

SUBJECT REVIEW REPORT

**DEPARTMENT OF
LINGUISTICS AND ENGLISH**



***FACULTY OF ARTS
UNIVERSITY OF JAFFNA***

13th to 15th October 2008

Review Team :

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1. SUBJECT REVIEW PROCESS

National universities in Sri Lanka, which count 15 at present and established under the University Grants Commission, are public institutions and they are funded mainly by the government. In 2007, the total government allocation for the Higher Education System has been Rs. 15.7 billions and the estimated allocation for 2008 for the same sector is about Rs. 16.28 billions. Thus the universities are public institutions. They must consciently exercise their responsibilities for quality and standards. Their accountability for quality and standards is a key factor in promoting and safeguarding public confidence in Sri Lankan higher education.

The main purpose of the subject review is to evaluate the quality of education in a particular subject or discipline. The process of subject review is conducted as stipulated in the Quality Assurance Handbook, to make judgments using specific evidence, focusing on the quality of the student learning experiences and student achievement, according to the aims and objectives which the Department aspires to achieve. The review attempts to identify good practices, the constraints and the strategies that can be used to overcome the constraints confronted in the learning/teaching process.

The Department of Linguistics and English has submitted its Self Evaluation Report (SER) to the Quality Assurance Council in 2005 on which the review activity was done.

Quality Assurance Council of the UGC appointed the following Members to perform the Subject Review of the Department of Linguistics and English at the University of Jaffna.

- Prof. Sarath Amunugama, University of Kelaniya
- Dr. Rev. Ayagama Vijitha, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka
- Dr. Ajantha Hapuarachchi, University of Colombo

The Subject Review process was performed from 13th to 16th October 2008 according to the finalized schedule attached here as annex 1.

In the review process attention was focused on the following eight aspects as given in 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 counseling.

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

- discussions held with the Vice-Chancellor, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, the Head of Department, the academic staff and the undergraduate and the postgraduate students and the non-academic and the support staff
- observation of Departmental facilities (lecture rooms, laboratories, staff rooms, office space etc.) and other facilities

- observation of teaching sessions
- review of documents available at the department, such as examination papers, marking schemes, minutes of the departmental meetings, publications by members of the academic staff, etc.

Each of the eight aspects was judged as good or 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, FACULTY AND THE DEPARTMENT

The Jaffna Campus of the University of Sri Lanka was established with effect from the 1st of August 1974 by notice published in the Gazette Extra-ordinary no 121/15 of 25th July 1974, issued by the Vice-Chancellor of University of Sri Lanka by virtue of powers vested in him by section 18 read with section 85 of the University of Ceylon Act No. 1 of 1972. Professor K. Kailasapathy, the then Head of the Department of Tamil and Hindu Studies of the Vidyalandara Campus was appointed the first President of the Jaffna Campus.

With the implementation of the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978, and the Gazette notification of 22nd December 1978, and along with the other six Campuses of the University of Sri Lanka, the Jaffna Campus became an independent and autonomous University as the University of Jaffna with effect from 1st January 1979.

The Faculty of Humanities was established under the Jaffna Campus, with four Departments of study namely the Department of Tamil, the Department of Sinhala, the Department of Hindu Civilisation and the Department of History. Subsequently the Faculty was re-named as the Faculty of Arts in 1981. The Faculty has developed into the largest Faculty of the University and it provides courses to a large number of students in a variety of disciplines in the social science and humanities. At present the Faculty has within its fold 17 Departments of Study offering 17 undergraduate degree courses as well as postgraduate courses leading to M.A., M.Phil. and PhD degrees. In addition, several extension courses are being conducted by various Departments of Study and the English Language Teaching Centre (ELTC).

The Department of Linguistics and English was established in 1989 as a result of bifurcation from the Department of Languages and Cultural Studies. Presently it conducts the following four undergraduate courses :

- Linguistics as a subject for the Bachelor of Arts (General) Degree
- English as a subject for the Bachelor of Arts (General) Degree
- Bachelor of Arts (Special) Degree in Linguistics
- Bachelor of Arts (Special) Degree in English

In addition to this, the Department also conducts eight elective course units in Linguistics at levels 2, 3 and 4, and seven elective course units in English also at levels 2, 3 and 4.

At present 13 academic staff members are serving in the Department in various capacities:

- Senior Lecturers Gr. I = 4
- Senior Lecturers Gr. II = 2

- Lecturers (Probationary) = 2
- Senior lecturer of Temporary basis = 1
- Lecturers of Temporary basis = 2
- Visiting Lecturers = 2
- One post of professor remains vacant.

Among the highest qualifications of the permanent staff, there are 4 PhDs, MPhils, two year Masters and First Degrees among whom are in Preparations of MPhils.)

The Department runs a very small library containing about 200 books provided by donors and by academics, for the use by the academics and students of the Department. It provides a meagre supplementary to the service rendered by the Central Library.

3. AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

3.1 Aims

Linguistics embraces other disciplines, rather multi disciplinary in its approach. The graduates of Linguistics and English either with general or special degrees should be able to fit into the socio-economic condition of the nation in general and the community from which they emerge in particular. Language is the tool of thought. So Linguistics aims at giving the different aspects of learning a language, thereby the knowledge and research methodology acquired during three or four years will enable them to contribute immensely in planning, learning and teaching a language effectively.

In Sri Lanka, three languages are spoken namely Sinhala, Tamil and English. Sinhala and Tamil are the official languages. It is very imperative that these two languages together with English should be handed effectively by those who qualify in Linguistics from our University.

3.2 Learning Outcomes

For all students in the Department,

- To have an understanding of Sri Lankan history and culture, an awareness of the need for Social Harmony and the ability to work and interact well with people from different background.
- The enthusiasm and skills towards a continuous learning process and to facilitate towards the achievement of the aims of the Department.
- To be self-motivated, creative and able to meet challenges, and have received career guidance and been taught basic management skills.
- To stimulate the opportunity for students from other Departments within the Faculty to study language structure and literature at a level appropriate to their needs.
- To develop good inter personal and communication skills, both written and verbal, for study and future employment.
- To be able to contribute to, and pursue advanced learning and research relevant to regional and national development.
- To support the teaching staff to widen their knowledge and strengthen the skill which ultimately leading forward their career development.

- To maintain an informal, supportive and responsive atmosphere in order to promote the enthusiastic learning towards a high completion rates.
- To set opportunity for students to .develop the skills and enthusiasm required for life long learning.

On successful completion of our programmes for all linguistics students,

- Enabling them to have a ability to apply the basic concepts involved in this subjects to other areas of study, especially, Syntax, Applied Linguistics, Translation and Stylistics etc.
- Enabling them to face the challenges of globalization and computer era regarding language learning and its applications, and enabling them to fit into the modern society that is emerging as a result of scientific advancement in technology.
- Enabling them to become creative in bringing out their hidden talents in acquiring knowledge in language learning.
- Enabling the students to perform their task in whatever capacity they are employed and also carryout research work or postgraduate studies in any of the branches of Linguistics.

For all English Literature students,

- Exposing the development of English literature along with the necessary social and historical background of the different ages and its impact on the different literary forms.
- Giving an insight into the depths of human consciousness, history, and man's inhumanity to man and ongoing struggle of people and nations through literature from Asia, and Latin America.
- Introducing the emergence of a multi-faceted global cultural consciousness which gives the life to a monolithic and narrowed vision of a limited humanity opening up new pathways to understand the working of a vast human reality with a variety of rich ideas, insights and truths.

To achieve these outcomes the programmes provide learning experience that is intended to enable students to:

- Assess their progress through a systematic appropriate assessment and grading system.
- Have a manageable work load within the university guidelines.
- Benefit from a curriculum with clear details of programme and unit objectives content and requirements and assessment methods.
- Undertake final year research project of their specialized field and enable them to interact with senior academic staff their research experience.
- Improve their knowledge and conceptual capacity built up by progressive development of knowledge.
- Develop their ability for critical and self-directed learning.

Programme details

- At inception in 1974, instruction in the Faculty was done under one year end system. It was continued until 2000, after which a two semester system was introduced. In all cases, students offered two subjects for the first year (GAQ), and then specialized one subject for another three years.
- In 2001, the faculty undertook major restructuring of the degree programme and the faculty of Arts students offer two major subjects and one auxiliary unit, under a course unit semester system. For batches commencing their studies after 2004, this is taught and assessed through a modularized credit valued, grade point system in the course structure.

- Following courses brief the course units offered by the department of Linguistics and English, Curriculum 2001 do not contain core and elective course units, all units are considered as optional. Curriculum 2005 contain fixed core and elective course units where the special degree students are compelled to follow all core courses and selected electives.
- In the first year, the department offers four course units where candidates will follow all four modules that may lead to special and general degree programmes depending on their performances. There are not much changes in the first year course units in 2001 and 2005 curriculum. According to 2001 curriculum, in second and third year of study programme, eight course units are being offered in each year (both semesters) where the general degree students will select two units per semester and the special degree students three units per semester. Second and third year course units are open to general and special degree students belong to various disciplines. All nine course units offered in the fourth year are compulsory for the special degree students with an additional micro-level research project or dissertation.
- 2005 curriculum offers eight core modules and four elective modules in the second and third year. Eight core modules are offered in the fourth year but electives are not offered in this year. All core modules are compulsory for special degree students. The general degree students who have chosen Linguistics or English Literature as a main subject may select core modules from the second and third year curriculum, but core modules are not offered to special and general degree students of other disciplines.

4. FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW TEAM

4.1 Curriculum Design, Content and Review

The Department offers two subjects namely Linguistics and English literature for the Bachelor of Arts General Degree and conducts the Bachelor of Arts Special Degree in the same two subjects. The curricula of both subjects have been approved by the Faculty and the Senate. Having observed the course summery it could be considered that the contents in the study programme seem to cover a wide range of elements in the relevant field of study. Semester based Course Unit System has been adapted by the Department since 2005 as a policy laid down by the Faculty and the Senate. The present study programme implemented from 2001 and then developed further in 2005 gives the students the opportunity of selecting optional course units from other disciplines as well thus enabling them to acquire a broader knowledge and develop skills without limiting to the main discipline. The expected learning outcomes are very justifiable.

The elaborated syllabus provided by the Department gives the following details for each of the course units: Course code, title, objectives and the contents of the course unit. We suggest a further development in line with the usual presentation of a detailed syllabus and structure each course unit by including the following information: Course Code, - Title, - Type, - Aims and Learning Outcomes, - Contents, - Methodology, - Assessment, - Prescribed texts, - Recommended reading.

As mentioned in the SER, teaching seems to be the most aspired profession for the graduates of the Department followed by other professional careers such as translators, administrators, academics, etc. The inclusion of certain aspects of teaching methodology in the English syllabus is appreciated and few common core course units covering translation methodology

would be very useful since there are number of opportunities specially in the state sector for translators of Tamil origin. Since the media of instruction includes Tamil, this could be further enhanced by developing the existing resources in teaching Sinhala and French. It is also very advisable to seek the opportunity of introducing teaching of other foreign languages which are important in international relations.

Though there is room for further development of the Curriculum, the overall achievement under this aspect can be considered as SATISFACTORY.

4.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment methods

In addition to the documents submitted, the review team observed three lecture sessions conducted by one visiting lecturer and two permanent lecturers.

The review team made the following observations :

The lecture timetable seems to be well balanced but the shortage of teachers seems to affect very much proper conducting of the study programmes. There are only senior Lecturers and probationary lecturers supported by two temporary and two visiting lecturers to conduct all four programmes. Having discussed with the academic staff of the Department and specially with the students, the review team strongly recommends that a serious staff development programme (workshops) should be organized covering a wide area in teaching and assessment methodologies and the use of technology in the classroom. Another aspect urgently required is the provision of proper teaching equipment. Though the University as a whole and some of the other Departments seem to be rather well equipped, the Department of Linguistics and English Literature is very much deprived of such equipment. The Department does not have for itself any equipment such as OHPs, Multimedia projectors, (Notebook) computers, etc. Classroom lectures and chalk and board method (including dictating notes) seem to be the only way of imparting knowledge in the Department. Though the Department had undergone sever problem concerning classroom space, with the present infrastructure development in the Faculty, the said problem to a certain extent is being attended to and in the near future, the Department will have its own office more and classroom space will be available for academic activities.

Continuous assessment covering 25% of the total marks and the end of course unit exams covering the remaining of 75% of the total marks are being practiced as assessment methods and the final results including the class determination are based on the Grade Point Average (GPA). The GPA will be calculated as a weighted average on the grade points obtained for the different courses and the number of course credit hours.

However, the review team was of the opinion that the 25% and 75% proportion seemed to be very stringently applied to all course units whereas the Department should have the choice to vary this in accordance with applied methodology and expected learning outcome of each of the course units in order to practice a correct evaluation in the learning progress of the student. Since all course units have credit values ranging from 2 to 4 (except the Dissertation which has 6 credits) the review team is of the opinion that semester end written examination which covers at present only 75% of the total marks, the three hour duration of each of the written examination should be reduced to two hour duration thus falling in line with generally accepted practice in the national university system and also alleviating the final year examination burden on students which is one of the objectives of the course units system.

The review committee also recommends that the range of marks to compute Grade Point Values should be amended in such a way so that the same value system accepted by the Sri Lanka university system is implemented in the Department (of course it should be implemented at Faculty level).

The overall achievement in this aspect can be considered as SATISFACTORY.

4.3 Quality of students including Student Progress and Achievements

Students following the Degree programmes in the Department are those who have been allocated by the UGC following the national policy in university admission. In addition to these groups there are also adult students (especially Teachers in English having successfully completed the first year in Arts programme externally) pursuing the same Degree programmes internally along with the other students? However, the team noticed that most of the students in the Linguistics are from the special intake given admission on subject basis having obtained lower z-score marks (this statement is very objective and it does not at all put in doubt their intellectual capabilities).

As for students pursuing English Literature, the selection is done based on their results for English at GCE O'Level and performance at the aptitude test for selection conducted by the Department.

During the academic years from 2000 to 2004 in Linguistics, 9 students have secured second class upper division, 20 students second class lower division and 19 students ordinary passes and no student in the failure category thus ensuring 100% passes. The first batch of students (only three students) in English Literature obtained their degree in 2004 and there had been one Second Class upper division, one Second Class lower division and one Ordinary pass. In this subject also there had been no failures.

However, the students seemed to be frustrated mainly on three aspects. First is the lack of text and other reference books in the Department of Main Library. They depend entirely on the information imparted by the lecturer. They do not seem to be very familiar with the use of internet. The excuse they give is that the Department or the Faculty is not equipped with sufficient internet facilities and the general computer centre is located far from the Faculty. Then, they seem to be not quite satisfied with the teaching methods of the lecturers. They want more use of technology in classrooms and more active teaching from the lecturers. They expressed their desire that the teachers should be given the opportunity to learn on new teaching methodologies.

During the observation of teaching process, the review team noted that the participation of students in the learning process was very positive. They seemed to be very attentive and responsive to the lecturer.

The achievement in this aspect can be judged as GOOD.

4.4 The Extent and Use of Student Feedback

During the review exercise, the team found that there were two types of student feedback being practiced in the Department. One is by way of questionnaire given to the students at the

end of each course unit which is done in a formal way, and the other, more informal, by enabling students to meet any member of the academic staff to discuss on matters pertaining to teaching and learning process.

The questionnaire consists of several structured and multiple answer questions covering all aspects of delivery of lectures and a section requiring liberal and descriptive response from the students. According to the information given by the Department, the contents of these questionnaires are kept in files in the Department and discussed at staff meetings of the Department. The review team is of the opinion that the contents of the questionnaires should be kept by the relevant teacher and should be used by his/her personally to enhance his./her delivery techniques. To a certain extent it could be discussed in a very informal way with the peer reviewer as mentioned under 5.6. of this section.

The informal feedback is taken during personal discussions the students have with the academic teachers. Even at the discussion with the students they revealed that the teachers are available when they want to seek advice or information regarding their academic and personal problems. It was also revealed that the student feedback was also considered at the most recent revision of the curriculum.

The achievement in this aspect of the Department can be considered as GOOD.

4.5 Postgraduate Studies

All post graduate courses in the University are conducted by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and the senior staff members of the department are involved in such activities as supervisors or examiners. At present there are two students pursuing the M.Phil research degree under the supervision of the Department. Some academic members serve as resource persons in the postgraduate courses conducted by other universities.

The academic staff of the Department contributes to research publications done by the Department but there is no evidence of them being refereed or not. There are few national and international publications by the senior staff members.

The review team noted that the overall research publications are not many perhaps due to the overload of work assigned to the staff since the permanent cadre is very much insufficient to cope with all the existing course works.

The achievement in this aspect can be judged as SATISFACTORY.

4.6 Peer Observation

During the discussion the review team had with the academic staff, it was revealed that there is informal interaction between the senior staff and the junior staff in preparation of teaching material and course works. However, there is no regular and effective peer observation done in classroom activities. It was understood at the discussion that a formal systematic peer observation mechanism should be a policy of the Faculty, until such time this could be exercised within the Faculty in an informal manner. Harmonious atmosphere among all the academic members of the Department could be an asset in this regard. Each member may invite one of his/her colleagues of his/her choice to observe teaching in the classroom and at the end have a friendly discussion based on the comments of the observer. This would

tremendously help the observee as well as the observer to enhance their own method of teaching.

It is strongly recommended that a regular systematic mechanism of peer observation in classroom activities be adapted by the department or the Faculty.

The judgment in this aspect is UNSATISFACTORY.

4.7 Skills Development

The team could see the attempt of the Department to develop skills in students through their study programme itself. In addition to the programme of academic studies of the Department, inclusion of particular core modules at different levels is a very positive step towards developing skills of students. Following are such course units proposed by the Department/Faculty :

- English language
- Social harmony and communication skills
- Management and entrepreneurial skills
- Computer literacy
- Basic science
- Career guidance

These modules are assessed and allocated credits which are computed for the final marks and students are also required to pass in all such modules in order to qualify for the Degree.

Students pursuing the special degree courses are receive advice and guidance in conducting their research works at degree level and also on developing their research and writing skills by the senior academics.

In addition, the student take part in other extra curricular activities such as sports and organizing exhibitions enabling them not only to expose themselves but also to gain experience in organising events, team work, personality, etc.

Achievement in this aspect can be considered as SATISFACTORY.

4.8 Academic Guidance and Counseling

The review team learnt that there was an attempts to establish and provide formal student guidance and counselling for the benefit of students. Appointment of student counsellors, course advisors are being done for this purpose at Department, Faculty and University levels. An orientation programme is also being organized during the first two weeks after the intake of new entrants.

In the discussion the members of the team had with students, we are of the view that though some teachers all over the university are available to discuss certain matters with students, this service of guidance and counselling seems much to be desired and more prominence should be given to it.

Achievement in this aspect can be judged as SATISFACTORY.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the observations made during the study visit to the Department of Geography at the Eastern University of Sri Lanka by the review team, the eight aspects were judged as follows:

Aspect	Judgement
Curriculum Design, Content and Review	Satisfactory
Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods	Satisfactory
Quality of Students including Student Progress and Achievements	Good
Extent and Use of Student Feedback, Qualitative and Quantitative	Good
Postgraduate Studies	Satisfactory
Peer Observation	Unsatisfactory
Skills Development	Satisfactory
Academic Guidance and Counseling	Satisfactory

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

In spite of certain number of areas that require improvement, the committee was of the opinion that with the restricted resources available to the Department of Linguistics and English, it has gained two good judgements and five satisfactory judgements. One of the major positive points on which the committee unanimously agreed upon has been the commitment and the dedication of the academic staff in striving to provide the best delivery for their students. Also the students seem to be very much motivated in pursuing their higher studies and the participation in academic activities is at a very high degree.

As for the infra structure and other facilities, the acute problem of space that the Department has been facing for a long time is being addressed to with the on going infra structure development project pertaining to the Faculty of Arts.

There is an urgent need to support the Department by providing necessary teaching equipment such as computers with internet facility, multimedia projectors, etc. Which can help to improve teaching methodologies in the class room. The Department has been trying to get a language laboratory for several years but as of now it is deprived of this facility which is essential for a Department of languages.

The academic staff should be supported by conducting workshops on staff development specially in teaching methodologies, evaluation and course preparation, particularly on course unit system.

The quality assurance review was done at a time when the University of Jaffna was experiencing hardships due to the prevailing situation in the region specially the restrictions in civil movements and constrains in travelling out of the region. As such it was evident to the committee that most of the desired improvements are lagging behind due to this situation. As such, the external agencies like the UGC and the QAA Commission should take special

efforts to assist the University of Jaffna in general and such Departments who need assistance in particular. It is also felt that an internal policy on equity in distribution of facilities among the Departments would be beneficial to develop the quality of teaching and learning in the Department of Linguistics and English in the University of Jaffna.

In conclusion, the members of the review committee wish to express their gratitude to the Vice-Chancellor, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Head and members of the academic staff of the Department of Linguistics and English, Registrar and the non-academic staff of the Department for their cooperation extended to them during their stay in the Jaffna University.