeting of Panel of Reviewers
1130 – 1230 Meeting with Head and the other Academic Staff of the Department
1230 - 1330 Lunch and Departure

Annex 2. LIST OF PERSONS VISITED

- Vice Chancellor of the University of Colombo
- Dean of the Faculty of Management & Finance
- Head of the Department of Business Economics
- Academic Staff of the Department of Business Economics
- Non Academic Staff of the Department of Business Economics
- Undergraduate Students of level I and II program
- Librarian and Senior Staff Members of the Library

- University Senior Student Counselor and Faculty Student Counselors
- Staff of the Physical Education Unit
- Director Career Guidance Unit
- Head - ELTU

Annex 3. LIST OF LECTURE SESSIONS OBSERVED

- Teaching at Level I and II

Annex 4. LIST OF FACILITIES OBSERVED

- Department staff member's rooms
- Department Premises
- Faculty Lecture halls
- Faculty IT/Computer laboratories
- University Library

Annex 5. LIST OF DOCUMENTS OBSERVED

- Faculty hand book
- Student evaluation forms
- Student attendance list
- Lecturer's time tables
- Lecture Materials/handouts
- Minutes of the Faculty Board, minutes of the department meetings
- Question Papers, Marks sheets
- Students Dissertations