SUBJECT REVIEW REPORT

DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES

FACULTY OF ARTS AND CULTURE
SOUTH UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA

11th to 13th May 2008

Review Team :

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1. SUBJECT REVIEW PROCESS

Initiated by the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Directors (CVCD), the Quality Assurance Mechanism for national universities was introduced in 2002. Divided as Subject and Institutional Reviews, the process incorporates internal and external assessment of Universities/Departments of study, promoting and safeguarding public confidence in the country's system of higher education. The Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council (QAAC) of the UGC/Ministry of Higher Education have the overall responsibility for the conduct and sustenance of quality assurance activities in universities. Subject Reviews which deal with individual academic departments of national universities, consider eight key aspects in reaching judgments on the maintaining of quality within such departments. These relate to Curriculum Design, Content and Review, Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods, Quality of students (including Student Progress and Achievement), the Extent and Use of Student Feedback (Qualitative and Quantitative), Postgraduate Studies, Peer Observation, Skills Development, Academic Guidance and Counseling.

The Review Team consisting of Prof. U.P. Meddegama, Prof. S.Thilainathan and Dr. Mrs. Ajanatha Hapuarachchi, visited the Department of Languages of the South Eastern University from 11th-13th of May, 2009 and carried out the task of subject Reviewing with the full co-operation of the staff. The Dept. had prepared a schedule for the three days starting with formal meetings with the Quality Assurance specialist Dr. Colin Peiris and members of the staff. Prof. Peiris briefed the purpose and objectives as well as the procedure of subject review. As the Head of the Department was absent due to ill health, Prof. Sanmugadas, consultant to the Deparmtent, attended to the co-ordination of the process assisting the review team in every stage of their mission.

The team observed teaching by several lecturers, checked the departmental documents including mark sheets, past papers, minutes of departmental meetings, and publications of the students and staff. As an important aspect in subject review the Team met with a large group of students and engaged in friendly and constructive discussions with them. The team inspected the main library as well as the Departmental library and other facilities such as the IT, the two computer labs etc. while observing these various aspects and activities the Review Team could exchange ideas with the members of the staff on a number of occasions and on the third day winding up with a formal meeting of the Review Team and the academic staff.

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

The South Eastern University of Sri Lanka [SEUSL] was established in October 1995. The objectives of establishing this university was mainly to create opportunities to under privileged students of the region who were facing immense hardships to study at other universities in the North and East, which were severely affected by the on-going war and tension. The students of the area were having financial difficulties for studying in the universities in Colombo, Peradeniya and Matara etc. The SEUSL was established to cater for the educational needs of the students in the South East or the Ampara district. This university is located on a beautiful campus of 225 acres in the village of Oluvil , which is 350 Kms away from Colombo.

The University had two Faculties at the beginning i.e. The Faculty of Arts and Culture and the Faculty of Management and Commerce, but now the number of Faculties has been

increased with the addition of the Faculty of Applied Sciences and the Faculty of Islamic Studies and Arabic Language. The SEUSL has been further expanded with a Centre for Extension Studies [CES] which offers External Degrees in Arts and Culture and Management and Commerce. Further the Centre for External Studies offers Diploma and Certificate Courses in a number of disciplines. The university has a fully equipped library, Computer Unit, Learning centre, English Language teaching Unit and sports facilities. With the completion of the new buildings, which are under construction for the Faculties of Arts and Commerce and especially the newly built impressive Centre for Information Technology, this university has the potential for developing fast with sufficient infrastructural facilities and resources to develop as a major university accommodating a greater number of students.

The Department of Languages was one of the earliest departments to be established at the SEUSL. This department conducts courses in five subjects such as Tamil, Arabic, English, Islamic Culture and Sinhala. The Units of Arabic and Islamic Culture were separated from this department when the Faculty of Islamic Studies and Arabic language was established. In the meantime Hindu Culture was added to the subjects of the Department of Languages.

In order to obtain a Bachelor of Arts General Degree a student must earn 90 credits. All the course units of the department carry 03 credits for main courses while the compulsory and auxiliary courses carry 02 credits. Thus a student must take 36 course units to gain 90 credits to be eligible for the B.A. General Degree.

For the Special Degree in languages a student must earn 120 credits by completing 45 course units and 1 dissertation. Duration of the General degree course is 3 years while the Special Degree program is of 4 year duration.

3. AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Aims and learning outcomes of the Department of Languages have not been included in the Self Evaluation Report. However, aims of the Department are mentioned under Vision and Mission as follows: the Vision of the Department of Languages is to become a Centre of Excellence for exploring and disseminating superior knowledge in the field of Languages through innovative and high quality teaching, research and development.

The Mission of the Department is to provide superb academic services in an excellent manner and to accumulate knowledge through research and development and its application for the advancement of society.

Staff and Students

There are seven academic staff members and 4 temporary lecturers. The academic staff is supported by two non-academic staff members. The department invites professors and lecturers to teach as and when required. The number of students in the department is around 200. Three lecturers with Postgraduate qualifications have been promoted as Senior lecturers. Two of the lecturers are currently engaged in research projects leading to Ph.D. Students:

Degree	2004/05	2003/04	2002/03	2001/02
General	41	108	23	124
Special	02	14	08	26
Total	43	122	31	150

4. FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW TEAM

4.1. Curriculum Design, Content and Review

The Department of Languages offers the following subjects for Special and General Degrees:
Tamil
Hindu Culture
Sinhala and
English

Main Courses:
First year
Introduction to Tamil Literature and Literary appreciation
Introduction to Tamil Language and Practical Grammar

Second year: 1st Semester:
Structure of Modern Tamil Phonology and Morphology
Practical Criticism and Literary Aesthetics
Modern Poetry in Tamil
Development of short story in Tamil
Islamic Literature in Tamil
2nd Semester;
Modern Tamil syntax
Folk Literature and Folk Literary Studies
Development of Novel in Tamil
Ethical literature in Tamil
Principles of Modern Linguistics

Third Year   1st Semester:
Classical Tamil Poetry and Poetics
Modern Literary theories
Tamil Drama and theatre
Devotional Poetry in Tamil
Translation: Theory and Practice

2nd Semester:
Classical Tamil Grammar
Research Methodology and Report writing
Epic Poetry in Tamil
History of Tamil Studies
Tamil Poetics: Prosody and Alamkaara

Fourth Year- 1st Semester
Modernization of Tamil Language
Tamil Language and Literature in Sri Lanka
Medieval Tamil grammar
History of Literary Criticism in Tamil
Tamil Journalism

2nd Semester:
History of Tamil Language
Tamil Grammatical tradition
Lexicography: Theory and practice
South Asian Literature in Tamil Translation
Tamil paleography and Inscriptions
All these are 3 Credit Courses

Some of the Courses for **English** are as follows;

1st Year Semester 01:
Introduction to Literature
Commonwealth Literature

2nd Year: Semester 01
Classical English Poetry
Short Story
Advanced Grammar and Reading

Semester 02
Classical English fiction
Expository Writing

Sinhala: Following are some of the Courses in Sinhala;

1st year Semester 01
Introduction to Sinhala Language
Introduction to Sinhala Literature

2nd Year Semester 01;
Sinhala Grammar
Literary Appreciation

Semester 02
Translation
Practical Writing
Basic Sinhala

Courses in Culture, Folklore, Literary theory and Criticism etc. are offered in the third year. As in Tamil and Hindu Culture, the Courses in English and Sinhala too carry 3 Credits.

In addition to the above mentioned courses the department conducts three compulsory courses for all students:
English Language
Information Technology and
Research Methodology [3rd year, Semester II]

The Department of Languages has also introduced six auxiliary courses for all students as follows:
Social Harmony
Basic Mathematics
Logic and Scientific method
Personal Development
Basic Sinhala
Principles of Management

The Department has taken constructive steps in revising its curriculum under the IRQUE project. The purpose of this revision has been to improve the quality of the course, to modernize some of them taking into consideration the needs of the times and students. One of the important factors in this revision has been enhancing the employability of the undergraduates once they graduate from this university. At present the graduates who take languages are absorbed into the government sector as teachers, but the Department, by revising the curriculum is seeking to produce graduates who could compete with graduates of other universities for jobs in the private sector as well. This can be mentioned as a positive and constructive step taken by this department for quality assurance of education it imparts to students.

Strengths:
As we have just mentioned, the curriculum revision undertaken by the Department of Languages is a positive, farsighted move towards enhancing the level of education as well as guidance for its teachers for modernizing syllabi as well as their approach to teaching for motivating students by familiarizing them with the use of modern technology and other teaching methods. The recent revision of the curriculum undertaken by Prof. Nuhuman, as is clear from the detailed report he has submitted has been prepared incorporating all these aspects. The present academic staff in the department is well aware of the need to implement the recommendations of this report and we further noticed that they are now moving in the right direction. Content of the courses is good.

Weaknesses and Recommendations:
Although English is listed as a compulsory subject, there is only one visiting lecturer to teach it, which is not a satisfactory arrangement. With our meeting with students of the department we found that there is a great demand for this subject; students are very keen in improving their skills in this subject, but they feel that they need full time, permanent lecturers to teach all the course units in English.

Sinhala has been taught from the beginning of the Faculty of Arts as a basic course. Only for a few years Sinhala had been offered as a subject for B.A. There is only one lecturer at present to teach Sinhala for a large number of students. As there is a growing demand by students for Sinhala we recommend that a permanent lecturer of Senior Grade should be added for sharing the work load of the lecturer currently shouldering the weight. Thus we found that the lack of permanent lecturers for Sinhala and English at senior level as a noticeable drawback because skills in these official languages in the country are of utmost importance for social harmony and employability of the graduates. Hence we recommend that while paying more attention to improving the quality of teaching through methods such as regular revision of syllabi, peer observation and student evaluation, the department should take action as soon as possible to recruit permanent lecturers for Sinhala and English.

As there are students who are very keen in specializing in English, the department must consider offering English for Special Degree and provide a sufficient number of qualified lecturers and other resources for the subject.

Level of Judgment: Good

4.2. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods

Strengths:
Teaching methodology is similar to the normal practice in other universities. Standard, conventional methods of lecturing are followed in general. The review team observed the teachers tend to teach through lecturing while maintaining interaction with the students by questioning them from time to time, and clarifying and explaining difficulties using the chalk and board. Sometimes the lecturers make use of the OHP, the multi media as these facilities are available in the faculty. Dissemination of knowledge is pursued by encouraging students to read the text books, additional reading material such as journals as well as the relevant documents in the WEB.

Students are encouraged to attend lectures regularly and submit home work and assignments on time. They are given guidance and training in the use of the Internet and multi-media facilities as skills in using them are becoming essential in the learning process in the modern world. The academic staff seemed to be aware of the need of guiding students in the right direction as far as the learning process is concerned. Further, the teachers have used hand – outs, and other lesson material as such teaching aids are indispensable in teaching languages.
Assessment of examinations and assignments is marked out of 100. For semester-end examinations of 3 hour duration 70% and the remaining 30% is allocated for assignments. This method, we found to be inconsistent with the standard practice in the university system. Since the introduction of the course unit system, the assessment has been 60% for examinations and 40% for assignments or any other quizzes, group exercises, presentations etc. Therefore, it is recommended that the department adopts the accepted norms and methods in regard to the assessment.

Weaknesses and Recommendations:
Although undergraduate teaching is well established and of a commendable standard, due to the relatively short history of the faculty and the difficulties in finding qualified resource persons, the Postgraduate teaching seemed to be still at the initial stage. Although the Department has planned to offer PG degrees and courses, none of these courses has been started yet. Post Graduate studies for both the junior staff and other interested students should be undertaken as soon as possible because of the fact that this is a good practice as well as an essential component in university education. The Staff should concentrate more on undertaking research and publishing the outcome and findings in English. The Review Team, while observing the publications of the Staff and Students noticed that most of them are in Tamil. Therefore, for the purpose of reaching a wider readership nationally as well as internationally, and for sharing and exchanging knowledge faster and more effectively with a world –wide readership they should be encouraged to undertake and publish research articles and books in local languages as well as in English or another international language.

Assessment method should be revised and awarding of 60% of the marks for examinations and 40% for assignments and other practical work must be adopted. Further, according to the standard method followed by other universities semester–end examinations should be of 2 hour duration.

Level of Judgment: Satisfactory

4.3 Quality of Students including Student Progress and Achievements

The Department of Languages claims to welcome students of diverse racial, religious and language backgrounds. These undergraduates coming from various areas of the country are selected on merit they have achieved for the Advanced Level examination. When they enter this university at Oluvil, a rather isolated location, they need special supervision and guidance with regard to development of skills in social interaction, communication, building up new attitudes towards current national and international economic and political problems and trends. While streamlining the courses of study to suit these special requirements, the students need more practical training in gaining knowledge of languages, at least English or another international language, computer literacy and a practical knowledge in the field of IT. From our meetings with students, we found the quality of students to be of a satisfactory standard, but they need more opportunities and support to move in the right direction as university students for expanding knowledge in academic matters as well as for interaction with more experienced and qualified teachers. The general feeling regarding the employability of the graduates of this Department is that they are bound to end up as School Teachers. This, we found to be an unhealthy attitude. The Department should make attempts to attract or recruit more teachers in English and Sinhala by arranging for equal opportunities for both male and female students with regard to access to IT facilities. Further the students need guidance as to the opportunities available to them in the government sector as well private sector for finding employment although their discipline is in languages. Graduates in the languages can be trained as Translators as there is a growing demand for Translators both locally and internationally.

Level of Judgment: Satisfactory

4.4. Extent and use of Student Feedback

The Department is well aware of the significance and usefulness of Student Feedback for the improvement of teaching, learning and teacher-student relationship. For the purpose of enhancing the quality of teaching and general dissemination of knowledge by the department close and a well organized method of getting feedback from students is of paramount importance. Although the department has indicated some obstructions to obtaining feedback from students, the Review Team noted that with a little extra encouragement and persuasion the students are likely to express their feelings and personal problems etc. freely and honestly. Some of the methods used by the department for the purpose of gathering feedback are as follows:
Formal questionnaires
Open-door policy: Students are allowed free access without formalities to their teachers for exchange of ideas and discussion.
Allocating a few minutes in lectures for questions and answers
Group exercises and discussions

Field Trips: This gives a good opportunity for teachers and students to get closer and engage in friendly conversation.

Through office staff and support staff: This is also an effective method as the students sometimes get friendly and tend to confide in support staff.

Furthermore, the Department seeks information from past students, Visiting lecturers, teachers of other departments, students' societies and finally, and perhaps more effectively, from the suggestions Box.

In addition to these the teachers could measure the progress and effectiveness of their teaching from the test papers and assignments. Another method of getting feedback may be from the students' presentations. The Review Team feels that the participation of teachers in student presentations is extremely useful to motivate students as well as to persuade them to get involved in discussions. Thus this department has been aware of the importance of Student Feedback for the purpose of correcting its own shortcomings, enhancing teachers' confidence and for curriculum reviewing, for developing teaching methods, preparation of teaching material, helping in student welfare activities, and finally producing bright and highly skilled, all round graduates to serve the country.

Weaknesses and Suggestions:

As the department is keen in obtaining student feedback and distributes and collects evaluation forms and further, as the department encourages its members to get feedback through many different methods, especially through the open door policy, and initiative given to students to approach teachers even informally to discuss their problems or to make suggestions, the Review Team found this aspect in the department as strong and constructive. Therefore we do not wish to make any extra recommendations except commending the department and requesting them to continue with the good practice of encouraging students in providing with feedback.

Level of Judgment: Good

4.5. Postgraduate Studies

The Department of Languages has planned post-graduate courses for M.A. in Tamil, Diploma in Tamil and Diploma in Languages. However these courses are not offered yet as the Department is awaiting the approval of the UGC. The following staff members are listed in the Self Evaluation Report of the Department as teachers of these courses:

Mrs. MLS. Rahila   M. Phil
Mr. MAM Rameez   M. Phil
Mr. K. Raghuparan   M. Phil
Mr. A. Wickramaratna   [Pending results of M. Phil]
Mr. AFM. Ashraff   M. Phil
Mrs. MASF. Saadhiya   M.A. M. Phil
MRs. S. Selvaranjan   M.Phil
Mrs. M.J.Rizmy   [reading for M.A]

Weaknesses and Recommendations:

The descriptions of the planned courses were not available to the Review Team. As postgraduate studies form an essential component of university education, these courses should be made available to interested students and implemented. It is not clear whether the proposed two Diplomas are Postgraduate or just Diplomas. The published list of teachers is same as that for undergraduate teaching. It would be better for the quality of postgraduate

teaching if more experienced teachers with Ph.D. qualifications and experienced professors could be recruited or, invited to teach in the program. Two of the teachers in the above list have not yet obtained the M. Phil degrees. Considering these shortcomings and mainly the fact that Postgraduate teaching is yet to begin, we recommend that these courses are started promptly and a sufficient number of resource persons are provided.

Level of Judgment: Unsatisfactory

4.6. Peer Observations

Strengths:
The Department of Languages has been interested in maintaining peer observation from several perspectives. This has been carried out with a view to cover every aspect of teaching in the department. Following are some of the methods of peer observation as stipulated in the Self assessment of the Department. Further, from our observations, we too found that some of these good practices are put into practice.

Head of the Department and other senior members observe class room teaching. They do spot checking and observation of the teaching of visiting lecturers as well. Senior members in the department observe teaching of junior members and advise them on improving their skills in teaching. Same method is applied for observing the teaching of the Temporary lecturers, the Head of the department taking steps to guide them in the right direction. Senior members observe the teaching of peers and as an established practice all senior members of the staff participate in some of the important courses of lectures such as lectures on research methods. In the case of complaints about poor performance of a lecturer, the HOD intervenes, supervises the teaching of such lecturers and guides them. Thus this important aspect in university teaching is respected and implemented by the Department of Languages although negligence of this good practice is a common phenomenon in some other universities.

Weaknesses and Recommendations:
The review team did not find any weakness in Peer Observation and hence considered it unnecessary to make any recommendations for improvement. However, the Team finds it useful if a system for recording Peer Observation, with names of the lecturer concerned, the name of the peer who observed, the date, time and lecture topic, and the comments of the peer is implemented and the records kept in the department as confidential documents. These records will serve as proof of peer observation and they could be used by the lecturers for self assessment, self criticism and for rectifying weaknesses in their teaching. Thus systematic and regular peer observation will be a highly effective means for enhancing quality of teaching.

Level of Judgment: Good

4.7. Skills Development

The Department claims to have realized the significance of Skills Development of students and has been taking steps to develop an employability oriented degree program. However, as the syllabi and courses of the department are basically on languages and culture, this objective may have been hindered to some extent. The Department has identified the following course of action in order to develop students' skills in various subjects that are in demand in the job market.

Developing language skills: So that the graduates could seek employment in foreign firms, embassies etc.

Produce graduates with knowledge and skills who are competent and qualified to compete with graduates of other universities.

Encourage undergraduates to learn modern languages and to gain practical knowledge in handling computers and a working knowledge of IT.

The Department offers Credit and Non Credit modules aimed at skills development in English and IT.

Encourage students to participate in extra-curricular activities.

Weaknesses and Recommendations:

Students must be made aware of the measures taken by the department for skills development. They must be encouraged to make use of these opportunities and facilities. Facilities and guidance available to students who are interested in sports seems to be inadequate. Some of the female students complained that in the computer room with internet facilities it is the male students who always get the lion's share. The instructors must take this problem into consideration and arrange for female students to have equal access to these facilities.

Skills in modern languages should be developed parallel with knowledge in classical and the official languages.

Level of Judgment: Satisfactory

4.8. Academic Guidance and Counseling

A combination of strategies for Academic guidance and counseling has been implemented at the level of the University, Faculty and the Department. Among these the following have been quoted in the Self Assessment Report:

The UGC Handbook

Information on the Degree Program, the examination procedure and the facilities available to students provided at the beginning of a new academic year.

Orientation programs held at the beginning of the academic year. In addition to these the department organizes awareness programs to educate the students on the courses offered by the department, evaluation methods, facilities and links with the industry etc.

New comers get some guidance from the senior students

As special strategies, the department implements the following activities:

Organizing subject related field visits.

Introducing innovative teaching and learning methods.

Allocating five minutes in every lecture to listen to students questions and to clarify and help them

Reminding the students of the requirement of 80% attendance. The teachers checking on regular attendance in lectures.

Staff-Student Relationship program: Under this program each staff member is assigned with a group of students. The names and photographs of the students are provided to the lecturer in charge of each group. During meetings with individual students or with the group, the lecturer can discuss their problems and take necessary measures to solve problems and assist the students.

A noteworthy feature is the special arrangements made for the disabled/physically handicapped students. The Department arranges facilities for such students and the staff

members are always ready to help such students. The Review Team noticed the facilities provided for handicapped students at the main library, a welcome feature not yet seen even in the established major universities in Sri Lanka.

Lecturers allocate two hours per week for meeting with students.

Among other facilities with regard to counseling, there is a unit for counseling for the Faculty and a career Guidance Unit as well.

Weaknesses and Recommendations:

The Review Team noticed that the staff members in the department are not sufficiently involved in the welfare or counseling activities. One lecturer, however, had worked as Senior Student counselor before taking study leave. Information given in the Self-evaluation Report is mostly the general programs for Academic guidance and counseling of the Faculty and the University. The Review Team in their meetings with students found out that they are not aware of the facilities available to them as regards Academic guidance and Counseling. The students admitted to the university under the Special Intake seemed to be confused in regard to support they need to follow the subjects they are really interested in. Some of the English medium students, although they are very keen in specializing the subject are disappointed as Special Degree in English is not offered by the Department. The Department could make an attempt to help such students by making alternative arrangements with other universities or requesting the UGC to transfer such students to other universities where the Special Degree programs in the subjects they wish to follow are offered. We mention this because of the fact that one of main ideas of the Course unit system is flexibility. Perhaps the Department could educate the newly recruited temporary lecturers on the facilities and strategies to make them aware of the importance of the academic guidance. This is of vital significance as the students become closer with young, temporary lecturers than with senior lecturers. So the young lecturers should build up rapport with the students more easily and cordially and offer them guidance and counseling.

Level of Judgment: Satisfactory

Based on the observations made during the visit by the Review Team and as per the facts discussed above the judgments given to those eight aspects under review are as follows:

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

5. CONCLUSIONS

This is an active and vibrant department, which deserves fair attention and treatment by the university and the UGC. This Department can be developed into a more prominent department catering to the needs of the students in modern times and more involved in social and cultural activities in the university. The academic staff needs active support from the university to obtain professional qualifications and seek services of experienced, senior professors to guide them in their teaching, post graduate work and research in general. The Department has a very active and obliging support staff. Unlike most other university departments, the Department of Languages at the South Eastern University did not complain of lack of facilities. They were satisfied, even proud of the classroom, computer and IT facilities they are having at present. All the lecturers, including the temporary staff are provided with Computers with Internet Connection. As there are no practical problems with regard to infrastructure facilities and resources, it should be easier for the academic staff to pay full attention to teaching and research. Considering all these positive aspects, the review team feels that this department should be able to accommodate a greater number of students than it is having at present. Further, this is a department that could even attract foreign students as such students would prefer to study Tamil and Hindu Culture at this university considering its geographical location. However in order to take a larger number of students, the Department of Languages should consider introducing more new subjects and courses related to the main subjects taught in the department as well as subjects aimed at improving the employability of its graduates. Further, as this is a Department which deals mainly in teaching languages, it needs a fully equipped modern language laboratory and trained staff in the use and management of language laboratories.