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SUBJECT REVIEW REPORT

DEPARTMENT OF CHRISTIAN AND
ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION



**FACULTY OF ARTS
UNIVERSITY OF JAFFNA**

8nd to 10th June 2009

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used to evaluate the quality of education within a specific subject or discipline of both undergraduate and postgraduate programs focusing on student learning experience and student achievement. However the responsibility for quality and standards lies within the University itself, since it alone has the powers to control and change existing practices. This review on the study program of the Dept. of Christian and Islamic Civilizations of the University of Jaffna was conducted according to the guidelines given in the Quality Assurance Handbook for Sri Lankan Universities, published by the CVCD and University Grants Commission in July 2002, based on the information given in the Self Evaluation Report (SER) submitted by the Department and observations made by the review team during the site visit.

The Self Evaluation Report (SER) submitted by the Dept. consisted of the following sections:

- Objectives, Learning Outcome and Details of Program
- Design of the Curriculum, Content and Review
- Students, Staff and Facilities
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods
- Admissions, Quality of Students, Student Progress, Completion and Prospects of the Graduates
- Student Feedback
- Postgraduate Research and Study Program
- Peer Observation
- Skills Development
- Academic Guidance and Counseling

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

The University of Jaffna was established in 1974 as the 6th Campus of the University system of Sri Lanka, with the mission of òDiscernment of Knowledgeø During the past 35 years it has developed into a University consisting of eight faculties and six academic units. The Faculty of Arts of the University was established in 1974.

The teaching of the subject of Christian Civilization was started as a unit under the Dean of the Faculty of Arts in 1979. Mr. S. Jebanesan (now Rt. Rev. Dr. S. Jebanesan) prepared the syllabus and he was appointed as a visiting lecturer. When the department of Language and Cultural Studies was started in 1981, this unit along with Arabic and Islamic Civilizations became part of it. In 1989 the department of Language and Cultural Studies was divided into the department of Linguistics and English and the Department of Christian and Islamic Civilizations. Then the students had the opportunity to offer Christian Civilization for General and Special Degree of Bachelor of Arts.

Rev. Dr. A. J.V. Chandrakanthan was the first head of this Department. Owing to the ethnic war and displacement, the Department had to look into the needs of Islamic Civilization course too though all the students of Islamic Civilization continued to follow their lectures at the University of Peradeniya.

ent from 17th to 20th May 2009. The Agenda of the 3-day
 addition to the SER the following sources provided
 the evaluation.

- Meetings held with the Acting Vice Chancellor, Dean, Head of the Dept., members of the academic staff, non-academic staff, librarian, computer facility head and staff and undergraduate students.
- Presentation made by the Head of the Department
- Observation of the facilities of the Department, the Faculty and the University (library, computer facility, lecture rooms etc.)
- Documents made available by the Department

The review team focused on the following eight aspects of education at the subject level according to the guidelines 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. Post-graduate studies
6. Peer Observation
7. Skills development
8. Academic Guidance and counseling

Each of the eight aspects was judged as good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory, in the light of the strengths, good practices and weaknesses in each. Taking into account the judgment given to each of the eight aspects, an overall judgment was given as *“confidence”*, *“limited confidence”*, *“no confidence”*.

3. AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The SER clearly spells out the objectives of the degree program of the Dept. as follows:

1. To provide students with knowledge on how Greco-Roman and Semetic civilizations exerted influence on Judaism and Christianity
2. To enable students to understand the contents and messages of Bible and to be guided by the Word of God in their life
3. To enable them to understand the nature, mission and structure of the church
4. To enable students to understand how Christian literature and art served in the past as an effective medium for the spread and growth of Christian values.
5. To enable them to gain a comprehensive and deeper understanding of the teaching of the Church regarding several responsibilities and act accordingly.
6. To enable them to understand the reality of religio-cultural pluralism in South Asia and the role of religions in establishing peace in the region through inter-religious dialogue.
7. To enable them to understand and respect the teachings of other religions and learn from the spiritual experiences of eminent personalities of other faiths
8. To get the students to understand the richness of the theologies of various Christian denominations and to encourage them to work to promote ecumenical relations.

It was the objective of this review to evaluate the quality of the study program of the Dept. in respect of the aims/objectives stated above.

The structure of the general and special degree courses is in conformity with the requirements of the Sri Lankan University system as spelt out by the UGC, with general degree students required to obtain 90 credits in three years and special degree students an additional 30 in the fourth year. The curriculum designed by the Department has been approved by the Faculty Board as required. In addition the Dept has sought and obtained the observations of the Dept. of Religious Studies of the University of Toronto, Canada. The medium of instruction is Tamil and all the course material is also in the same language.

In relation to curriculum design, content and review the judgment of the team is SATISFACTORY

4.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment methods

They are in keeping with the requirements of the general system of SL Universities.

In relation to Teaching, Learning & Assessment Methods the judgment of the team is GOOD

4.3 Quality of Students including Student Progress and Achievements

As in the case of other Universities in the country, the quality of students admitted to the Department depends on the UGC and its admission policies. In general, students from Jaffna, Killinochchi, Mannar and Mullaitivu districts apply for placements in the University of Jaffna. The University has no authority over the selection of students. The cut-off marks for university entrance (for Arts) from those districts can be used as some measure of the quality of student intake to the Faculty of Arts of the University of Jaffna.

Minimum Z-scores in Arts Stream by Selected Districts: 2005-2008					
	Jaffna	Killinochchi	Mannar	Mulative	Galle
2005	1.3695	1.2767	1.1921	1.3071	1.3695
2006	1.3334	1.2329	1.2749	1.3139	1.3334
2007	1.2727	1.2712	1.1995	1.1494	1.2727
2008	1.2890	0.8010	1.2774	0.8513	1.2890
Source: UGC Website					

The University of Jaffna is mainly catering for the first four districts in Table 2. Therefore, the Z-scores reported in the first four columns indicate the average quality of intakes to the Faculty of Arts at University of Jaffna. The last column reports the Z-scores for Galle district. This is for comparison. Comparison shows that the students coming from Jaffna district are at least as good as those coming from Galle district. Quality at entry is slightly lower for the other three districts. However, except for year 2008 for all other years they are above the average. These statistics clearly indicate that the quality at entry of the students in University of Jaffna is comparable with other districts.

Breakdown of student enrolment 2002-2008:



ent of Christian and Islamic Civilization 2002 to

Year 2002/2003							
1st year		2nd year		3rd year		4th year	
1 st semester	2 nd semester	1 st semester	2 nd semester	1 st semester	2 nd semester	1 st semester	2 nd semester
52	52	G- 10	17	G-13	11	2	2
		S- 21	21	S-10	10		
Year 2003/2004							
1st year		2nd year		3rd year		4th year	
1 st semester	2 nd semester	1 st semester	2 nd semester	1 st semester	2 nd semester	1 st semester	2 nd semester
7	7	G- 26	20	G-18	20	10	10
		S- 25	25	S-21	21		
Year 2004/2005							
1st year		2nd year		3rd year		4th year	
1 st semester	2 nd semester	1 st semester	2 nd semester	1 st semester	2 nd semester	1 st semester	2 nd semester
18	18	G- 02	1	G-15	15	21	21
		S- 0	0	S-25	25		
Year 2005/2006							
1st year		2nd year		3rd year		4th year	
1 st semester	2 nd semester	1 st semester	2 nd semester	1 st semester	2 nd semester	1 st semester	2 nd semester
5	5	G- 06	6	G-01	1	25	25
		S- 03	3	S- 0	0		
Year 2006/2007							
1st year		2nd year		3rd year		4th year	
1 st semester	2 nd semester	1 st semester	2 nd semester	1 st semester	2 nd semester	1 st semester	2 nd semester
16	16	G- 03	G- 03	G- 06	G- 06	0	0
		S- 01	S- 01	S-03	S-03		
Year 2007/2008							
1st year		2nd year		3rd year		4th year	
1 st semester	2 nd semester	1 st semester	2 nd semester	1 st semester	2 nd semester	1 st semester	2 nd semester
26	26	G- 08		G- 01		3	
		S- 06		S-03			

G- S-
General Special

In respect of Quality of Students, Student Progress and Achievements, the judgment of the team is SATISFACTORY

Feedback

Students in this Department are provided with opportunities to express their views through their representatives in the Faculty Board and by meeting the academic Staff members at times convenient to both parties. They can meet easily as the staff rooms and lecture rooms are located close to each other on the same floor. Although a questionnaire is used to collect feedback from students, it is needed to formalize by introducing it through the Assistant Registrar of the Faculty.

However the evaluation mechanism and discussion of the evaluation are taking place to some extent and the cordial environment maintained by the academic staff members helps students to express their views freely.

In relation to the extent and use of student feedback, the judgment of the team is SATISFACTORY

4.5. Postgraduate Studies

Currently the Department Christian and Islamic Civilizations of the University of Jaffna offer two postgraduate programmes in M Phil and PhD. These are Research degree programmes. The fields of research and the topic are approved in consultation with the Board of Studies of the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

In relation to the extent and use of post-graduate studies, the judgment of the team is GOOD

4.6. Peer Observations

Peer review of teaching at the Departmental level has been rather informal, with no definite mechanism to officially evaluate the quality of teaching of the lecturers, for example, by colleagues visiting the lecture room to observe the teaching. Peer review, at present, is limited to Department meetings, question paper moderation and second marking of answer scripts. Discussions about curriculum, course outlines etc. are not common and if they exist, they are informal because such activities are guided by the Faculty Board.

In relation to peer observation the judgment of the team is SATISFACTORY

4.7. Skills Development

Undergraduates are required to improve three types of skills during their University career: subject related skills, soft skills and generic skills. Subject-related skills are usually embedded in the curriculum design and in learning, teaching and assessment methods. Opportunities to develop other skills and abilities are provided through various 'extra-curricular' activities. Opportunities to develop physical skills are provided through indoor and outdoor games and athletics.

at presentation equipment should be available to both
Department level

- Provide more opportunities to develop life-skills

With regard to skills development the judgment of the team is UNSATISFACTORY

4.8. Academic Guidance and Counseling

Every Staff member has to follow the staff development program in order to obtain the status of permanent cadre, and that program includes a segment on counseling and guidance. Academic guidance with regard to tutorial writing and other connected matters are given on an on-going basis by the respective lecturers. At the beginning of the year a two-week orientation program is given to the students, covering all matters pertaining to both studies and personal welfare. A Guidance and Counseling Unit is operational at the University level. In the Department, the Staff, on account of its close relationship with the students is sensitive to their needs.

With regard to academic guidance and counseling the judgment of the team is GOOD

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

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

5. CONCLUSIONS

The strengths/Good practices and weaknesses identified by the Review Team in each of the eight aspects of evaluation of this review as follows.

1. Curriculum Design, Content and Review

Strengths

1. Contents of the Courses cover the material in relation to objectives and expected outcomes
2. Checking curriculum design with the University of Toronto

with introduction of the GPA system and inclusion of

Weaknesses

The socio-political and economic circumstances of the North have severely constrained the development and maintenance of the learning environment required for education at the University level. As the SER itself states at the end, the unsettled situation and its consequences remain a major drawback in achieving intended outcomes. Hence, what is being done and achieved is very laudable. Still a couple of remediable shortcomings could be pointed out:

1. Establish, if not already done, and further develop contact with the Christian Culture/Civilization Depts. of the Universities of Batticaloa and Kelaniya, at least through electronic communication.
2. Raise the level of English literacy and comprehension, since very little material on some of the subjects is available in Tamil e.g. foundations of Christian Civilization, European Christian Art, Modern Theologians, Modern Trends in Christianity. This would be vital for 4th year students.
3. Take steps to build up a Department library (English and Tamil).
4. Since there could be a problem with regard to employment with a degree from this Dept., students could be encouraged and given, what may be called career guidance, to take electives from outside the Department?

2. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods

Strengths

1. The lecturers are well qualified; the three senior ones with doctorates and the junior one enrolling for the M.Phil
2. Well-prepared lecture notes are distributed among the students; the presentations though limited mainly, to talk and chalk, are done effectively.
3. Continuous assessment of student performance through the requirement of submitting assignments/papers is good
4. The cordial atmosphere prevailing between the students and staff is remarkable
5. The invitation of guest speakers to address the students on various current issues.

Weaknesses

1. Use of visual aids/multi-media is very inadequate; could not the Department seek resources on its own to remedy the situation
2. Library facilities need urgent improvement
3. Distribution of marks between the assignment and written examination seems imbalanced; a student could pass the written exam though failing in the assignment
4. Release of results should be speeded up; to be released before the first half of the following semester
5. Students could be required to write one or some assignments in English in order to encourage English language development.
6. Though the Department is entitled to four permanent lecturers it has only three; it could explore the possibility of getting another one to reduce the work load (teaching) and allow more time for research and publications.

Student Progress and Achievement

1. Quality of students is good, as good as in the privileged district of Galle
2. All students seem to be keen to learn; they are motivated
3. There is an almost 100% pass rate
4. For the academic years 2003 and 2005 students from the Department received the best students' prize for the whole Faculty.
5. The design of the curriculum goes beyond the academic to the inculcation of vision and values for life.
6. Good student feedback arrangements involving active students-lecturers-interaction.

Weaknesses

1. Inadequate opportunities for students to put into practice what they learn through extra-curricular (even extra-University) programmes & projects
2. A Departmental publication (review/magazine) could provide even a limited outlet to students to express their abilities and creativity.

4. Extent and Use of Student Feedback

Strengths

1. Having a formally prepared questionnaire to get the quantitative feedback from the undergraduates about the performance of the lecturers
2. Maintaining a cordial relationship between undergraduates and the lecturers in the specialized/major programmes
3. Students' compliance with the requirements stipulated (even at ad hoc basis) rather than continuously protesting

Weaknesses

1. Non-existence of a formal forum in the Department to discuss feedback information obtained from the students by the lecturers. Therefore the feedback sheets should be evaluated formally and the outcome discussed with the respective lecturer, in particular, and with all others, in general (without harassing the lecturer concerned)

5. Postgraduate Studies

Strengths

1. The University of Jaffna has a separate faculty to deal with postgraduate education programmes. Given that the University of Jaffna does not have sufficient human and physical resources, faculty of postgraduate studies is a good strategy to increase the efficiency of handling postgraduate education programmes.
2. All the senior staff is involved in research and consultative activities. Some of them are members of national and international academic/professional organizations. This guarantees the practical exposure to the students at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.
3. Already 8 students have completed the M Phil through this Department. 3 of them have also have completed the PhD Program. Thus the Postgraduate Program is fairly well established.

is coordinating all postgraduate activities. Although this arrangement, it is observed that postgraduate programmes do not generate any direct benefits to undergraduate education. Apart from lecture and coordination fees payable to lecturers and coordinators concerned, all the balance of generated funds go to the university general fund. Departments or the Faculty of Arts do not have any benefit from postgraduate programmes.

2. There is a need to fill the vacancy that still exists for a permanent staff member in the Department of Christian and Islamic Civilization. That is required in order to have sufficient supervisors for the postgraduate students.

6. Peer Observation

Strengths

1. Marking schemes are prepared for second examiners
2. Academic and administration matters are discussed at Department meetings. At least two Department meetings are held per semester

Weaknesses

1. No practice of maintaining records/minutes of Department meetings
2. No proper peer observation mechanism

7. Skills Development

Strengths

1. Writing, analytical and critical thinking skills are developed through assignments and student presentations
2. Access to the internet and availability of the computer centre promotes electronic media skills
3. Organizational and socialization abilities are developed through sports and other recreational facilities.

Weaknesses

1. Lack of IT facilities at the Department level
2. Use of IT seems to be at a minimum level

8. Academic Guidance and Counseling

Strengths

1. The dedicated team of trained student counselors of the University
2. Besides, there is a formal team to look after student problems
3. Counselors have got adequate training through seminars/workshops etc.
4. Four designated academic counselors of the University are available to the students for academic related problems
5. A faculty handbook with all relevant information, in English and Tamil, is given to all students on entrance to the University
6. The orientation programme at the beginning helps freshers to familiarize themselves with the system

counseling set-up can give.

the University on account of the prevailing uncertain
 need more help than what the present Guidance and

This report summarizes observations made by three members of the QAA evaluation team in three days visit to the Department of Christian and Islamic Civilizations of the University of Jaffna. During this period the evaluation team gathered both quantitative and qualitative information required for the purpose. The main sources of information were: the SER, presentation by Head of Department, meetings with students, with Staff with the Administration, both academic and non-academic, and perusal of documents made available to the team.

The general opinion of the team was that despite many obstacles facing the Department it is doing a good job of work. Most of the weaknesses are beyond the control of the Dept, and even of the University. The evaluation team expects that most of these obstacles will be overcome in a future of peace and development.

However, it will be the responsibility of the Department to take careful note of the weaknesses indicated under each section and see which of them could be eliminated with the resources available, without delay.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the facts given above, the review team would like to recommends the following major modifications to improve the quality of academic programme offered by the Department:

1. Overall Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO) of the degree program must be very clear and should be informed the students. The course outlines should be improved by including a course description, learning outcomes for each course, comprehensive description of evaluation methods, breakdown of the total time among individual topics, reading list under each topic, and relationship of learning outcome of each course with the overall learning outcome of the degree programme.
2. It is really important to have a well designed program to enhance skills of the students from 1st to final year. Currently, they are not exposed to IT related subjects satisfactorily and use of audio-visual and power-point presentations in the learning process is at the minimum level. The Department may organize an Annual Research Symposium, presentations and debates etc. for students and these can be incorporated as a part of continuous assessment. A good practice would be allow students to carry out a more comprehensive research project under the supervision of senior lecturers in the 4th year 1st semester and 4th year 2nd semester is allocated for the internship in a church or related institution. Also, the structure the degree programme should be in a way to cultivate knowledge, skills and competencies gradually identifying the sequence of subjects to be offered at each level of the degree programme.
3. It is advisable to have a cordial line with other stakeholders in the next curricula revision. These other stakeholders may include, amongst the others, alumni of the Department,

representatives, similar departments in other universities would be establishing an Alumni Association for the to develop market oriented degree programs for the department. Promote subject associations allowing students to involve in more activities such as Journal publication, organizing guest lectures, workshops etc.

4. Lack of physical resources can easily be addressed within the university. According to the information provided by the staff of the Department, annual income generated from postgraduate programs is considerable. However, this income cannot be used for department development under the existing regulations imposed by the university. This can be altered by allocating certain percentage for Faculty or Department Development Fund. Then departments (faculty) can use that allocation for physical resource development such as computers, upgrading lecture rooms, multi media facilities etc.
5. Student feedback collected formally should be evaluated and the outcome should be discussed with the relevant staff members. As much as possible, common mistakes should be discussed at the common meeting organized by the Head of the Department very cordially and collective effort should be taken to improve the teaching process.
6. It is important to further improve the peer evaluation process. This can be done by sharing the teaching in same course unit, inviting colleagues to observe teaching and regular discussions on teaching are the standard practices in Sri Lankan universities in this context.
7. Currently all the courses are taught only in Tamil. English is limited only for course outlines and textbooks and certain clarifications. Discussions with students revealed that students hardly read English textbooks and use English in writing for examinations. This limits the ability of students to go beyond the Jaffna peninsula for jobs and possible placements in churches outside Jaffna. Therefore, the English speaking environment should be improved.
8. Practices in student counseling is good. Apart from conventional student counseling, the University of Jaffna has also introduced academic counseling to assist student in academic related difficulties such as selection of subjects and subject related difficulties. This has to be further strengthened. Under the present conditions, evaluation team learnt that there is large number of students with symptoms of war and displacement related stress conditions. In order to accommodate these problems there is a need to increase the number as well as the skills, quality and dedication of student counselors.