

SUBJECT REVIEW REPORT

**DEPARTMENT OF
ACCOUNTANCY & FINANCE**



**FACULTY OF BUSINESS STUDIES
VAVUNIYA CAMPUS
UNIVERSITY OF JAFFNA**

19th to 21st March 2007

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1. SUBJECT REVIEW PROCESS

The subject review evaluates the quality of education within a specific subject or discipline as well as the programmes offered by an academic department. It is focussed on the quality of the student learning experience and student achievement. It is designed to evaluate the quality of undergraduates. This report presents the findings of the subject review assessment of the academic standards achieved and the quality of learning opportunities provided in the Department of Accountancy and Finance (DAF), Vavuniya Campus of the University of Jaffna.

The Review Team consists of Professor M.W. Wickramarachchi (University of Sri Jayewardenepura), Professor D. Atapattu (University of Ruhuna), and Dr. W.G.S. Kelum (University of Sri Jayewardenepura), visited the DAF during the period from 19th to 21st March 2007.

The review was conducted adhering to the guidelines provided in the *Quality Assurance Handbook for Sri Lankan Universities*, published by the CVCD and University Grants Commission in July 2002. The review was based on the Self Evaluation Report (SER) submitted by the DAF and supported by the information provided and gathered during the three-day site visit to the department.

The following aspects of education/provision were considered under the review assessment:

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,
5. Postgraduate studies,
6. Peer observation,
7. Skills development,
8. Academic guidance and counselling.

Each of the eight aspects was judged as ‘good’, ‘satisfactory’ or ‘unsatisfactory’ paying attention to the strengths, good practices and weaknesses found in each area. An overall judgment was given as ‘confidence’, ‘limited confidence’ or ‘no confidence’ after taking into consideration the judgments given to each of the eight aspects.

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

Northern Province Affiliated University College (NPAUC) was commenced in 1992. Students were enrolled for two year Diploma Courses in Accountancy and Finance, Mathematics and English. In April 1997, NPAUC was upgraded as Vavuniya Campus of Jaffna University with two faculties. The Faculty of Business Studies is one of them. The Department of Accountancy and Finance and the Department of Economics and Management are operating under the Faculty of Business Studies.

Vision and mission statements of the Faculty of Business Studies and the mission statement and objectives of the DAF extracted from the SER are given below.

Faculty of Business Studies

Vision

“Walking along toward a full fledged Faculty awarding unique degrees in multidiscipline“

Mission

“Continuous enhancement of the ability Graduates in the field of Business Management to work in a competitive and innovative environment in order to provide an efficient output”

Department of Accountancy and Finance

Mission

“To be the centre of Excellence in accounting education in Sri Lanka and Abroad”

Objectives

1. To develop knowledgeable and skilled young men and women for employment in Accounting based positions in Public and Private sector organizations,
2. To have a deep understanding and appreciation of issues in Accounting through theoretical and practical perspectives.
3. To develop modern IT based skills in Accounting.
4. To get exemptions from Professional Accounting bodies in Sri Lanka and Abroad.

3. AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Aims and learning outcomes given in the SER are summarized as follows.

3.1. Aims

The DAF’s aim is to develop students’ abilities on the basis of gained knowledge, conceptual understanding and skills in the area of Accounting and finance. Students will learn how to apply the gained knowledge and understanding in the practical environment of the dynamic world. They will acquire personal and transferable skills. Students will develop their abilities to work in critical situations for correct decision making. The DAF will produce good accounting specialized students through implementing and innovating different methods. In this competitive world, students may have to face several challenges from the environment.

3.2. Learning Outcomes

Level of achievement expected from students:

- To understand factors of Financial Accounting,
- To prepare the financial statement of miscellaneous business activities,
- To understand Auditing concepts, principles, techniques and procedures,
- To interpret the financial statements,
- To be able to gather knowledge about the management and dealings of Financial Institutions,

- To understand the Business issues from related to multinational companies,
- To harmonize the diversity in Financial Reporting Standards and significant issue in International Accounting,
- To understand the basic principles and process of IT based accounting,
- To enable students to understand investment procedures in the share market,
- To enlighten students on financial regulation of the government,

During the site visit, the Review Team advised the staff to revise aims and learning outcomes of the DAF after observing similar degree programmes of other universities.

4. FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW TEAM

4.1. Curriculum Design, Content and Review

The DAF has provided the curriculum of the BBM. (Special) Specialization in Accounting and Finance programme in the Self Evaluation Report (SER). The present curriculum was introduced during the academic year 2003/2004. The Degree programme under the review consists of 120 credits and the duration is four years. The four-year period is divided into 8 semesters and the students are required to follow the 2-year common programme and 2-year Accounting and Finance programme conducted by the DAF.

During the first two years, students are required to follow 29 compulsory course units, which give 60 credits. Four, Proficiency in English course units are non credit. Third year students are required to follow 10 course units, which gives 30 credits and 2 Proficiency in English non credit course units. During the final year all students are required to follow 10 course units including 2 course units in Internship in Accounting and Finance. Total credit allocated for the year four is 30.

The contents of the curriculum are structured to achieve intended learning outcomes of the degree programme. The programme and course units are at a suitable academic level and sufficient opportunities are available for students to gain required subject knowledge in an accounting undergraduate degree. Curriculum of the degree programme consists of 45% of credit for Accounting and Finance course units, 10% of IT related course units, 27% Management related course units and 10% English and communication skill course units and 8% other course units. The degree also consists of 6 non credits compulsory proficiency in English course units offered during the first three years. The degree programme is conducted in English medium

Accounting specialization subjects such as Auditing and Taxation are taught during the second year of the degree programme. Introduction of Internship in Accounting and Finance course units to the curricula facilitate the students in gaining practical training in the business environment. This may enhance employability of accounting undergraduates. Practical training is limited to three days per week of a semester and the balance two days are allocated for lectures. Students are required to complete 600 hours of practical training within one year. It seems that 100 hours of practical training may be equivalent to 1 credit so that students can gain 6 credits from the Internship in Accounting and Finance course units..

The final year course unit on Dissertation in Accounting, which is compulsory, provides opportunities for the students in developing skills on experimental designing, data gathering and interpretation, critical evaluation and oral and written communication.

Reviewers have observed that non-availability of sufficient number of qualified lecturers limits opportunity of students in selecting elective course units during the third and fourth

years. There are 8 elective course units in the programme; however, the DAF does not offer most of the elective course units included in the curriculum.

According to opinions of the students IT component of the degree needs more credits. IT related course units are not available for students during the second semester of the first year and the first semester of the second year. The Review Team felt that the IT component of the programme may not be sufficient to produce quality graduates for the future market.

The Review Team is of the view that the aspect of Curriculum Design, Content and Review would be judged as GOOD.

4.2. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods

The academic staff of the DAF consists of 1 Senior Lecturer, 1 Probationary Lecturer and 1 Assistant Lecturer (on contract basis). They teach accounting as well as some non accounting course units. Teaching is scheduled only for weekdays and classes are not held during weekends. Visiting lecturers conduct classes on weekdays after 2.30 p.m. According to the SER, DAF has employed 2 visiting lecturers to provide professional orientation in the programme.

Lectures are conducted between 8.30 a.m. and 4.30 p.m. of weekdays mainly due to security reasons prevailing in the area.

Academic staff members prepare handouts in summary form for distribution among students. The review team has observed distribution of lecture handouts.

According to given information by the staff and students tutorials and small group sessions are held for the first year students from time to time. The time table does not provide allocation of time for tutorials.

Practical classes are held for information technology and computer application related course units. For this purpose DAF is using the faculty computer centre. In addition, another small computer centre is available with internet facilities for the students. This is kept open on weekdays from 8.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. However, Internet access is not available for some computers.

According to end semester evaluation by the students, majority of the students are satisfied with the teaching. However, the degree of satisfaction has varied among the course units.

Aims and learning outcomes, lecture schedules, reading lists and distribution of assignment marks are available for most of the course units. The course outlines are distributed among the students at the first lecture of a course unit. Generally, a course unit has 20% marks for continuous assessments and 80% marks for the final written examination. General pass mark is 45, which is different from the normal university practice.

Assessment methods seem to be appropriate for measuring the learning outcomes. Internship in accounting course unit has a unique evaluation process. The scheme used for evaluation consists of (a) evaluation of training record book by an internal examiner (50% Marks) (b) evaluation of training experiences through a student presentation and submission of final report (30% Marks), (c) evaluation by the training supervisor (10% Marks), and (d) evaluation by the DAF staff at review visits (10% Marks).

No special calendar is prepared to balance the distribution of assignments through out a semester. According to the timetables of the current semester, the number of teaching hours per week allocated to a lecturer (including the Head of the Department) varies between 12 and 16.

The Review Team observed that the facilities available within the department and the Faculty are not sufficient to have better teaching and learning environment. Only four lecture halls are available for all 200 students. These lecture halls are not facilitated with audio visual and other equipments and no separate rooms are provided for lecturers for preparation of teaching materials. The Head of the DAF, lecturers and non academic staff members are sharing the same room.

Considering the above facts, the aspect of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods is judged as GOOD.

4.3. Quality of Students including Student Progress and Achievements

Students who are qualified for university admission from Arts, Commerce and Science streams of GCE (A/L) are eligible for admission to the Faculty of Business Studies of Vavuniya Campus. Curriculum of the year one and two is common for all students admitted to the Faculty of Business Studies. At the end of the second year, students are selected to the BBM (Special) Accounting programme from those who have studied accounting at the GCE (A/L) on the basis of their preferences. .

Under the prevailing curriculum, students have the option to obtain the BBM (General) Degree at the end of the year three and those who complete the four year degree are awarded the BBM (Special) Accounting or Marketing or Business Economics degree.

According to the explanations given by the staff and in the SER, around 1% of the students do not complete the degree. Due to prevailing war situation in Vavuniya, some Sinhalese and Muslim students give up the course or get transfers to other universities. A student can complete the degree within six years from the date of first registration. According to available records of DAF, waiting time for employment is ten months. Specially developed indicators are not available to measure the student progress.

Newly admitted students are provided with an orientation programme. During this programme, students are guided to the library, computer centres and etc.

Students are satisfied with the quality of teaching. Formal student evaluation documents confirm this. Students are not satisfied with the facilities available within the campus. They do not have a permanent suitable ground for sport activities. Canteen, toilet and library facilities available for the students and staff are not adequate.

When the above facts are considered the aspect of the Quality of Students, Student Progress and Achievements could be judged as GOOD.

4.4. Extent and Use of Student Feedback, Qualitative and Quantitative

SER does not contain a section on student feedback. However during the site visit, the reviewers have observed use of standard evaluation questionnaire to obtain student feedback. The evaluation is carried out at the end of a semester. However subsequent actions have not been taken to improve the education system.

Students are encouraged to communicate with lecturers during the teaching sessions, informally.

When the above facts are considered the aspect of the extent and use of student feedback, qualitative and quantitative could be judged as SATISFACTORY.

4.5. Postgraduate Studies

The DAF does not have a post-graduate programme. Out of the three lecturers only one possesses a masters degree another lecturer is studying in a masters programme. The third lecturer is in the temporary staff. The DAF is not in a position to commence a postgraduate programme.

Due to heavy teaching workload in the undergraduate programme of the DAF, lecturers cannot find time for research activities. No research culture has been developed within the Faculty. Reviewers did not see research publications of DAF staff.

When the above facts are considered the aspect of the Postgraduate Studies could be judged as UN SATISFACTORY.

4.6. Peer Observation

Initiatives have been taken by the DAF to introduce peer observation and evaluation.

Teaching of the lecturers of DAF is evaluated by the lectures of the Department of Economics. Reviewers found some evidence relevant to peer-observation; however no comments or reports were available

All final examination question papers are moderated by second examiners and answer scripts are evaluated by two examiners.

When the above facts are considered the aspect of the Peer Observation could be judged as SATISFACTORY.

4.7. Skills Development

Skills development is embedded in the curriculum of the degree programme. Students can acquire interpersonal, communication, negotiation and accounting technical skills through the practical training programme. IT skills and ability to handle computer accounting software can be improved through the computer based accounting course unit. Assignments and presentations have been designed to improve teamwork, communication and presentation skills of the students. Final year project report and dissertation provide opportunities for the students to develop written and oral communication, critical and analytical thinking, problem solving and report writing skills.

When the above facts are considered the aspect of the Skill Development could be judged as GOOD.

4.8. Academic Guidance and Counselling

Vauniya Campus has introduced a student counselling system and the Faculty of Business Studies has appointed two academic staff members for counselling activities.

All academic staff members of the DAF are available from 8.00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. of weekdays to provide advice to students of the degree programme.

At the discussion with the student counsellors, it was revealed that the counselling system is generally meant for the students during the orientation programme. Consultation hours are included in the personal timetables of lecturers. However, during the review period the reviewers did not see any activities or evidence relevant to counselling

When the above facts are considered the aspect of the Academic Guidance and Counselling could be judged as GOOD.

5. CONCLUSIONS

For the purpose of better understanding, conclusions are presented in statement form as given below under respective headings.

1. Curriculum Design, Content and Review

Strengths/Good Practices

- The contents of the curriculum are structured to achieve intended learning outcomes,
- The programme and course units are at a suitable academic level and sufficient opportunities are available for students to gain required subject knowledge in accounting,
- Academic staff members prepare handouts in summary form,
- Introduction of Internship in Accounting and Finance course unit may enhance employability of accounting undergraduates.
- Dissertation in Accounting is a compulsory course unit for the students.

Weaknesses

- Tutorials and small group sessions are not systematically held and no tutorial classes are allocated in the time-tables.
- Auditing and Taxation are taught in the common programme prior to teaching prerequisite accounting subjects.
- Allocation of three days per week for practical training may not provide proper training for students.
- Students are not in a position to select some of the elective course units included in the curriculum.

2. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods

Strengths/Good Practices

- DAF has employed 2 visiting lecturers to provide professional orientation in teaching practical oriented course units.
- In addition to the faculty computer centre, another small computer centre with internet facilities is available for students.
- Majority of students are satisfied with teaching in the DAF.
- The course outlines are distributed among students at the first lecture of a course unit.
- Internship in accounting is an evaluated course unit.

Weaknesses

- The academic staff of the DAF consists of one senior lecturer, one probationary lecturer and one assistant lecturer on contract basis. They have to teach accounting and some non accounting course units.
- Allocation of 20% marks for continuous assessments may not be sufficient to improve student learning
- General pass mark is 45, which is different from the normal university practice.
- Only 4 lecture halls are available for 200 students and audio visual facilities are not available. The head of the department, lecturers and non academic staff members are sharing the same office room.

3. Quality of Students including Student Progress and Achievements

Strengths/Good Practices

- Students are selected to the accountancy degree programme from those who have studied accounting at the GCE (A/L) on the basis of their preferences.
- Students are given an option either to obtain the Bachelor of Business Management (General) Degree at the end of the year three or to continue studies for another one year leading to a special degree.
- According to explanations given by the lecturers waiting time for employment is ten months,
- New students admitted to the Campus are required to follow the orientation programme.
- Students are satisfied with the quality of teaching.

Weaknesses

- Due to prevailing war situation in Vavuniya, some Sinhalese and Muslim students give up the course or get transfers to other universities.
- A student has to complete the degree within six years from the date of first registration. However, in most of the universities offering four year degrees a student can complete the degree in seven years.
- Indicators are not available to measure student progress.
- Students are not satisfied with the facilities available for sports, canteen, toilet and library.

4. Extent and Use of Student Feedback, Qualitative and Quantitative

Strengths/Good Practices

- A standard evaluation questionnaire has been used to obtain feedback of students.
- Students are encouraged to communicate with lecturers during and after the teaching sessions.

Weaknesses

- Student feedback data has not been analysed

- Reviewers did not see improvements on the basis of student feedbacks

5 Postgraduate Studies

Strengths/Good Practices

- Not identified

Weaknesses

- The DAF does not have a post-graduate programme
- No research culture has been developed within the DAF
- Academic staff members have not published research articles.

6. Peer Observation

Strengths/Good Practices

- The DAF has taken steps to introduce peer observation and evaluation.
- Final examination papers are moderated by second examiners and answer scripts are marked by two examiners.

Weaknesses

- No comments or reports are available relevant to peer observation.

7. Skills Development

Strengths/Good Practices

- Students can acquire interpersonal, communication, negotiation and accounting technical skills through the practical training programme
- IT skills and ability to handle computer accounting software can be improved through the computer based accounting course unit.
- Assignments and presentations have been designed to improve teamwork, communication and presentation skills of the students.
- Final year project report and dissertation provide opportunities for the students to develop written and oral communication skills, critical and analytical thinking, and problem solving ability.

Weaknesses

- Practical training is limited to activities of three days per week of a semester.

8. Academic Guidance and Counselling

Strengths/Good Practices

- Faculty of Management Studies has appointed two academic staff members for counselling service.
- Lecturers of DAF are available from 8.00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. of weekdays to give advice to students of the degree programme. .
- Consultation hours are included in the personal timetables of lecturers.

Weaknesses

- Generally, counselling system is in operation during the period of orientation programme
- Reviewers did not see any activities or evidence relevant to counselling.

Based on the observations made during the visit by the Review Team, the eight aspects were judged as follows:

Aspect Reviewed	Judgment Given
Curriculum design, content and review	GOOD
Teaching learning and assessment methods	GOOD
Quality of students including student progress and	GOOD
Extent and use of student feedback, qualitative and quantitative	SATISFACTORY
Postgraduate studies	UNSATISFACTORY
Peer observations	SATISFACTORY
Skills development	GOOD
Academic guidance and counselling	GOOD

The overall judgment is suspended

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- One of the objectives of the course unit system is to allow students to select optional subjects/units according to their requirements. Therefore, it is recommended that the students be allowed to select elective course units included in the curriculum.
- In the opinion of the Review Team, Auditing and Taxation are to be taught during the third or fourth year after teaching required quantum of financial, cost and management accounting.
- Improving IT component of the programme is recommended in order to produce quality graduates for the future market.
- Tutorials and small group sessions need to be incorporated in the time table, and it is recommended to hold them systematically.
- The DAF may consider increasing the allocation of marks for continuous assessments to improve student participation and learning.
- In deciding the pass mark, the DAF may consider that in most of the undergraduate programs in Management in Sri Lankan universities, general pass mark is 40.
- It is desirable to increase the number of years available to complete the degree from six years to seven years.
- The DAF may consider extending the guidance and counselling provided by the student counsellors to cover the entire student study period.

- In order to provide more benefits to the students, it is recommended that the internship program be increased from three days to five days per week.
- The present staff members should be encouraged to continue studies leading to PhD in Accounting or Finance.
- Lectures should also be encouraged and facilitated to get involve in research activities.
- More lecturers with accounting and finance qualifications need to be recruited.
- Internet access has to be improved by linking all computers of the small computer centre with Internet.
- Room and equipment facilities have to be increased in order to improve the quality of the students.