

# **SUBJECT REVIEW REPORT**

**DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS**



***FACULTY OF HUMANITIES  
UNIVERSITY OF KELANIYA***

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## 1. SUBJECT REVIEW PROCESS

The primary objective of the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council, established in 2005 under the University Grants Commission/ Ministry of Education with financial support from the IRQUE (Improvement of Relevance and Quality of Undergraduate Education) project, is to ensure quality, continuous development and efficient performance of Sri Lankan higher education institutions, and to gain the confidence of the community in their graduates in accordance with internationally recognized evaluation mechanisms. University accountability for quality and standards is a key factor in promoting and safeguarding public confidence in Sri Lankan higher education. There are four main components of the quality assurance programme:

- Institutional Review
- Subject Review
- Subject Benchmarking and
- Credit and Qualification Framework

Being a key component in the national quality assurance system for Sri Lanka, the Subject Review evaluates the quality of education within a department of study, in contrast to the Institutional Review which focuses on the powers and responsibilities which universities hold for quality and standards. Subject review is carried out in relation to the subject aims and objectives set by each program of study pertaining to both undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes.

The subject review examines the wide range of influences that shape the learning experiences and achievements of students. It covers the full breadth of teaching and learning activities, including direct observation of classroom, tutorial classes, laboratory situations, the curriculum, staff and staff development, the application of resources (library, IT, equipment) and student support and guidance. This range of activities is captured within a core set of eight aspects of provision.

The aspects of provision are:

- Curriculum design, content and review
- Teaching, learning and assessment methods
- Quality of students
- The extent and use of student feedback
- Postgraduate studies
- Peer observation
- Skills development and
- Academic guidance and counseling

The review method has two main processes, internal and external evaluations. Internal evaluation is the self- assessment in the subject, based on the program's own aims and objectives, and set out in the structure provided by the core set of aspects of provision.

The external evaluation comprises a three-day review visit carried out by a team of reviewers. The purpose of the review visit is to review, consider and test the evidence provided by the study

program in the light of the aims and intended student learning outcomes. Reviewers do not use any externally set standards against which the programmes are judged. There are three options open to the review team in making the overall judgement concerning the quality of provision in the department of study concerned:

- Confidence
- Limited Confidence
- No Confidence

In all cases, the overall judgement will be supported by the evidence contained in the report.

In addition to the overall judgement, review teams will provide a separate judgement of each subject review aspect. The review team will summarize its findings on each aspect, emphasizing strengths, good practices and weaknesses. At the end of each aspect, they will use one of three judgements:

- Good
- Satisfactory
- Unsatisfactory

In judgements of ‘good’ or ‘satisfactory’, the review team will wish to highlight strengths and good practice relating to the aspect concerned; in the ‘unsatisfactory’ category there are likely to be fewer examples of strengths or good practice.

The key elements of the process followed by the Review Team in conducting this subject review and shared with the two departments included an emphasis on the voluntary nature of this exercise as well as the fact that it is undertaken by peers. While the assessment is broadly based on the self-evaluation of the respective academic departments, the success of the review depends on the findings and process being validated and owned by the members of these departments. Hence, a detailed debriefing and feedback session was held at the end of the two-and-a-half day review, where doubts were clarified and the preliminary findings were shared and informally validated.

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

The University of Kelaniya originated as the Vidyalkara University of Ceylon which was established as an independent university in 1959, by granting university status to a traditional seat of learning, namely the Vidyalkara Pirivena founded in 1875 as a centre of learning for Buddhist monks. It was one of the two great national centres of traditional higher learning, heralding the first phase of the national movement and national resurgence. The status of the Vidyalkara University was changed to that of a campus in 1972 under the University of Ceylon Act, No. 1 of 1972 which created a single national university. With the implementation of the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978, the Vidyalkara Campus became an autonomous university under the name and style, University of Kelaniya.

Today, the University of Kelaniya is one of the major national universities. It is located just outside the municipal limits of Colombo, in the ancient and historic city of Kelaniya, on the north bank of the Kelani River.

The University consists of six faculties and three institutions. The six faculties are the following:

- Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies
- Faculty of Humanities
- Faculty of Medicine
- Faculty of Science
- Faculty of Social Sciences and
- Faculty of Graduate Studies

Two postgraduate institutes, namely, the Postgraduate Institute of Archaeology, the Postgraduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies, and an Institute dealing with indigenous medicine, i.e. the Gampaha Wickremarachchi Ayurveda Institute, are affiliated to the University of Kelaniya.

The University of Kelaniya has pioneered a number of new developments in higher education in the country. It was one of the first universities to begin teaching science in Sinhala, and also first to restructure the traditional Arts faculty into three separate faculties of Humanities, Social Sciences and Commerce and Management. It also has several unique Departments not generally found in the Sri Lankan university system. These include the departments of Industrial Management and Microbiology in the Faculty of Science; Departments of Linguistics, Fine Arts, Modern Languages and Hindi in the Faculty of Humanities; Mass Communication and Library and Information Sciences in the Faculty of Social Sciences.

The undergraduate enrolment in the different subject streams in 2005 is given below:

Subject Stream	Number of Students
Arts	3,449
Management Studies & Commerce	2,129
Science	1,195
Medical Sciences	971
IT	181
Total	7,925

Source: [www.ugc.ac.lk](http://www.ugc.ac.lk)

### **The Department of Linguistics:<sup>1</sup>**

Linguistics as an independent field of study was recognised by the university in 1972 after the establishment of the Department of Linguistics under the Faculty of Humanities. During the past thirty four years Department of Linguistics has been expanding its programs which include B.A. Courses in Linguistics, Translation Methods as well as the post graduate degrees M.A., M.Phil. and Ph.D. in Linguistics. There are three elective courses in Tamil as a second language for the

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<sup>1</sup> This section is mainly derived from the Self Evaluation Report (SER) of The Department of Linguistics, with page numbers provided within square brackets. In addition, data has been taken from staff presentations and interviews, as well as information specially compiled by the Department of Linguistics on the request of the Review Team.

1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> level of the degree programme. Also, a course in Tamil as a second language has been introduced for the students who have a basic knowledge of Tamil. There is also a Tamil Certificate Course of two years duration. Sinhala as a Foreign Language is taught on requests made by foreign academic institutions [SER, p.2].

#### Department of Linguistics (DL) Staff & Students

- DL teaching staff fall into the following categories:
  - Permanent 09
  - Visiting 11 (including 03 professors)
  - Temporary 06
  - Demonstrators 01 (Sign Language)
- DL Office Staff:
  - Clerk 01
  - Office Aide 01
  - Technician 01

#### DL Students

- Over 1700 students follow DL courses, approximately 80% of them are in the Tamil language programme. Registered student numbers for 2004/05 Academic Year:

Subject	Course	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Linguistics	B A Special	02	04	02
Linguistics	B A General	52	35	45
Translation Methods	B A General	57	42	34
Tamil	B A Special	1266	90	--
Tamil	B A General	74	16	--
ALL (1719)		1451	187	81

According to the Self-Evaluation, “most students are either Buddhist priests or students from leading schools in the country. More than 50% [of the] students are female. Students who applied for the certificate course in Tamil are from the Faculties of Science, Commerce and Management, Social Science and Humanities.” [ibid. p.4]

In terms of undergraduate programmes, the Department of Linguistics (DL) programmes can be classified into 04 categories, as follows:

Programme	Duration	Student Numbers
BA General Degree with Linguistics as a subject	3 years	135
BA Special Degree in Linguistics	4 years	08
BA General Degree with Translation as a subject	3 years	133
BA General Degree courses in Tamil Language	3 years	90

During the last five years, more than 75% of students have graduated with Second Class Upper Division passes at the final degree, which indicates a very high standard of performance.

In addition, the DL offers three postgraduate programmes as follows:

MA in Linguistics	1 year	150
M Phil in Linguistics	2 years	08
PhD in Linguistics	3 years	02

The Tamil Certificate course is of particular interest since it is gaining in popularity and has students from other faculties participating. Interviewing students of this course we were able to see first hand that the course is successful both in terms of language competence and attitude change. The following statistical table demonstrates the extent of the popularity and student diversity of this course, which is entirely elective, showing that increasing numbers of first year students are opting to take this course.

<b>Faculty</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Year Students</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Year Students</b>	<b>Total</b>
Humanities & Social Sciences	786	98	884
Commerce & Management	325	01	326
Science	54	02	56
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1165</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>1266</b>

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

The Self-Evaluation Report states that the vision of the Department of Linguistics is “to produce good citizens who have good knowledge in language and who possess abilities in analytical and practical use in language” [ibid]. While this is an ambitious and overarching vision, it nonetheless demonstrates the best traditions of an enlightened university education which goes beyond mere academics to broader ethical dimension.

The aims of the department include the provision of (a) general and special degree programmes in Linguistics and Translation Methods, (b) programmes and courses in Tamil as a second language, (c) general language competence and social awareness programmes, and (d) programmes of specific cognitive and neuro-psycholinguistic content. In addition, the aims include the enhancement of (e) employability, (f) research capability and (g) academic writing skills, while creating (h) a conducive learning environment through fostering excellent teacher-student relationships.

These aims are very broad and over-arching as befits a programme of this nature. It is important, therefore, to assess the extent to which these aims are reflected in the learning outcomes of the specific courses offered by the DL. The following categories and types of courses are offered:

Undergraduate Programme:		Level 1	Level 2	Level
3	Level 4			
	1. Required or Mandatory Core Courses (for Credit)			
	GENERAL DEGREE			
	Linguistics	02	04	04
	--			
	Translation Methods	03	04	04
	--			
	SPECIAL DEGREE			
	Linguistics	--	06	08
	06			
	2. Elective Courses (for credit) <sup>2</sup>			
	GENERAL DEGREE			
	Linguistics	02	02	06
	--			
	Translation Methods	01	01	01
	--			
	Tamil	01	01	01
	--			
	SPECIAL DEGREE			
	Linguistics	--	--	--
	--			
	3. Optional Courses (non-credit)			
	Postgraduate Programme:			
	4. Fee-levying Courses			
	MA in Linguistics (one-year) <sup>3</sup>		06	Courses/Modules
	(all required)			

In order to assess the consistency and coherence of the learning objectives within and across these courses it is necessary to consider each of them separately.

Though Aims and Objectives have been provided for all courses, learning outcomes have not been specified for any courses offered by the Department. Thus, it is not possible for the Review to assess individual courses on this basis. The following analysis is therefore necessarily general since it seeks to measure the courses within the three major programmes – Linguistics, Translation Methods and Tamil as a Second Language – on the basis of “learning outcomes” and “levels of achievement” extrapolated from the Aims and Objectives, Content and Methodology of these programmes as well as of individual courses within them. However, it is clear that the DL should explicitly formulate learning outcomes for both the broad programmes and the

<sup>2</sup> There may be some overlap here since the identical course is classified both as “Core” and “Elective”, and the distinction between the two classifications is unclear.

<sup>3</sup> A new two-year MA, with research component, is to replace the one-year MA, which has been taught for the past years.



individual course within them, as a matter of priority. Moreover, there are some concerns about the individual “course descriptions” as provided to the Review Team, which include the following information: (a) course code, (b) title, (c) status [whether elective or core], (d) aims and objectives, (e) contents [sic], (f) methodology, and (g) assessment. The reason for this concern, as discussed with the academic staff during the review is that these descriptions are often different from classroom practice, such as in the case of “assessment”, where almost all indicate 20% continuous assessment and 80% examination, even when this formula has been changed. In general, both the Core/Elective difference and the credit count appear to be confused and confusing, but these issues may require a faculty-wide revision.

Insofar as can be determined on the basis of information provided to the Team, therefore, the learning outcomes and levels of achievement of the Tamil courses appear to be entirely consonant with student performance in these courses. In addition, the attitude change of students who have taken these courses is also noteworthy and has gone a long way to create an atmosphere of tolerance and understanding of unity-in-diversity in Sri Lanka. A very popular Tamil Day celebration and cultural performance is held annually with the active participation of a large number of students. This Tamil programme, notwithstanding a few linguistic issues in its teaching practice, is a worthy example that should be followed by other universities and higher educational institutions in the country. If the Tamil language courses reflect the best practice of the department in this respect, it would seem from the limited exposure that the review team had, that the postgraduate programme required the most revision.

In general, in the Linguistics programme, the course syllabi and examination system may need to be restructured and re-sequenced in order to provide a disciplinarily logical progression of their respective learning outcomes and expected levels of achievement. For instance, LING 41523 History of Linguistics is a Level Four course for Special Degree students, whereas LIN 33536 Historical Linguistics is taught in the third year, as a Level Three course. It would seem that a basic course outlining the historical development of the discipline of Linguistics should be provided to students well before the final year. Similarly, the History of Sinhala course (LING 43534) at present comes after the Structure of Sinhala (LING 33556). In addition, all of the courses do not appear to be of equivalent/comparable difficulty or depth.

The Translation programme too appears to suffer from a lack of real choices for students, particularly since translation skills and aptitudes are not normally omni-disciplinary since they require some facility/interest and knowledge in the broad subject area. For instance, a course each is offered in Literary, Legal, and Science Translation for all students, irrespective of their specific interests and abilities, and no additional courses are on offer to enhance and hone their skills in any chosen area. In addition, the course descriptions of Technical, Literary, Legal and Science Translation (05 courses) are basically duplicates of each other, with the same three (outdated?) texts as reading material for all of them. This has resulted in insufficient differentiation among similar courses, which, in turn, leads to problems with identifying appropriate learning outcomes and achievement levels.

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

In general, the Review Team found that the Department of Linguistics (DL) had well-qualified and committed academic staff, with 06 PhDs and an impressive array of research publications. However, the steady decline in undergraduate enrolment in the Linguistics Special Degree programme reflects a negative trend that needs to be addressed. At present, a total of only 08 special degree students study in all three years. The Translation Methods programme is only offered as a subject for the General Degree. It is the Tamil Language programme that has proved to be a resounding success and is an example that other universities may wish to emulate.

The postgraduate programme of the DL has proved to be very popular, but the Review Team had extensive discussions with department staff and students, and urges that both course content and structure (including eligibility to enroll) be re-assessed to enhance quality and uniformity. Even undergraduate courses may require re-orientation to better reflect the twin considerations of disciplinary rigour and practical orientation that would increase market demand.

The following detailed specific findings should be seen in the context of these general observations regarding declining demand and enhancing relevance,, which have been taken into consideration in making the final assessments in each of the eight areas of evaluation. The findings are presented separately for Linguistics and Translation Methods, but where appropriate a set of general comments lead off the section.

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

A detailed analysis of all available material was undertaken by the review team during the three days on campus. In addition, further information was obtained from the staff through email and direct contact. Based on the systematic assessment of materials and discussions with staff, the following conclusions were arrived at, which were shared and validated at the debriefing to all relevant staff of the DL held on the afternoon of the final day of the review. Feedback from this meeting has been included in the analysis below.

###### *Linguistics:*

###### **Strengths**

- New areas such as Clinical Linguistics and Sign Language have been included and are proving to be popular

###### **Areas for Improvement**

- Syllabus may require re-assessment to be more inclusive and representative
- Unevenness in course design and format
- Students appear to be unaware of course content and structure
- Continuous Assessment built-in (20%), but heavy emphasis on End-Semester examination
- Possible areas of duplication of courses, which may also need better sequencing

*Translation Methods:*

Strengths

- Introduced and pioneered translation curriculum to university system
- Practical translation exercises are student-centered and stimulate good response from students

Areas for Improvement

- Need to structure courses to relate more to translation and relationship between languages
- Overlap and possible duplication of courses
- Inconsistency between Contact Hours and Credits assigned to courses.
- Greater specialization and the provision of more options should be facilitated, taking into consideration student interests and aptitudes

*Tamil as a Second Language:*

Strengths

- Very popular with students and fulfills national interest as well.
- Young teaching staff very keen and motivated

Areas for Improvement

- Inadequate differentiation between Certificate and BA credit courses
- Over-emphasis on one form of pronunciation
- Good potential for making Tamil a General Degree subject

***It is the view of the Review Team that the Curriculum Design, Content and Review in the DL can be judged as SATISFACTORY.***

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

The teaching, learning and assessment methods of the DL varied widely by programme and course. The Linguistics courses had a more or less uniform assessment scheme, which tended to place a heavy burden on the final examination, reminiscent of the pre-course unit era of year-end examinations. Translation Methods courses appeared to be more practical and activity-based in general, which is in keeping with the subject area. Tamil was taught in an effectively interactional and participatory manner, with the emphasis on developing speaking and listening skills in the classroom. However, assessment methods of Tamil as a Second Language need to be carefully rethought to better reflect course objectives. As a rule, the teaching methods of the DL in its regular curriculum, appeared to be conservative and mainly lecture-based.

*In General:*

Strengths

- Committed and well-qualified professional teachers
- Friendly and supportive environment for students

Areas for Improvement

- Need for more structured briefing/guidance, training and peer review of newer staff
- Over-emphasis on End-semester examinations
- Need for more student-centered assessment
- Inadequate resources and facilities (books, space)
- Discrepancies in course outlines and actual practice

*Tamil as a Second Language:*

Areas for Improvement

- Assessment not entirely relevant to second language [“written examination”?]
- Requires innovative testing methods

*Linguistics:*

Areas for Improvement

- Should include more practical project assignments and field research
- Feedback to students should be more streamlined

*Postgraduate Studies: New Two-Year Syllabus*

Strengths

- Is a distinct improvement on the previous one-year course

Areas for Improvement

- Continuous assessment required – at present only a final examination
- Greater student participation and awareness in teaching/learning process
- Course content and assessment should reflect postgraduate levels of knowledge

*Translation Studies:*

Areas for Improvement

- Should regularize internship process in professional training in translation course [make report + presentation as requirements]
- Requires a more appropriate assessment system

***It is the view of the Review Team that the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods in the DL can be judged as SATISFACTORY.***

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

*Linguistics:*

Areas for Improvement

- Reading and reference should be encouraged more
- Widely divergent knowledge levels and expectations from courses
- Students need to be motivated and guided carefully
- Declining student interest (in special degree) needs to be addressed urgently

#### *Translation Methods:*

##### Strengths

- Overall student satisfaction and motivation
- Engaged in creative and practical activities

##### Areas for Improvement

- Selection criteria may require greater transparency

#### *Tamil as a Second Language:*

##### Strengths

- Successful programme producing competent Tamil-speaking students
- Language competence also brings about inter-ethnic awareness and understanding
- Overall student satisfaction
- Engaged in creative and extra-mural activities

***It is the view of the Review Team that the Quality of Students, including Progress and Achievements, in the DL can be judged as GOOD.***

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

It appears that there is no formal mechanism by which student feedback is accessed in any of the DL's teaching programmes. The standard end-semester student evaluation forms have not been administered so far in the Department, though there is consensus that this practice should be implemented with effect from the current semester. Though Linguistics has the luxury in its special degree programme of relatively small classes no systematic attempt has been made to solicit student feedback. It is paradoxical that the Tamil programme which has some of the largest classes is most proactive about student feedback.

In discussions with staff and students, however, it became evident that more ad hoc processes of obtaining feedback, such as informal discussions, were carried out by individual teachers, but it is still not clear how this ad hoc feedback influences changes in course content and logistics, teacher evaluation and student assessment methods. In general, there appears to be a growing, yet currently inadequate, sensitivity to student needs and requirements, which has not yet been translated into a systematic procedure. This is, therefore, an urgent priority for the immediate future.

***It is the view of the Review Team that the Extent and Use of Student Feedback in the DL can be judged as UNSATISFACTORY.***

#### **4.5. Postgraduate Studies**

The DL academic staff members are actively engaged in postgraduate research, and continue to publish extensively in peer-reviewed and popular journals. Individual faculty members have developed specialized areas of research interest and expertise, and the DL has collectively focused on sub-disciplinary areas such as Sign Language and Speech Disorders. Serious academic research appears to be strength of the Department, especially in Linguistics, while Tamil and Translation Methods has taken a more popular disseminatory route.

### *Linguistics (MA)*

#### Strengths

- Is a long-established course that continues to be popular with a wide variety of students from diverse academic and employment backgrounds

#### Areas for Improvement

- Entry requirements and course content may require careful re-consideration
- Assessment criteria should reduce emphasis on final examinations
- Academic staff have produced research of high quality

***It is the view of the Review Team that Postgraduate Studies in the DL can be judged as SATISFACTORY.***

### **4.6. Peer Observation**

Peer observation does not appear to be a structured and systematic activity in either the Linguistics or the Translation programmes, though some attempts appear to have been made in the Tamil programme. As noted above, more guidance and supervision is needed in the DL, given that relatively inexperienced young lecturers carry a significant workload, particularly in the Translation Methods courses. Though ad hoc and informal peer observations have taken place, no documentation of this has been maintained. As a result, individual teachers of common courses do not have sufficient structured sharing of methodologies and strategies. This is accentuated by the fact that regular staff briefings or collective lesson planning does not seem to take place.

In fairness to the DL, however, it should be noted that the absence of peer reviewing processes is a faculty and university-wide phenomenon, and this lacuna should be addressed as a matter of policy at the faculty and university levels if it is to be effective and systematic.

***It is the view of the Review Team that Peer Observation in the DL can be judged as UNSATISFACTORY.***

### **4.7. Skills Development**

The assessment of the Skills Development component of the Subject Review was undertaken on the basis of interviews with staff and students, and the analysis of syllabi and course content (as available).

#### *Linguistics:*

##### *Subject-Specific Skills*

- More holistic understanding of Linguistics required

##### *Presentation Skills*

- Should be required to make academic presentations
- Should develop explicatory skills
- Greater emphasis on Clarity, Confidence and Organization

#### *Analytical Skills*

- Need opportunities to develop skills in Qualitative and Quantitative Data Collection
- Synthesis and Summary Skills developed through assignments
- Research Skills used in final dissertation

#### *Translation Methods:*

##### *Skills for Employment*

- Internship programme provides exposure and experience in the world of work
- Technical translation skills developed

##### *Practical Skills*

- Presentation Skills well-developed
- Employment Preparation Skills

#### *Tamil as a Second Language:*

##### *Skills for Employment*

- High demand in public and private sector for bilinguals proficient in Sinhala and Tamil
- Those who complete it are happy with course

##### *Practical Skills*

- Presentation Skills
- Communication Skills
- Spoken Interaction in Diverse Situations
- Employment Preparation Skills

***It is the view of the Review Team that Skills Development component in the DL can be judged as GOOD.***

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

In general, the university counseling system did not appear to have the reach or depth to address student needs in a proactive and preventive way, but was mainly geared to crisis management and basic awareness courses. The Orientation Programme at the beginning of the students' undergraduate career was the only occasion when information was provided to them about courses offered and benefits etc., but this too was perceived as inadequate and not always well-timed.

Though the DL did not appear to have a specific programme for guiding and counseling students, the Dept Head was leading an extensive general counseling programme for all students of the faculty. All the students consulted expressed the consensual view that their needs were well-addressed and they were able to approach any staff member if they had a problem. The special degree programme was well-served as there are under 10 students in all three years, but even general degree students felt that the department provided a safe and comfortable space for them. In addition, students who had personal issues were able to seek advice and guidance from staff.

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

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the observations made by the review team and discussed above, the eight aspects were judged as follows:

<b>Aspect Reviewed</b>	<b>Judgement Given</b>
Curriculum design, content and review	<b>Satisfactory</b>
Teaching, learning and assessment methods	<b>Satisfactory</b>
Quality of students including student progress and achievements	<b>Good</b>
Extent of student feedback, qualitative and quantitative	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>
Postgraduate studies	<b>Satisfactory</b>
Peer observation	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>
Skills development	<b>Good</b>
Academic guidance and counseling	<b>Satisfactory</b>

Despite having a critical mass of qualified and committed academic staff, many of the programmes in the Department of Linguistics have not achieved the promise and potential that they clearly have. The transition from the year-end examination system to the continuous assessment modalities of the course unit system do not appear to have been internalized by the DL, and this has led to some concerns about quality and student-centredness. Declining demand for Linguistics Special Degrees has been offset by the increasing popularity of Translation Methods and the pioneering Tamil language programme.

However, changes in curricula and assessment methods are overdue, while student feedback and peer observation processes need to be prioritized, but it should be recognized that these are system-wide issues. Faculty research is strength of the DL, and is a tradition that younger staff members have also taken on board. Postgraduate programmes need to be re-thought and expanded. In summary, the Review Team felt that the Department of Linguistics had the academic quality and commitment to better realize its role as a centre of excellence within the Sri Lankan university system, but that this would urgently require a re-visioning and forward-looking plan that addresses the concerns identified in this assessment.

***The overall judgment is suspended***

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***General***

- It is recommended that the student evaluation of teaching be made compulsory, and other feedback processes also be institutionalized.
- It is recommended that the peer observation of classroom teaching be regularized, and particular attention be paid to establishing mechanisms for guiding junior staff.



- Academic counseling and guidance programmes at the faculty and department levels should be prioritized.
- It is recommended that greater emphasis be placed on English language competence through a combination of graduation requirements and innovative courses geared to academic reading.
- The relationship between staff-student contact hours and the credit rating of courses needs to be more consistent, since the current system appears to be both misleading and arbitrary, reflecting neither level of difficulty or time allocated per course.
- Staff Development needs to be in-built, so that it takes place annually and in a systematic manner.
- The Faculty may wish to institute an appeal process if students wish to have their grades re-evaluated.
- Up to date and comprehensive data on student enrolment (disaggregated by gender, other subjects etc) and results achieved should be maintained in a readily accessible way and should be used in planning at the faculty and department levels.
- It is recommended that regular and systematic syllabus revision and monitoring processes be built in to the course unit system, and new multi-disciplinary courses foundation courses be initiated (with basic Linguistics, Translation and Tamil components for all students in the Humanities Faculty).

#### *Linguistics*

- Courses need to be revised to reflect better sequencing and greater balance, as well as to cover key sub-disciplinary areas and new disciplinary developments. A uniform system, which should include duration/contact hours/credits, assessment, monitoring and certification is recommended.
- Course descriptions need to be updated and included learning outcomes & achievement levels.
- It is recommended that the teaching and assessment methods be revised to reduce emphasis on rote learning and end-semester examinations. Greater emphasis should be paid on continuous assessment to ensure that students gain the maximum from the classroom experience.
- Group work and practical projects should be encouraged so that students learn to apply the knowledge gained to real situations.
- Department may consider offering more elective/optional courses, particularly to Special Degree students, which allow for deeper study and specialization.
- Declining student numbers should be looked into and remedies sought through making some courses more demand-driven and employment-oriented. Greater efforts should be taken to place students in suitable employment on completion of their degree.

#### *Translation Methods*

- It is recommended that a greater range and variety of courses be offered, and, in due course, a Special Degree programme be developed.
- It is recommended that greater focus be given to developing language skills, especially in English, while translation between Sinhala and Tamil be emphasized.
- Training and guidance of junior staff need to be built in to the programme.

- Course descriptions need to be updated and included learning outcomes & achievement levels.
- It is recommended that the teaching and assessment methods be revised to pay even greater emphasis to continuous assessment to ensure that students gain the maximum from the classroom experience.
- It is recommended that the group work and practical projects be encouraged so that students learn to apply the knowledge gained to real situations.
- Department may consider offering more elective/optional courses, which allow for deeper study and specialization, especially since not everyone has the aptitude/skill/knowledge to be multi-disciplinary translators.
- Greater transparency and accountability may be required in selecting students to follow Translation Methods courses, and selection criteria need to be streamlined.

#### *Tamil as a Second Language*

- It is recommended that the courses be revised to reflect differences between the different types of courses (and establish a tiered system of pre-requisites, for instance), as well as to ensure that students can follow courses throughout their undergraduate career.
- Department may consider including Tamil as a General Degree subject. It is recommended that a uniform system, which should include duration/contact hours/credits, assessment, monitoring and certification be introduced.
- Course descriptions need to be updated and included learning outcomes & achievement levels.
- It is recommended that the teaching and assessment methods be revised to reduce emphasis on rote learning and end-semester written examinations. Greater emphasis should be paid on continuous assessment to ensure that students gain the maximum from the classroom experience.
- It is recommended that group work and practical projects be encouraged so that students learn to apply the knowledge gained to real situations.
- The emphasis on cultural awareness activities and the use of Tamil language classes to facilitate attitude change could be further developed.

## **7. ANNEXES**

### **ANNEX 1. AGENDA OF THE SUBJECT REVIEW**

#### **DAY - 1 Aug 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006 (Wednesday)**

- 08.00 - 09.00 a.m. - Meeting of Reviewers with the Members of the Quality Assurance Council
- 09.00 - 09.30 a.m. - Discuss the Agenda of the Review
- 09.30 - 10.00 a.m. - Welcome Meeting with the Dean/Faculty of Humanities and Head of Department of Linguistics (DL)
- 10.00 - 10.30 a.m. - Tea Break
- 10.30 - 12.30 p.m. - Head DL presents Self Evaluation Report  
Discussion based on Head's Report
- 12.30 - 01.30 p.m. - Lunch Break
- 01.30 - 02.30 p.m. - Observation of Department facilities, Library and IT Centre
- 02.30 - 03.30 p.m. - Meeting with Department Academic Staff
- 03.30 - 03.45 p.m. - Tea Break
- 03.45 - 04.45 p.m. - Meeting with undergraduate students
- 04.45 - 05.30 p.m. - Brief meeting of Reviewers

#### **DAY - 2 Aug 2<sup>nd</sup> 2006 (Thursday)**

- 09.00 - 9.30 a.m. - Observe Teaching (Lecture by Mr S J Yogarajah)
- 09.30 - 10.00 a.m. - Meeting with Technical staff and other non-academic staff
- 10.00 - 10.30 a.m. - Observe Teaching (Special Degree Lecture by Prof Wickremasinghe)
- 10.30 - 11.00 a.m. - Observing documents (Tea)
- 11.00 - 11.30 a.m. - Observe Teaching (Lecture by Prof Rajapakse)

11.30 - 12.30 p.m. - Meeting with Postgraduate Students

12.30 - 01.30 p.m. - Lunch Break

01.30 - 02.00 p.m. - Observe Teaching (Tutorial)

02.00 - 02.30 p.m. - Observe Teaching (Translation Methods)

02.30 - 03.00 p.m. - Observe Student Presentations (Translation Methods)

03.00 - 03.15 p.m. - Tea Break

03.15 - 04.15 p.m. - Meeting with Special Degree Students

04.15 - 05.00 p.m. - Brief meeting of Reviewers

**DAY - 3 Aug 4<sup>th</sup> 2006 (Friday)**

09.00 - 09.30 a.m. - Observe Teaching (General Lecture)

09.30 - 10.00 a.m. - Translation Circle Meeting

10.00 - 10.30 a.m. - Counseling (Mr S J Yogarajah)

10.30 - 12.00 noon - Reviewers' Discussion

12.00 - 01.00 p.m. - Lunch Break

01.00 - 02.00 p.m. - Reviewers' Discussion and Preparation for Debriefing

02.00 - 04.00 p.m. - Meeting with Head and Staff to Share Preliminary Findings  
Presentation by Review Team  
Feedback and Validation of Findings

## **ANNEX 2. LIST OF TEACHING SESSIONS OBSERVED:**

- (a) Tamil as a Second Language Class: TAML 13012 (Elective) Tamil Language I
- (b) Translation Methods: Student Presentation and Lecture, Tutorial Class  
TRMD 32042 (Core) Oral and Practical Translation
- (c) Linguistics: General Degree LING 31012 (Core) Structure of Sinhala  
Special Degree LING 23556 (Core) Introduction to Syntax

## **ANNEX 3. PERSONS MET**

Dean, Humanities: Prof K Kumarasinghe

Librarian: Mr Jayatissa

Academic Staff, including Visiting and Temporary Lecturers

Non-Academic Staff

Students: Undergraduate (Tamil Language, Linguistics, Translation Methods) and Postgraduate (MA in Linguistics)

## **ANNEX 4. LIST OF DOCUMENTS EXAMINED**

Syllabi, Curricula for Linguistics, Translation Methods and Tamil Language courses

Exam papers and answer scripts (a sample)

Time tables

Lesson materials, lecture handouts

Research publications

Student Handbook

Course Unit handbook

## **ANNEX 5. FACILITIES OBSERVED**

Classrooms

Department offices

Staff Rooms and academic staff offices

Department and main libraries

Common facilities shared with other departments in the faculty (e.g. Conference Room)

## **ANNEX 6. TEACHING STAFF OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS**

### **Head of Department (at the time of the Review)**

Mr. S.J. Yogarajah

*B.A.(Sri Lanka),M.Phil.(Kelaniya), Dip. In Theology (Rome)*

### **Academic Staff**

#### **Prof. (Mrs) D.M. Wickramasinghe**

*B.A.,M.A.(Ceylon),Ph.D, (Exeter)*

#### **Prof R.M.W. Rajapakse**

*B.A.(Sri.Lanka.),M.A.(Kelaniya),M.A.(York),Ph.D.(London)*

#### **Dr. A.C. Premaratne**

*B.A.,(SriLanka),Ph.D.(Lond.)*

#### **Prof. W.M. Wijeratne**

*B.A., M.A.,(SriLanka),Ph.D.(Ed.)*

#### **Dr.S.M Kariyakarawana**

*B.A.(Honours Kelaniya). M.A.(Ottawa), Ph.D.(Cornell)*

#### **Rev. T.Sutadhara**

*B.A.(Kelaniya). M.A.(Hawaii)*

#### **Mr. S.J. Yogarajah**

*B.A.(Sri Lanka),M.Phil.(Kelaniya), Dip. In Theology (Rome):*

#### **Dr. Mrs. G.J.S. Wijesekara**

*B.A.(Kelaniya), M.A.(Delhi) Ph,D. (Kelaniya)*

#### **Mr. Sudath Senarath**

*B.A. (Kel'ya) , M.Phil (Kel'ya) :*

### **Non-Academic Staff**

**Technician : Mr. P.K. Boragolla**

**Dept. Asst.: Mr. M. Gunathilaka**

**Clerk: Ms T M Hewarathna**