



# **INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW 2017**

Rajarata University of Sri Lanka

**Institutional Review**  
**of**  
**Rajarata University of Sri Lanka**

**Reviewers**

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## **SECTION 1: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE UNIVERSITY AND ITS REVIEW CONTEXT**

The Rajarata University of Sri Lanka (RUSL) was established as the eleventh National University in Sri Lanka and was inaugurated on the 31<sup>st</sup> January 1996 as per the Gazette Notification 896/2 and under the Section 21 of the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978, amalgamating resources of the Affiliated University Colleges in the Central, Northwestern and North-Central Provinces. At the inception, three faculties, namely, the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, the Faculty of Management Studies, and the Faculty of Applied Sciences were established, and the Faculty of Agriculture and the Faculty of Medicine & Allied Sciences were established in 2001 and 2006, respectively. The Faculties of Social Sciences and Humanities, Management Studies, and Applied Sciences are conveniently located in the Mihintale premises, while the Faculties of Agriculture and Medicine & Allied Sciences are situated approximately 15 km away from Mihintale.

The Rajarata University of Sri Lanka has the vision “To be a centre of excellence in higher education and research.” The mission of the University is “To produce innovative intellectuals capable of taking challenges in the context of global development through the competencies developed from the academic programmes, research and training of wide nature.” The university corporate plan is usually prepared to achieve the vision. Some of the Faculties have understood the outcome based and student centered learning system but accepted that they have to work more to achieve this goal. Those faculties are also intending to align their programs with the Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework (SLQF). In addition to learning resources, the University also provides sports facilities, career guidance, industrial placement, language training, and facilities for drama and music, etc. to develop the capabilities of its graduates. The counseling facilities along with accommodation for all the students in 9 newly constructed hostels and limited health facilities provide a suitable environment for learning. The accommodation facilities for the academic, administrative and non-academic staff is limited and private accommodations are not available for the staff to rent, due to the geographical positioning of the university.

There are 248 academic staff and 432 non-academic staff serving a population of about 5000 undergraduate and 400 postgraduate students. The annual internal undergraduate intake is progressively increasing during the last 5 years in the Faculties of Agriculture and Management Studies, while the Faculty of Applied Sciences complains about the inadequate student admission to the Faculty rather than the set number, and it was observed that from 2017/2018 onwards the student admission to the Faculty of Applied Science will be increased to the expected number. To provide more opportunities for learning, the University has established distance and open education modalities. A general convocation for both undergraduates and postgraduates are held annually.

The University Council which is the governing authority of the University consists of the Vice Chancellor (as the *ex officio* Chairperson), Deans of the six Faculties (6 *ex officio* members), two representatives of the Senate, and ten members appointed by the University Grants Commission (UGC).

The Rajarata University of Sri Lanka had a total of 10 participants, representing all Faculties, in the process of preparing the Self Evaluation Report (SER). The Rajarata University of Sri Lanka has prepared a SER as per the guidelines of the QA handbook prepared by the CVCD and UGC in 2002. The first Institutional Review was undertaken during January 2011 and a judgment of “Confidence” was given to the Rajarata University of Sri Lanka. The responses by the University to the recommendations made in relation to the University, and the action taken by the University were provided during the site visit in November 2017. The corporate plan and action plan were provided during the site visit.

## **SECTION 2: REVIEW TEAM'S VIEW OF THE SELF - EVALUATION REPORT (SER), THE RAJARATA UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA**

The SER of The Rajarata University of Sri Lanka contains 83 pages compiled under three Sections with one figure, four tables and an appendix with 15 Tables. The report has been prepared in accordance with the format given in the Manual for Institutional Review of Sri Lankan Universities and Higher Education Institutes published by the University Grants

Commission, in April 2015 (pages 92-96). However, there were some shortcomings, as described in the next section (Section 3).

In Section 1, an introduction to the institution has been presented in 7 sub-sections. First the vision and mission of the university were presented. In Sub Section 1.1, Introduction about the University, and in Sub Sections 1.2 and 1.3, A historical outline, establishment and composition of the University were given. The goals and objectives of the university have not been taken into consideration. In the sub section 1.3, the student, academic and non-academic staff population is given. The organizational structure and SWOT analysis are presented in Sub Sections 1.5 and 1.6 respectively. The Committee has observed that there were a few lapses in the SWOT analysis, indicating some of the strengths against weaknesses. The process followed to prepare the SER was outlined in the sub section 1.7. It contains information on the establishment of the IQAU, but has been observed that the activities of the IQAU have commenced very recently and have a long way to go.

The previous Institutional Review for The Rajarata University of Sri Lanka was undertaken in January 2011. The SER did not address the Recommendations given by the previous Institutional Review Report. There were 47 important comments given under seven different headings. The comments and the remedial measures, which have been undertaken, are under process, or are unaddressed, were provided during the site visit.

In the Section 2, the adherence to the 10 criteria and 145 standards explained in the Manual for Institutional Review has been described with a list of documentary evidence and guide to each piece of evidence. The listed documents were made available for examination by the Review Team. As instructed in the Manual for Institutional Review, under this chapter, the information was tabulated in four columns. It would have been better if the table would have had five columns for easy reference, with column 1 listing the number of the Standard, column 2 describing the examples expected, column 3 describing the university's adherence to each Standard, column 4 highlighting the documentary evidence to support the claim, and finally, column 5 listing the code of each document. Every time the reviewers had to cross check the SER with the Manual for Institutional Review, in order to cross check with the Standards.

**The Criterion 1:** Governance and Management have been highlighted under 29 Standards. Under this section, attempts have been made to describe the policy statements and corporate plan (2017-2021).

**The Criterion 2:** Curriculum Design and Development has been examined under 15 Standards. This section attempts to demonstrate university's adherence to the policies and practices relevant to curriculum design and development.

**The Criterion 3:** Teaching and Learning was elaborated in the next section under 10 standards. In this section, the activities undertaken by the university to promote the quality of education have been given while indicating drawbacks with the staff to student ratio in different faculties.

**The Criterion 4:** Learning Resources and Student Support have been summarized under 14 Standards. The SER has not elaborated the drawbacks of the university's requirements, especially in relation to infrastructure facilities for the learning environment.

**The Criterion 5:** Student Assessment and Awards. This criterion contains 15 Standards. The procedures followed for student assessment were mentioned.

**The Criterion 6:** It deals with the Strength and Quality of Staff. This section provided evidence with regard to the recruitment and promotion of staff, staff development and induction of new recruits (staff).

**The Criterion 7:** Postgraduate Studies, Research, Innovation and Commercialization comprise 25 Standards. This section demonstrated how some of the faculties of the university facilitate development and maintain a good research culture and strengthen postgraduate education.

**The Criterion 8:** Community Engagement and Outreach have been discussed under 6 Standards. This section is basically confined to the extension courses and services of the university to engage with the community.

**The Criterion 9:** Distance Education is highlighted under 13 Standards which deals with open and distance education providing opportunities to students who were unable to enter the internal system of education.

**The Criterion 10:** Quality Assurance is highlighted under 10 Standards. It was observed that the University has initiated Quality Assurance activities.

The conclusions and current actions were presented under Section 3 of the SER. It acknowledges the fact that the university has taken action to improve its quality by taking possible actions. The progressive entities have been confronted with limitations in resource allocation, infrastructure facilities, and insufficient cadre / human resources. It also attributes the university's inability to absorb best available academic staff and students to its geographic location.

The Review Team is well aware of the difficulties in collating a wide range of information pertaining to different circumstances and entities. The efforts made by the members of the SER team in this regard are appreciated. One of the most significant observations made in the SER is that the whole process has to be informed to the University academic and non-academic communities for the betterment of the University.

The Review Team considers that the SER has been prepared according to the guidelines given in the Manual for IR. The compilation of documentary evidence amounted to a large number of documents, which can be regarded as evidence of the commitment of the Team of the SER. However, analysis of some important "data" (which could be presented in tabular or graphical form to represent the developments since last institutional review) would have improved the SER.

The Corporate Plan does not provide any evidence to identify whether the strategies and activities are in place along with the personnel responsible for the implementation of the Corporate Plan according to a time frame. Also, the SER has mentioned nothing about the

recommendations of the previous IR report released and the remedial measures undertaken to improve the system.

The Review Team agrees that the SER has identified some of the issues that affect Quality Assurance in the University. The more significant issues referred in the SER are related to improper maintenance of the University website, appraisal of its staff and students, poor reaching out into the overseas arena, no systematic method to settle staff grievances, filling of approved non-academic cadre positions (particularly of academic and laboratory staff, who are below the accepted norms in Science based faculties), unsatisfactory monitoring of graduate employability, no processes for peer observation in all faculties while not satisfactory in those faculties where the student feedback is been practised, no due consideration given for accessibility to differently-abled students, the small number of postgraduate research degrees, no proper mechanism for gauging community perception of the University, no optimal liaison with the public and industry, no initiatives taken to attract foreign students into degree programmes, and non-streamlined activities of Internal Quality Assurance Cells (IQAC).

### **SECTION 3: A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE REVIEW PROCESS**

The UGC appointed the following team consisting of 5 members to conduct the institutional review of The Rajarata University of Sri Lanka from 20<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> November 2017. Prof. Vasanthy Arasaratnam served as the review chair.

- Prof. Vasanthy Arasaratnam (Senior Professor, University of Jaffna)
- Prof. K. R. R. Mahanama (Senior Professor, University of Colombo)
- Prof. D. A. Nimal Darmasena (Senior Professor, University of Peradeniya)
- Prof. R. P. Chitra Ranjani (Senior Professor, University of Kelaniya)
- Prof. Tilak P. D. Gamage (Professor, University of Ruhuna)

The Self Evaluation Report (SER) was made available on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July 2017 to each member of the team for the desk evaluation and the instruction was given well ahead of the visit to the University for the site review process. The review team discussed the Program Schedule with the University and finalized the timetable before commencing the site visit. With regard to the

preparation by the Review Team, it did not meet personally and only communicated via e-mail. It would be always nice to have the team arriving in the place one day before, to have a detailed discussion about the whole process. The panel visited the University and conducted the review from 20.11.2017 to 24.11.2017. The Review Team was very satisfied with the agenda, which is given in the annex, and the facilities provided by the University. The Deans of Faculties with the Heads of Departments met the team on their arrival at the respective Faculties and made presentations. That was followed by two separate meetings: one for academic staff (excluding the Dean and the Heads of Departments) and the other with the students. The balance time was spent on verifying the supporting documents and observing the facilities.

The site visit was well organized and the team was able to keep up the time with the Program Schedule. The Review Team is of the opinion that all those who participated in the review process took the entire review process very seriously and actively participated in the proceedings. The Vice Chancellor led the process with able support from Professor Sanath Hettiarachchi, Director of the Internal Quality Assurance Unit of the University, who was accessible all the time to the team and provided the necessary support in all aspects.

The Review Team found that the some of the documents referred in the SER were not relevant to the criterion mentioned. The said documents were pooled together and placed in a place, arranged in systematic manner, which helped the reviewers to go through the documents easily during the site visit. The Review Team split up and went through all the documents.

#### **SECTION 4: OVERVIEW OF THE UNIVERSITY'S APPROACH TO QUALITY ASSURANCE AND STANDARDS**

The Rajarata University of Sri Lanka does not possess a comprehensive quality assurance system. The IQAU had been established and became active after the appointment of the new Director, and in some of the Faculties the QA Cells had been established but they are not functioning effectively. The significance and the central role played by quality assurance has not been identified and endorsed in the University's Corporate Plan.

In the preparation for the current institutional review, the work that has been performed at the University level showed that the new Director had been appointed few months before and it implies that more awareness needs to be brought in among the staff.

The Staff Development Centre of the University is contributing adequately in inducting probationary staff in their profession and helping senior level staff through workshops and seminars, to maintain and sustain quality and standards.

Few of the Faculties in the University have paid due attention to the Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework (SLQF) in planning the curricula to have academic standards. There is no evidence to show that Quality Assurance and standards are regularly monitored at different levels.

The Review Team noticed the following activities that the university has in place to maintain its quality and standards:

- At Council level all academic, administrative, and financial matters are monitored to maintain the quality and standards.
- At Council level the performance indicators in the Corporate Plan are monitored, which is a strength of this Universality, while it is also important to consider discussing these matters at the Senate and Faculty levels.
- The Staff Development Unit has been strengthened physically and invites qualified resource persons to conduct quality assurance programs.
- Students are being provided with certain facilities for social and personal development, for example, sports, with the assistance of instructors.
- The library has been automated and provides quality service with limited books and study materials available.
- The Career Guidance Unit is functioning well with two appointed officers. The progress is continuously monitored by the Vice-Chancellor's advisory committee. They are providing both counseling and career guidance services to the students, who need both advice and consolation, at present. It is better to accelerate the establishment of the council approved psychological counseling unit as a separate entity to further improve the quality of both career guidance and counseling services.

- The IQAU has been established at the University level; it is located at an easily accessible place.
- The University does not have a coordinator or a Unit to facilitate international affairs with a view to promote interaction between local and overseas university staff.
- Subject reviews have been conducted and follow-up actions have been taken to rectify the deficiencies pointed out by the review reports.
- QA has not been in the Faculty and Senate Agendas. The Faculties and the Senate need to monitor the progress of the academic and other programmes.
- It is suggested to activate the Faculty level cells and strengthen the linkage between IQAU and Faculty QA Cells. It is also important to strengthen the administrative support given to IQAU to make its coordinating role more efficient.

## **SECTION 5: COMMENTARY ON THE TEN CRITERIA OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW**

### **Criteria 5.1: Governance and Management**

The Rajarata University of Sri Lanka has an organizational structure similar to the other state Universities in the country, which is capable of managing the higher education in the present context in relation to students seeking higher education. However, monitoring methods using the existing structures need to be improved as indicated later. The organizational structure, governance and management system are in full compliance with respective Acts, relevant Ordinances and their amendments, Establishment Codes, rules and regulations issued by the UGC, relevant Ministries/Authorities, etc.

It is commendable that the Strategic Plan (2017-2021) and Action plan for 2017 have been prepared. The KPI's drawn for activities linked to the six goals do not match with the mission of the University. Current levels of the KPIs have not been indicated anywhere even though projections have been made annually up to 2021. It is again recommended that KPI's be developed relating to student abilities at exit, and to match the vision and mission of the University.

It was noted that the university was engaged in the development of the Corporate Plan, but the majority of the academic, and nonacademic staff are unaware of the process. It is observed that the awareness about the Corporate Plan and its Goals, Objectives, and Strategies among the majority of first level managers, *i.e.*, DR, SAR, AR, DB, SAB, and AB, and the academics and other executive officers in the University was minimal. Further the input from all stakeholders (*e.g.*, employers, UGC, parents, students) was not obtained while preparing the corporate plan. Obtaining inputs from relevant stakeholders while developing the University Corporate Plan would help to keep in touch with the national requirements and would allow the graduate profiles of the faculties to improve the university graduate profiles.

Academic monitoring of the activities lies with the Faculty. It is recommended that evidence of such monitoring be reported to the Faculty Board with measurements made of Key Performance Indicators. It is recommended that this be made an agenda Item in the Faculty Board.

At the Institutional Review, it was observed that the Higher Educational Management Information System (HEMIS) has not been implemented, in order to ensure a robust progress monitoring and evaluation mechanism.

The University has prepared an Annual Action Plan with specific time frames. Since the funds received are often less than the funds requested, it was recommended to prioritize the list of activities and revise the Action Plan. Resource allocations are made 'bulk wise' in equal amounts to all the faculties. Need analysis has to be done and the fund allocation has to be done accordingly. It has been observed that there is no transparency about how the limited funds received have been prioritized. The Finance Committee carries out procedures and mechanisms for 'Financial monitoring.' There is no computerized system available for the financial monitoring. According to the last report released by the Auditor General, the Rajarata University of Sri Lanka was given a qualified audit opinion. There were no major issues in financial matters. Delays in releasing funds by Treasury have been linked to delays in procurement by the university. It is recommended that exact specification documents for equipment purchases be prepared for all activities requested for funding under the Action Plan at the beginning of each year.

Several student groups reported poor maintenance of buildings and infrastructure. Discussions with those responsible for the buildings and infrastructure revealed that this was due to a combination of several reasons. One was because of inadequate funds in recurrent budgets. Another was because of the inability to fill existing cadre positions arising out of Ministry Circulars requiring such vacancies to be filled only from the lists provided by the Ministry. A third was the difficulty in selection of a responsible contractor (when outsourcing is done). Fourth was the sudden increase in the number of student admissions.

The Review Team also has observed that there was no adherence to the Master Plan and that buildings are constructed based on the receipt of the funds and the availability of the land. This area needs serious reconsideration to create an environment to suit the educational and residential needs.

The University has to develop transparent, fair, effective, and expeditious disciplinary procedures and grievance redress mechanisms for staff and students, which are communicated to all concerned and implemented. The review team noted that there is no 'grievance committee' and recommends to appoint a 'grievance committee' to settle matters prior to a decision being taken by the VC on any contentious issue. It is also possible to have one each at the Faculty level. If the issues cannot be sorted out at the Faculty level, it can be placed to the Council level 'Grievance Committee.'

The Review Team found adequate evidence for the following criteria:

- Even though the documents have been arranged in a systematic manner, some of the documents were not related to the requirements of the Standards.
- The SER has been prepared well; the supporting documents were not tallying with the relevant standards.
- Although performance indicators were defined in the Action Plan of the University, there was no mechanism to monitor regularly.
- There was no evidence to show that the corporate plan and action plans were tested at the Faculty, Department, Centre, or Unit levels.

- The University recruits appropriately qualified staff through transparent mechanisms, and makes efforts to retain them and upgrade their skills.
- The By-laws and University Management Guide have been prepared. They have to be approved by the Senate and the Council.
- The University has taken measures to improve IT facilities.
- University web page is being developed. There was a separate Statistics and Information Unit to handle the related activities centrally.
- The examination management system is also being developed.
- Appointment of a Statistician and a web master is commendable.
- The University and most of the Faculties do not have an MIS.
- The academic Work Norms has been recently prepared and approved by the Senate and the Council.
- The University has defined and detailed job descriptions for the categories of non-academic staff on their appointments. But when they are transferred from one section to another, no such list of duties is given to the staff.
- The documents provided by all the Faculties were not in Uniform format. A need for a common guideline incorporating important contents for a student handbook, prepared by the faculties, was identified.
- The consolidated funds received have been distributed to all the Faculties Equally and within the Departments Equally.
- It is advisable to revise the Action Plan after receiving the annual allocations, and distribute the funds after making a need analysis and having discussions with the Deans, Directors and Coordinators. This distribution has to be aligned with the Activity Plan.
- It has been observed that the generated fund has been used for urgent requirements and to solve crisis situations.
- No policy is established for the utilization of generated funds.
- The University has prepared the increment forms for the academic and non-academic staff. There are no staff performance appraisals and management systems based on information collected in the 'standard increment form.'
- The SER does not report that the Faculties have their own rules and regulations regarding academic integrity. The view of the Review Team is that it is an internal matter, which is

best resolved within the university itself, by establishing Grievances Committees at the University and Faculty levels.

- The university has indicated that it has taken an initiative to develop comprehensive policies regarding Gender Equity and Equality (GEE) and Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV). It is partially implemented, with the lead taken by the Faculty of Medicine to include some material under its curriculum. At other faculties and units, cases of GEE and SGBV are treated case by case via the university's existing disciplinary processes.
- The Career Guidance Unit is functioning well to help the students but with minimum manpower. It is better to establish a separate psychological counseling unit allowing the Career Guidance Unit to concentrate on its mandated work under the UGC circular 934.

### **Criteria 5.2: Curriculum Design and Development**

The University has taken sufficient steps to maintain conformity of academic programmes with its mission and goals. Formal approvals have been taken from the university authority for all degree programmes offered. However, there were no proper TOR and guidelines prepared by the senate to curriculum development committee and faculty level curriculum committees to maintain the uniformity of the process among different faculties. A policy on regular monitoring and review of programmes could also be established by the senate to keep the programmes aligned with the changing national, regional, and global contexts.

Although the university has officially communicated the curriculum related policies and principles to respective faculties, at the meeting with the staff it was found that majority of the staff of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities were unaware of the curriculum development process and the development of a curriculum based on programme ILOs even after going through training workshops. Therefore, the university can implement a process of sharing the expertise available and good practices adopted by other faculties to improve the quality and relevance of programmes. The university should also consider the establishment of a policy on credit transfer mechanism to facilitate student exchanges and parallel entries.

It is commendable that the University has adopted the SLQF and the Subject Benchmark for many programmes. Although employability surveys and industrial feedback is sought for some

programmes, it is not uniform among all faculties and programmes. A policy with guidelines would address such issues and improve the consistency of data collection in all faculties.

The university's approach and efforts made on design and development of curricula based on outcome-based education (OBE) and student-centred learning (SCL) is commendable. However the duration of industrial training could be increased to satisfy both the industry and the students in some programmes.

Graduate profiles, ILO mapping, and workshops or awareness programmes on aligning them with the SLQF were done only in some faculties. Attention has to be paid to maintain the uniformity of the curriculum revision process in all faculties.

Except the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities (FSSH), all other faculties have developed the programme ILOs and course ILOs. Although the FSSH is also in the process of developing their curriculum, it was found that rather than developing a curriculum based on subject benchmark and programme ILOs, they are trying to fit ILOs to their existing curriculum. Furthermore, the university needs to develop and compile the detailed lesson plans including method/s of delivery, assessments and assessment criteria of all the degree programmes and make them available for the students. Based on the student comments, it was found that some teachers provide these details at their first lecture but it is not uniform among faculties and even within a given faculty. Meanwhile some teachers have not sufficiently understood the detailed lesson plans according to the evidence provided. Since it is a right of the student to know course details and the assessment plan, immediate action should be taken at the faculty level to develop these documents.

Almost all faculties have made available the prospectuses or handbooks of the respective faculties to the students. It is better to consider producing prospectuses and student handbooks separately for all faculties to improve the clarity of information to the student. However, some documents available at present needs comprehensive revision on assessment criteria and other related information such as appreciative achievements, *i.e.*, medals and scholarships selection criteria.

It is commendable that the university has taken efforts to satisfy national and global human resources needs through the curriculum and contents, and the university has taken some lead in introducing a novel but globally recognized health promotion degree programme in South Asia. Although some inputs are taken from the industries and external stakeholders, evidence on incorporating inputs from relevant research and professional bodies is limited.

In general, teaching learning strategies and assessment are evaluated on the basis of the students' attainment of learning outcomes. However, it was found that still there is a fraction of staff members who are not well aware of this systematic approach of ILO based teaching-learning and assessment, according to the sample lesson plans provided. Therefore, the SDC or teaching methodology units at faculty level need to continuously train the staff on lesson planning, lesson sequencing, and assessment.

The University offers only a few supplementary courses or training, such as English and job shadowing, as vocational, inter-disciplinary & multidisciplinary programmes, to enrich the general curricula. The University needs to further expand such programmes to improve the employability of students, and facilitate the development of their careers.

There is no issue with respect to the internal academic programmes on developing measures to protect the academic interest of students registered for or accepted for admission to a programme, when a programme is discontinued or suspended. However, this could be an issue for postgraduate and ODL students. Therefore, the university could develop a mechanism for addressing potential student issues of postgraduate and external programmes.

The University has taken measures to collect data on employability of their graduates at the time of convocation, and compile it at the statistics division. The retention rates and graduation rates at first attempt are also being followed in many faculties. Regular and proper tracer studies will provide detailed information for future planning and curriculum revisions as well. However, no clear faculty specific approaches were introduced to mitigate the identified employability issues other than the common programmes of the Career Guidance Unit. Further, employer satisfaction,

admission rates to advanced degree programmes, participation rates in fellowships and internships, and societal impacts have not been studied to analyze the social impact of different programmes.

There is no regular monitoring system of the effectiveness of programmes at the moment but some initiatives have been taken through student feedback in four faculties, and research on a pre-clinical course. However, a mechanism used to rectify the identified issues is not well defined. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a university wide policy on programme monitoring from relevant stakeholders and ensure appropriate actions are taken to remedy any identified shortcomings through the IQAU.

Only three faculties have done a remarkable regular cyclic curriculum revision while the other faculties have not succeeded in that process. Some attempts have been taken in incorporating the comments of external quality assurance in revising the curricula, but not in all faculties. Therefore, it is recommended to develop guidelines or a policy on curriculum revision to maintain university wide consistency while assuring the quality and the relevance of the programmes.

### **Criterion 5.3: Teaching and Learning**

Teaching and learning is one of the important dimension considered in the Institutional Review. The university has taken measures to ensure continuous professional development of their academic staff through the Staff Development Center. The role of the SDC to uplift the standards of the academics is commendable.

The University has taken appropriate measures to improve teaching and learning strategies that suit the undergraduate academic programmes offered by the university. Most of the Faculties were teaching based on a lesson plan and were aware of the objectives of their teaching modules. Evidence provided by the students indicated that students were informed about the learning outcomes of the modules at the beginning of the module.

Information provided by the Faculty through handbooks was not clear enough for students to understand the information about the University and Faculties. In some Faculties learning opportunities and support available to students and their responsibilities to engage in the learning opportunities provided were not clearly given.

The contents of the handbooks provided by the faculties were very different from each other and some of the important information such as course structure and subject combinations were missing, hindering the students from getting a clear understanding about the programme.

In most of the Faculties the teaching learning process were limited to conventional lecture rooms. Some of the lecture halls were not up to standard, while some of the Faculties were in the process of transforming their teaching learning process to an interactive one where students learn by actively engaging in and interacting with the study material.

From the statistics provided by the University it was observed that students of some faculties are using their Learning Management System (LMS) to obtain information about their academic activities. When compared to the total student population of the university, the usage of the LMS is very low.

Information provided by the evaluation procedures of modules indicate that some marks have been allocated to student presentations, self-learning assignments, project work, field visits, seminars, group work, practical classes and industrial training apart from classroom teaching.

Even though the present trend is to move towards the Student Centered Learning (SCL), the traditional system of education is still continuing. The curriculum is to be converted to Outcome Based Education (OBE) and technology based learning. This has to be implemented through a strong and clear Strategic Plan.

Most of the handbooks do not provide the vital information to the students, *e.g.*, assessment criteria, course structure, the conditions to repeat the exams, and the grades which could be

obtained, rules and regulations of faculties and university, awards and prizes, criteria for obtaining classes, etc.

As practiced by most of the universities, providing information to the students at the beginning of their respective programmes through a handbook is the practice. It was noted that most of the Faculties are giving this information to students, but through a course prospectus, not by a student handbook. The prospectuses of different Faculties are in different formats and information is not uniform.

It was observed that though the MBA program conducted by the Rajarata University of Sri Lanka has a high market value, a student handbook has not been published yet. The students of the MBA programme were unaware of the program structure, and examination and evaluation criteria. As a self-funded course with a lot of attraction, the importance of preparing a Handbook and issuing it at the registration of students is noted.

Self-directed learning of students through assignments was in practice in most of the Faculties, which was also reflected by the use of library facilities of the university. However student engagement and interaction with academic staff was not healthy in some faculties. The internet accessibility is weak at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, but it was reported that actions are being taken to improve the networking facilities by the end of 2017.

The Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities has a Computer Lab but there were no evidence to indicate that special attention is paid to improving the quality of the students. The Computer lab is hardly used by the students.

In different Faculties, the English Language teaching is conducted in a different manner; further, it has been observed that in the same Faculty the intensive program is also not uniform, depends on time availability and differs among different batches of students.

The English program to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences has to be improved. The team observed that the English Language skills of the students of the Faculties of Agriculture and Applied Sciences were far superior to those of the other three Faculties.

It is important to get feedback from passed out graduates to compile statistics of past students. Tracer studies have not been conducted and student's employability has not been assessed systematically.

The major problem in some of the Faculties is the student : staff ratio. The accepted norm of student : staff ratio are 1:7, 1:10 and 1:17 for faculties with clinical work, science based, and social science faculties, respectively. There is a dearth of qualified academic staff, particularly for the Faculty of Management Studies, the Faculty of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences, and the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, that has to be addressed immediately.

The Postgraduate Diploma in Education is carried out with only one permanent academic staff member, which needs urgent attention, as the training of teachers is crucial, since it determines the quality of the future generation of the country.

#### **Criterion 5.4: Learning Resources, Student Support and Progression**

Information about the University is managed through a well-structured web site of the university. However accessibility of internet facilities within the University was poor and may affect obtaining information quickly through internet. Also, no evidence could be found about the intranet facilities of the Faculties but applications of ICT for learning and administration was considerably poor.

As practiced by most of the universities, providing information to students at the beginning of their respective programmes is through a handbook. It was noted that most of the Faculties are giving this information to students, but through a course prospectus not by a student handbook. The prospectus of different Faculties are in different formats and information are not uniform.

The student handbooks are expected to provide vital information to the students, such as assessment criteria, course structure, the conditions to repeat the exams and the grades which could be obtained, rules and regulations of faculties and university, awards and prizes, class criteria, etc. Some of the handbooks (or prospectuses) are lacking that vital information needed by students.

Services provided by the main library and Faculty libraries were at a satisfactory level through lending facilities, reference library, inter-library loan, information literacy programme, user awareness programme, and some other services. Also, automation and application of ICT for the services provided by the main library and faculty libraries are satisfactory. However, with compared to the total student population, user statistics were much lower than normally expected, although investment in the library was relatively high. Although there are funding constraints for acquiring new textbooks and journals, the collection of books and journals was satisfactory.

Within the university there is a great need for an MIS system to be put in place to manage information effectively, efficiently, and securely, with accessibility only to authorized persons. The MIS is expected to provide records of all currently enrolled students comprising all admissions, academic, demographic, and educational background records, and assessment and examination results. The registration of students is done manually and the arrangements were inefficient.

Laboratory facilities of the Faculty of Medicine and Allied Health Science are maintained at a high standard, particularly facilities of the professorial unit. In the Faculty of Applied Sciences, laboratory facilities are satisfactory, but facilities of the Faculty of Agriculture are maintained in very limited spaces with many difficulties.

There is a great need for improving English language communication skills of students and sufficient infrastructure facilities have to be provided. With respect to human resources allocated for English language teaching there are some deficiencies. The number of staff allocated for

faculties are not sufficient and also the involvement of students is poor. Although there are some facilities for language teaching, poor use of those facilities was reported.

The University has a Career Guidance Unit managed by a director, located at the main premises in Mihintale. Presently the Unit is providing number of programmes for students to develop their management skills and soft skills. However the services extended by the Unit are more centered around the main premises of the university than the other faculties located away from the main premises.

The students are supported through the Mahapola and Bursary system. In addition to that, there is a Student Welfare Committee of the University comprising students and staff. However, there is a need for an extensive programme to look after both students and staff. These include medical insurance schemes and the facilities in the Medical Centre.

Also, a student counselling system is well in place within the University, and also there is a mentoring system in the Faculties of Agriculture, Medicine and Allied Health, Management, and Applied Science.

The University has established a system to monitor and control student disciplinary matters. The University has put into practice the UGC Circular 919 to curb ragging and any other form of intimidation and harassment of students. These are implemented by the University's existing disciplinary procedures. The Review Team could not find evidence of the policies that are enforced on academic honesty and integrity, conflict of interest, and ethics. However, the Review Team did observe the preparation of the By-laws to be implemented by the University. It is recommended that this be formalized at all faculties.

#### **Criterion 5.5: Student Assessment and Awards**

The University has procedure for designing, approving, and reviewing the assessment strategies. They are provided in the by-laws, student handbooks, examination rules and regulations, and the curricula. However there are variations among faculties with regard to the assessment criteria. Most of the faculties do not have clear criteria for awarding classes. It is recommended to follow

a standard format, and to list all necessary requirements to be accomplished by students to earn classes in the student handbooks of all faculties.

Students are assessed using published criteria (student handbook), which are communicated to all students at the time of enrollment. However detailed course outlines with assessment and ILOs were not found in any of the faculties. Therefore it is recommended to distribute a detailed course outline with the assessment criteria at the first lecture of a course unit..

It is commendable that the Staff Development Centre organizes workshops on different aspects of examinations for probationary lecturers.

The University has identified the importance of the SLQF and conducts awareness programs through the SDC to academic staff of the University. Except in the degree programs in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, in other degree programs in which lesson sequences are identified, the delivery methods of the lessons are given, the lessons are aligned with the ILOs, and the methods of assessment are also clearly mentioned.

The important aspect of student centered learning is to provide students with appropriate and timely feedback to enable them to monitor their progress and promote learning. Except the Faculties of Medicine and Applied Sciences, other faculties need to adhere to providing feedback after the continuous assessment, mid-term examinations and quizzes, etc.

It is strongly recommended that all faculties use the LMS, which will enable students to obtain the required information on time.

The University has a policy and regulations governing the nomination and appointment of both internal and external examiners. The appointments are done using C forms with proper approval. It is appreciated that initiatives have been taken to prepare the operating policy and procedure for question paper scrutiny and moderation, and second marking of answer scripts. Though result releasing activities are decentralized to the faculty level, students complained that most of the faculties take more than three months to release end-of-semester examination results. It is also

noted that the Postgraduate Diploma in Education releases results at the end of the program, after three semesters (the duration of the program is 1.5 years). This is one of the most important aspects, which needs to be monitored by the Senate and the Vice Chancellor of the University.

The University has already synchronized its programs since 2017, and in the near future inter-faculty and inter-institutional credit transfer will be implemented.

### **Criterion 5.6 – Strength and Quality of Staff**

The University has a comprehensive human resource policy on recruitment, retention, career development, promotion, and leave. It is appreciated that the preparation of the management guide, which includes HRM procedures and the functions and responsibilities of employees, is almost completed. It is the responsibility of the University management to implement the procedures enclosed in the management guide.

The total number of academic staff in the university is 248, out of which 113 (46%) academics are in the lecturer probationary category and temporary staff. This situation is not healthy. It is needed to recruit academically and professionally qualified staff to maintain quality and relevance of undergraduate programs.

The Staff Development Centre (SDC) of the university is functioning well. It conducts a certificate of teaching in higher education program for probationary lecturers, and other professional development programs which address the need of all categories of staff, and regularly trains, retains, and motivates them for the roles and tasks they perform. In the year 2017, the SDC conducted 15 training programs, out of which 6 were programs for academic staff, 8 for non-academic staff, and 1 program for all staff. It is appreciated that staff members are encouraged and trained on outcome based education and student centered learning.

Except the faculty of Agriculture, other faculties have inadequate numbers of academic and non-academic cadres as per the norm of staff-student ratio. The remaining vacancies need to be filled for the smooth functioning of the university.

There is no organized mentoring system to guide newly recruited academic staff. It is recommended to develop a policy on career development for newly recruited staff.

The University has an operating policy and procedure for calculation of workload of academic staff approved at the council meeting of 01.11.2016 for internal teaching activities and is being used for academic auditing from 2017.

Non-academic staff members know their duties and responsibilities through the job description at the time of their appointment. Further it is noted that performance of staff is not appraised regularly against work norms. It is recommended to develop a policy on assessment of staff for outstanding performance.

### **5.7 Postgraduate studies, Research, Innovation and Commercialization**

The Rajarata University of Sri Lanka (RUSL) offers several postgraduate degree programmes ranging from postgraduate diploma to the Ph.D. level in the Faculties of Applied Sciences, Medicine & Allied Health Sciences, Management Studies, and Social Sciences & Humanities. So far the Faculty of Agriculture has not initiated any postgraduate programs and they are in the process of introducing M.Sc. and postgraduate diploma degrees, which may have more relevance to the region.

The oldest postgraduate program offered by the RUSL is the Master of Business Administration (MBA). This program has been in practice over the last 15 years and it is one of the most popular postgraduate programs offered by the RUSL. However, the program has not provided a handbook or prospectus to the students. Students seem to be happy with the program and they appreciated the conducting of the MBA program at the RUSL. Students following the MBA program have three options to graduate with an MBA. Students opting for the MBA with Scholarly Works must complete 54 earned credits, which requires 18 months, while both the MBA with Business Development Plan and MBA with Dissertation extend for 2 years, with 64 earned credits. Students who are willing to exit the program with a postgraduate diploma can exit the program after completing 38 earned credits at the end of the first year. During the discussion with the

students, it was revealed that the exam results are delayed in the MBA program. On average, the program takes a semester to release the results to the students.

The Faculty of Medical & Allied Health Sciences offers M.Phil. and Ph.D. programs and these programmes are monitored by a Higher Degrees Committee. The Faculty has an effective ethics committee, which awards the ethical clearances for the research projects. Except in the Faculty of Medical and Allied Health Sciences, postgraduate programs in all the other faculties are monitored by a Board of Study at the respective faculty. The Faculty of Medical and Allied Sciences has a policy, which promotes and rewards innovations in research and allocates resources accordingly. However, there is no award system for outstanding research or innovations in ‘teaching and learning.’ It is recommended that such an award be instituted, and the initiative for such an award be taken by the academic community at Faculty or Senate level.

Details of admission qualifications, syllabi, by-laws, and examination procedures are available for the use of prospective students in faculty websites. The selection and the admission procedures are clearly given in websites.

The University does not provide any specific training program to postgraduate academic staff or research students at present. The mechanisms to ensure postgraduate supervision exist in the University through granting approval by Faculty Boards, Senate, and Council. The appointment of qualified supervisors with subject knowledge is a normal function of the University and takes place regularly at Faculties and the Senate of the University.

The guidelines for research supervisors are not available in any of the faculties. According to the SER, the University has adopted measures to balance the weight of the taught courses and independent research component of postgraduate programs..

There is no uniform system documented with regard to annual reviewing or monitoring of postgraduate programs in all faculties. But it was revealed that ideas and suggestions are exchanged and sometimes decisions are taken during statutory meetings of the Board of Studies.

There is a mechanism of monitoring the progress of students of postgraduate courses (taught courses) and research students. The progress reviews by Boards of Study / Higher Degree Committee are recorded in the minutes.

There were no published documents available on policies to deal with research misconduct, plagiarism *etc.* There are mechanisms for complaining and appealing for all students, including postgraduate students, through conventional procedures and arrangements in the Faculty Boards / Senate / Council.

During the discussion it was noted that the degree awarding criteria and the mark ranges for a specific grade are not uniform across the Faculties. It is worthy to introduce a common mark ranges and degree awarding criteria for all the postgraduate programs offered by the university.

The Faculty of Applied Sciences has registered an incubator named “Applied Consulting Services” (guarantee) in 2015 and it has yet to initiate its functions. Through the discussion it was revealed that a research proposal by the students has prompted them to initiate the project, but it was abandoned with the changes of the government.

#### **Criterion 5.8: Community Engagement, Consultancy and Outreach**

Different Faculties of the Rajarata University of Sri Lanka have different mandates and diverse criteria to engage in the community development and outreach activities. The Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Faculty of Applied Sciences, and Faculty of Management Studies have many community support programs designed to support student training. The Faculty of Applied Science has a degree program on Health Promotion and this program has several interactive programs with the community at all levels. Further this program attracts foreign students. This program involves the community and working closely with the villages around the university. The Faculty of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences has different community based programs built into the Community Medicine Curriculum. A radio program of the Faculty of Agriculture to the farmers is regularly conducted. Though there are many other activities organized by other faculties/institutes to help the communities, no systematic monitoring procedure is available for checking the community feedback except in a few acknowledgment letters.

The University does not have a policy, which promotes and rewards innovations in community engagement, and allocates resources accordingly for student activities. The Review Team also noted that the Rajarata University of Sri Lanka does not fully utilize its potential for community service, consultancy services, and outreach activities in view of its location and the requirements of the society.

### **Criterion 5.9: Distance Education**

It is highly commendable that the university has put much effort into providing Open and Distance Learning (ODL) to students who are unable to enter the universities. The students highly appreciated the provisions made by the University, especially at a regional level, even for farmers to continue their education in some aspects through the Centre for Distance and Continuing Education (CDCE).

The University offers ODL programmes through their Centre for Open and Distance Learning (CODL) in alignment with the policy framework and guidelines issued by the UGC, and ensures that students enrolled satisfy the requirements for admission as stipulated by the UGC, and that the admission criteria and methods of selection are consistent with the UGC Circulars and the UGC Handbook on External Degrees and Extension Courses.

The CDCE follows the regulations on the number of students to be admitted for each External Degree Programme, However, there is no policy on work norms and workloads of staff who are involved in both internal and external teaching activities. It was also found that some management committee meetings (BOS) were not held regularly to discuss academic and student issues. This work load and time sharing should be of a serious concern to the university to ensure the quality of internal programmes, as the ODL programmes are fee levying courses and they are also offered in other centers far away from the university with extensive travel.

It is commendable that the university has ensured facilities such as laboratory facilities, other necessary equipment, and financial resources to support Distance Education programs, and conducts the convocation of those ODL students inside the university, establishing the parity of

internal and external programmes. The CDCE can further develop some of the existing diploma programs as entrance qualification to higher levels to satisfy student needs in future.

The University provides adequate services to the students with respect to lectures, seminars, contact sessions, practical classes, printed modules, tutorials and handouts. Students also confirmed their satisfaction regarding the services, and the provisions made to share the resources available for internal students. However, there was no evidence of providing counseling services for enrolling into different programmes and assessment mechanisms with feedback for improving the weak students. The CDCE could also introduce a mechanism to get the student feedback/comments on resources, services, administrative and related other issues for continuous improvement of the services of the Centre for Open and Distance Learning (CODL).

The University has taken steps to improve and provide a Learning Management System (LMS) using Moodle for the B.Sc. Online Degree programme. The students are satisfied with the available facility and have appreciated this resource base and the service offered by the university. It would be advisable to find a mechanism to provide more access to library resources/e-library for the ODL students as well.

The University has taken satisfactory measures to match the student performance outcomes in such a way that the ODL courses and programmes within the same discipline are aligned to the SLQF, and comparable with respect to the quality and standards to internal programmes.

The University has taken satisfactory measures to maintain the parity of esteem of both face-to-face and distance modes, and it is appreciable that the convocation for the ODL graduates are also held, similar to internal students, within the university.

The University has not developed clear policies on the ownership of learning materials and protection of copyrights of their teaching materials. This is a setback for the sustainability of programs as other service providers could use the same materials. Therefore, immediate action is needed on this respect.

An IQA cell has been established as a part of the University IQA system and the CODL has also initiated the process of self-evaluation based on the QA manual, which is appreciable. However, the CDCE management should develop clear TORs incorporating the mechanisms of internalizing the good practices outlined in the EDP-QA manual.

The university has two major issues: inadequate staff (staff-student ratio) and delay in releasing results in general for internal students. On top of those two major issues, it is managing to serve about 3000 additional students through ODL programmes. Therefore, it dilutes the staff-student ratio further and may affect the quality of both internal and ODL programmes if there is insufficient external staff. Based on the workloads, the university may consider obtaining the services of external service providers if necessary. The CDCE could also consider future expansion, and offering some specific internal programmes in demand in the ODL mode internationally, after developing proper policy documents.

The progress and the programmes developed and offered by the CDCE during the last three years after its inception in 2014 is commendable. The mechanism of using generated funds for the development of the university resources is highly appreciable.

### **5.10 Quality Assurance**

The RUSL over the years has developed and adopted a robust system of procedures, guidelines and practices resulting in a multi-pronged approach to quality assurance. The Senate and its subcommittee, the Faculty Boards, and Boards of Study engage in a regular and continuous process of quality assurance activities of the study programmes. The university too has developed a format for submission of curricula for approval encapsulating the policies on the quality of the academic study programmes, such as outcome based education, international standards, subject benchmarks, and in some cases the SLQF, with limitations.

University level IQAU has been established in accordance with the Internal QA Manual for SL universities, 2013, and the UGC Circular No.04/2015, issued by the UGC on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2015. At present the Internal Quality Assurance Unit (IQAU) is formed at the RUSL with Internal Quality Assurance Cells (IQAC) in all Faculties. The present director of the IQAU has taken the

leadership to take the concept of Quality Assurance off the ground as per the instructions spelt out in the “Internal Quality Assurance Manual for Sri Lankan Universities.”

In the past, while the IQAU was established, in some of the faculties either IQACs were not established or were not effectively functioning. However, Quality Assurance has been given priority. Most of the Faculties have been practicing curricular reviews and reforms of the study programmes. A decision has been made to carry out major curriculum reviews by the Faculties at least once in five years.

Most faculties had quality related information, which included the profile of the student population and evaluation of effectiveness of teaching by student feedback. However, implementation of peer review needs to be streamlined.

The commitment of the university to reach a high level of accreditation was evident in the meticulous attention paid to the development of the extensive and comprehensive documentation system. This is commendable.

Delays in releasing students’ results extend from months to a year in all the faculties. This has created a negative impact to the quality assurance process. It is noted that that the papers are moderated, but there was no evidence to prove the moderation of the marking schemes. There is a well-established system in all faculties for appointing and obtaining approval of examiners, and for scrutinizing and moderation of examination papers. There is a need to develop marking schemes and model answers in the examination procedures in all faculties.

Although employability of students, once passed out, is not assessed by a proper survey method, the staff indicated that students are able to find employment six months after graduation, based on the statistics available at the statistics division. No scientific study has being conducted on the employability of the graduates based on the courses offered in each faculty. Depending on the present need of the country or international demand, the modules have to be revised. When curriculum revisions are carried out, major stakeholders were contacted and their views had being incorporated. The changes to curriculum are done with approval of Faculty Boards, Senate

and Council. The University also has taken into consideration the previous institutional review, and has implemented most of the recommendations.

The Rajarata University of Sri Lanka is now fully geared to take the concept of Quality Assurance, through the recently established Internal Quality Assurance Unit (IQAU) and the respective Internal Quality Assurance Cells (IQAC) of Faculties that are now in place. The University has appointed a qualified Director to the Internal Quality Assurance Unit (IQAU) of the University. The Director functions under the direct supervision of the Vice-Chancellor and co-ordinates all the work related to Quality Assurance, and works very closely with the Internal Quality Assurance Cells.

All in all, with the interviews we had with Faculty staff, and after perusing the evidence documents provided by them, it clearly indicates that the subject of Quality Assurance had been an area of priority in some form or other in the Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, over the last several years.

### **Section 6: Grading of overall performance of the University**

Based on the cumulative total score under each of the 10 criteria and the weightage given in Table 4.2 of the Manual for Intuitional Review, the actual criteria wise score for the Rajarata University of Sri Lanka is given in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Overall Performance of the Rajarata University of Sri Lanka**

<b>No</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Weighted minimum score*</b>	<b>Actual Criteria-wise score</b>
1	Governance and Management	90	134.48
2	Curriculum Design and Development	60	82.67
3	Teaching and Learning	50	60.00
4	Learning Resources, Student Support and Progression	40	64.76
5	Student Assessment and Awards	50	75.56
6	Strength and Quality of Staff	50	63.64
7	Postgraduate studies, Research, Innovation and Commercialization	50	54.67

8	Community Engagement, Consultancy and Outreach	30	46.67
9	Distance Education <sup>@</sup>	20	29.09
10	Quality Assurance	60	91.43
	<b>Total</b>		702.96
	<b>%</b>		<b>70.30</b>

*\*Represents 50% of the maximum achievable standardized criterion-wise score.*

*@Two criteria namely 9.12 and 9.13 were not considered.*

- i) Overall University Score is 70.30
- ii) Number of Criteria which received equal to or more than the weighted minimum score is 10
- iii) Criteria which received less than the weighted minimum score is none.

Accordingly, the Quality of Education and Standards of Awards of the Rajarata University of Sri Lanka is given an Overall Grade of B with a performance descriptor of Good.

Table 2, given below shows the Grade, performance descriptor and Interpretation of descriptor according to the final actual criteria-wise score received by the University of Rajarata University of Sri Lanka.

**Table 2: Grading of overall university performances**

University Score	Actual Criteria Wise Score	Grade	Performance Descriptor	Interpretation of Descriptor
70.30	Equal or more than the minimum weighted score for each of all 10 criteria	B	Good	Satisfactory level of accomplishment of quality expected of an academic institution; room for improvement

## **SECTION 7: COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Criterion 1: Governance and Management**

#### **Commendations**

- The SER is prepared according to expectations.
- The university has a corporate plan and an action plan.
- The corporate plan and the achievement of performance indicators are discussed in the Council.
- By-laws and a management guide have been prepared recently.
- Academic work norms have been prepared.
- Non-academic staff is provided with the list of duties when the appointment is given.
- The consolidated funds received have been distributed to all the Faculties Equally and within the Departments Equally.
- The University has taken measures to improve IT facilities.
- The University web page is being developed. There was a separate Statistics and Information Unit to handle the related activities centrally.
- An examination management system is also being developed.
- The appointment of a Statistician and a web master is commendable.

#### **Recommendations**

- Even though the documents for inspection have been arranged in a systematic manner, some documents not related to the requirements of the standards were provided.
- The SER has been prepared well; the supporting documents were not tallying with the relevant standards.
- The documents provided by all the Faculties were not in an uniform format. The need for a common guideline, incorporating important contents for a student handbook prepared by faculties, was identified.
- Although performance indicators were defined in the Action Plan of the University, there was no mechanism to monitor them regularly.

- The action plan was prepared based on the fund required for the annual budget and re-doing the action plan after obtaining the fund allocation has not been done.
- There was no evidence to show that the corporate plan and action plans were tested at the Faculty, Department, Centre, or Unit levels.
- A list of duties has to be provided to the non-academic staff even after the transfer is made from one Department or Unit or Branch to another.
- It is advisable to distribute the funds after making a need analysis and having discussions with the Deans, Directors, and Coordinators. This distribution has to be aligned with the activity plan.
- There was a great need to establish a Grievance Committee for the University community.
- It is better to establish an MIS for the University and at the faculty level.
- Even though the generated fund has been used for urgently needed purposes and to solve the crisis situations, there is no policy established for the utilization of generated funds.
- Existing KPI's should be re-visited to include student abilities at exit.
- Inputs should be obtained from key stakeholders (*e.g.*, employers, UGC, parents, students) when developing the University Corporate Plan, which needs to be in keeping with the national requirements.
- It is recommended that the Faculties develop KPI's which are connected to 'student capabilities,' and that regular monitoring of these KPI's be carried out at the faculty level.
- It is recommended that this be made an Agenda Item in the Faculty Board for institutionalization of QA practice.
- Activities should be prioritized within the Activity Plans of both the University and the Faculties, so that there is transparency when the funds allocated to the university/faculty are less than requested in the Activity Plan.
- It is recommended to provide a mechanism for a 'Grievance Committee' to settle matters prior to a decision being taken by the VC on any contentious issue. It is recommended that committees be set up at the university and faculty levels to address staff grievances.
- Exact 'tight' specification documents should be prepared for equipment purchases for all equipment, for which funding is requested under the Action Plan, at the beginning of each year, to reduce procurement delays.

- It is recommended that positive assistance (including fund allocation) be provided by the University for the Administrative Units and some faculties, which find implementation difficulties, related to HEMIS.
- It is strongly recommended that the practice of QA within the institution (as a whole) be institutionalized. It is recommended that to strengthen QA practice, the IQAU be provided with adequate secretarial support for its activities. An Activity Plan should be prepared for the year, and it should be monitored at the Senate by regular reporting at the Senate meetings.
- The recommendations made for the IQAU are repeated for the IQAC's at the Faculty Level.
- It is recommended that policies that are enforced on academic honesty and integrity, conflict of interest, and ethics be formalized at all faculties and institutes by the issue of formal internal circulars.

## **Criterion 2- Curriculum Design and Development**

### **Commendation**

- The University has adopted the SLQF and the Subject Bench Marks.
- The design and development of curricula based on outcome-based education (OBE) and student-centered learning (SCL) is commendable.
- All the faculties have developed prospectuses and made them available to students.
- The university has taken many efforts to satisfy the dynamic national and global human resource needs through its curricula and contents.

### **Recommendation**

- Develop a policy on regular monitoring and review of programs to keep the programs aligned with the changing national, regional and global needs.
- The university should establish policy/regulations on credit transfer mechanism to facilitate student exchanges and parallel entries.
- Attention has to be paid to maintain the uniformity of the curriculum revision process in all faculties.

- The university can prepare a common guideline for the curriculum development process and establish a flat form to share the good practices of some faculties with other faculties.
- The prospectus of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities needs to be revised with accurate evaluation criteria. It is better to develop the prospectus and student handbooks separately.
- All the faculties should take action to prepare detailed lesson plans and make them available to students.
- Curriculum revisions could be further strengthened by incorporating inputs from relevant research and professional bodies in future.
- The SDC needs to offer periodic training for the staff on lesson planning, lesson sequencing and assessment methods.
- The vocational, inter-disciplinary and multidisciplinary programmes should be further expanded to enrich the general curricula, to improve the employability and develop student careers.
- Regular and proper tracer studies should be introduced in future planning and curriculum revisions.
- A university wide policy on programme monitoring with relevant stakeholders should be established, and it should be ensured that appropriate actions are taken to remedy any identified shortcomings through the IQAU.
- Guidelines or a policy on curriculum revision mechanism should be developed, to maintain university wide consistency while assuring the quality and the relevance of the programmes.

### **Criterion 3: Teaching and Learning**

#### **Commendations**

- The composition of the academic staff of most of the faculties is commendable.
- The academic staff was well aware of their role in the academic programme and the duties assigned to them, apart from their teaching
- Efforts have been taken by the SDC to provide timely needed training to enhance the teaching skills of academic staff.
- Some faculties are managing a well-organized Learning Management System.

## **Recommendations**

- Information provided to the students is not consistent among the faculties. This has to be rectified through preparing a common format for a student handbook for all the faculties.
- The teaching-learning process was mostly limited to conventional teaching that needs to be converted to student centered learning.
- The standard teacher-student ratio should be maintained, as given by the norms, as some faculties are far below the norm.
- The Learning Management System needs to be implemented in the Faculties which are lacking it.

## **Criterion 4: Learning Resources, Student Support and Progression**

### **Commendations**

- A fully automated library system is in operation.
- A well-structured Career Guidance Unit provides guidance and management of careers to students
- A Student Welfare Committee has been established at the university and its activities provide assistance to needy students.
- The establishment and practice of a mentoring system to provide necessary guidance at a personal level to students, to achieve success in education, is commendable.

### **Recommendations**

- Although the investment for the library was high, the usage by students is comparatively low; this requires a mechanism to enhance the use of the library and self-learning.
- The laboratory facilities of the Faculty of Agriculture must be improved, and the standards of laboratories for undergraduate teaching maintained.
- Facilities for teaching large classes should be improved, providing standard infrastructure. Some lecture theaters are not up to the standard. The establishment of a

university wide Information Management System to make administration matters easier, particularly with distant faculties, is recommended.

### **Criterion 5- Student Assessment and Awards**

#### **Commendations**

- Students are assessed using published criteria.
- The university has accepted the SLQF in principle.
- The SDC conducts workshops on different aspects of examination for probationary lecturers.
- Initiatives have been taken to prepare an operating policy and procedures for question paper scrutiny and moderation, and second marking of answer scripts.

#### **Recommendations**

- A standard structure for a grading system should be followed, and all necessary requirements to earn classes listed in the student handbook.
- A detailed course outline with the assessment criteria should be provided at the first session of a course unit.
- The manual of examination procedure should be made available on the university website.
- Possibilities to use the LMS should be explored.
- Delays in releasing results must be avoided.

### **Criterion 6- Strength and Quality of Staff**

#### **Commendations**

- Preparation of the Management Guide is almost completed.
- Training programs conducted by SDC for academics and non-academics of the university are commendable.

#### **Recommendations**

- The enclosed procedures in the management guide should be implemented.
- All remaining vacancies need to be filled as early as possible.

- Academically and professionally qualified staff must be recruited.

### **Criterion 7: Postgraduate studies, Research, Innovation and Commercialization**

#### **Commendations**

- Programs have been established to uplift postgraduate education.
- Students are happy about the postgraduate programs.
- Initiatives to commence postgraduate programs have been made by the Faculty of Agriculture.
- Postgraduate programs are monitored by boards of studies or the higher degrees committee.

#### **Recommendations**

- A handbooks or prospectus should be provided in the MBA program.
- Specific postgraduate training programs should be established for research students.
- Guidelines should be established for research supervisors.
- Mechanisms should be established to handle research misconduct and plagiarism.
- A uniform grading scheme should be established for the postgraduate programs.

### **Criterion 8: Community Engagement, Consultancy and Outreach**

#### **Commendations**

- The Medical Faculty has introduced community-based education as a part of its curriculum and the Faculty of Applied Sciences has introduced community-based education as a degree program.
- The Faculty of Agriculture is involved with educational and farmer interaction programs and has a radio program.
- The Degree program on Health Management introduced by Faculty of Applied Sciences has the majority of its activities based in the community.
- Other Faculties are also involved with several community-based activities.

## **Recommendations**

- The community-based activities have to be developed and a systematic monitoring system has to be introduced.

## **Criterion 9: Distance Education**

### **Commendations**

- The progress and the programmes developed and offered by the CDCE during the last three years after its inception in 2014 are commendable.
- The mechanism of using generated funds for the development of the university resources is highly appreciable.
- The university has put much effort into providing Open and Distance Learning (ODL) to the students who are unable to enter the universities.
- It is commendable that the university has ensured facilities and resources to support ODL students.
- The University has taken satisfactory measures to maintain the parity of esteem of both face-to-face and distance modes.

### **Recommendations**

- A policy should be developed on work norms and workloads of staff who are involved in both internal and external teaching activities.
- The CDCE can further develop some of the existing diploma programmes as entrance qualification to higher levels to satisfy student needs in future.
- The CDCE could introduce a mechanism to get student feedback on resources, services, administration, and other related issues for continuous improvement of its services.
- It would be beneficial to find a mechanism to provide more access to library resources/e-library for the ODL students as well.
- The University/CDCE has to develop a clear policy on the ownership of learning materials and protection of copyrights of their teaching materials.
- The CDCE management committee should develop clear TORs incorporating the mechanisms of internalizing good practices outlined in the EDP-QA manual.

## **Criterion 10: Quality Assurance**

### **Commendations**

- An IQAU and IQAC's have been established are being implemented.
- Subject bench marks and outcome based education have been incorporated into the curricula.
- The SLQF has been accepted and is being implemented.
- A periodic curriculum review process is in place.
- Student feedback systems are being used.
- There is a relatively good documentation system.
- Examination papers are moderated.
- Examiners are appointed prior to the examinations.

### **Recommendations**

- There is a need to establish a peer review process.
- Delays in releasing results must be avoided.
- There is a need to moderate the papers along with the marking schemes.
- All the staff should engage in quality assurance activities.

## **SECTION 8: SUMMARY**

- The Rajarata University of Sri Lanka has five faculties and a newly added Faculty of Technology, which has not been included in this review process. The University has a vision and mission. The University is striving to align with the SLQF; different faculties are at different stages. Many of the faculties adopt the traditional teaching – learning system and have considerable research and outreach activities.
- The University has an organizational structure, which is similar to other state Universities in Sri Lanka. The organizational structure, governance and management system are in full

compliance with respective Acts, relevant Ordinances and their amendments, Establishment Codes, and rules and regulations issued by the UGC and the relevant Ministries. However, monitoring methods using the existing structures need to be improved and strengthened.

- The financial distribution and need analysis for different faculties have to be studied in depth. It is appreciable that the generated funds have been used but it has to be spent judiciously. In general audit opinion is favorable, with a few minor issues.
- The library is computerized and can support student centered learning if the books are updated and more copies are purchased. Improved residential facilities are considered as the major achievement of the university, since the University provides accommodation to about 95% of its undergraduates. The services provided by the Physical Education Unit, University main Health Centre, Career Guidance Unit and Student Counselors Office to support student life at the university are satisfactory, even though the Health Centre does not have a fulltime, permanent doctor. Support to differently abled students needs attention with trained human resources.
- Further infrastructure developments need good planning and student's access to the common facilities needs clear vision. Increasing the student admission with proper physical and human resources has to be given due consideration. The students from the Faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences and Management Studies have expressed their frustrations with regard to the spaces in lecture halls, computer centers etc., while the students of Faculty of Applied Sciences have expressed dissatisfaction with the full day Time Table, which does not give room for them to go for other extracurricular activities.
- The English Language Teaching Department offers services, depending on the requirements of each faculty. The English proficiency of students in the Faculty of Agriculture and Faculty of Applied Sciences is satisfactory, and the levels of the students from the Faculty of Management Studies and Faculty of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences are acceptable to some extent. The students from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences felt the importance of improving their English proficiency and have suggested to transform the

medium of instruction from Sinhala to English. The change of ELTU to ELTD shows that the University has realized the importance of English for the purpose of enhancement of the English knowledge of undergraduates.

- The students of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences also expressed a view that their computer skills are inadequate, and they expect to have a thorough training in IT. Even though the staff of the ELTD have expressed their dissatisfaction about the attendance of the students for the English classes, at the end of the course (in the 4<sup>th</sup> year), the students have obviously shown their weakness in English and IT skills. This feelings of the Senior Students of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences have to be passed to their Juniors, and the Seniors can motivate the Juniors to understand and consider the importance of English and IT education.
- The University has understood the SLQF and some of the Faculties have institutionalized the procedure to design the curriculum. Faculties of Agriculture, Applied Sciences, and Management Studies have the tradition of revising the curriculum every five years while Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences had several workshops to revise the curriculum (which is not known to some of the academics). The Faculty of Medicine is revising its curriculum after its inception. Study programmes should consider revising their course content to align with the SLQF and ILOs. However, the graduate profile is given a minimum concern during this process. Although curricula are monitored and revised from time to time, a formal mechanism for reviewing curricula on a regular basis is not there in most departments. There is no formal mechanism or policy for assessing programs periodically on the basis of student attainment of learning outcomes. All the faculties have procedures for designing, approving, monitoring, and reviewing the assessment strategies.
- One of the important aspects of student based learning is to provide students with appropriate and timely feedback to enable them to monitor their progress and promote learning. All faculties have not undertaken this on a regular basis. The assessment process goes through moderation and second marking which facilitate transparency and fairness. External marking is limited to the final year in some of the study programmes. There is no

declared policy on external marking and a wide variation of assessment methods are being practiced by different faculties. The time taken to release results also varies widely among faculties and has been brought up as a major issue by students of different faculties, indicating that the results are not released before the examinations of the following semesters.

- The Rajarata University of Sri Lanka has fewer Professors and senior academics, but has a qualified academic staff. A large majority of the members of the academic staff have acquired their postgraduate education outside the Rajarata University of Sri Lanka to minimize the inbreeding. The Staff Development Centre of the University is functioning well. To date it has done a commendable job in inducting younger academic, administrative and non-academic staff.
- The university has recognized postgraduate training and research innovation as core functions. It has developed a few postgraduate taught courses, but the infrastructure is inadequate and administrative and financial mechanisms for research and postgraduate degrees have to be developed. The University tries to support research activities through providing support for publications and presentations at conferences. Some of the staff have published in high impact journals and have obtained research grants.
- The diversity of mandates of different faculties has enabled the Rajarata University of Sri Lanka to engage in community development and outreach activities. The Faculty of Agriculture provides support to farmers to improve their knowledge. The Faculty of Applied Sciences has an undergraduate study program that involves the community, the Health Management Degree Program, and the Faculty of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences has incorporated community-based activities in their curriculum. The University does not fully utilize its potential for community and outreach activities in view of its location and the available resources.
- The Rajarata University of Sri Lanka offers only a very limited number of undergraduate programmes through the Open and Distance Learning mode, and BA and BBA Programmes

are the largest and most popular programmes among them, while the B.Sc. programme is not very successful due to very high dropouts. The UGC Policy of establishment of an institutional CODL for external degree Programmes is practised.

- The Internal Quality Assurance Unit at the University is very new and needs to be provided with adequate secretarial support for its activities. Quality Assurance Cells established at faculty levels have to function effectively. It is strongly recommended that the practice of QA within the University has to be institutionalized.
- According to the final score received (70.3%), the overall performance of the Rajarata University of Sri Lanka is given “B” grade with a performance descriptor of “Good.” It is to be noted that the University-wise score of 70.3%, is just above the required cut off mark to be qualified for the grade B. As indicated throughout the report, some entities of Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, with a newly established Quality Assurance Unit, have to consolidate good practices, though they have taken initiatives. These “initiatives” were considered favorably when assigning the combined scores for respective standards. Therefore, the Rajarata University of Sri Lanka has to move forward to stay in this position in years to come unless it enhances and consolidate its quality assurance process, which requires continuous commitments from all the stakeholders.

**ANNEXURE 1**

**SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS DURING INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW AT RAJARATA  
UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA**

**Programme of the Institutional Review-Site Visit**

**Rajarata University of Sri Lanka**

<b>Day 0</b>	<b>19.11.2017</b>	13.00 - 14.00-Arrive at the Hotel 14.00 - 16.00- 2 <sup>nd</sup> Pre-review meeting of the Panel at the Hotel
<b>Day 1</b>	<b>20.11.2017</b>	
<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	
08.00-08.15	Review Team's private meeting with QAA Council representative ( <i>Office of the IQAU</i> )	
08.15-08.30	Finalizing the agenda by the review team with the Director/IQAU ( <i>Office of the IQAU</i> )	
08.30-10.00	Meeting with the Vice-Chancellor (with Deans, Directors, Registrar, Bursar and Librarian) Presentation by Vice-Chancellor ( <i>Office of the Vice Chancellor</i> )	
10.00-10.45	Discussion (with working tea) ( <i>Office of the Vice Chancellor</i> )	
10.45-11.30	Meeting with the members of the Internal Quality Assurance Unit ( <i>SDC</i> )	
11.30-12.30	Document Viewing ( <i>SDC</i> )	
12.30-13.15	Lunch ( <i>SDC</i> )	
	<b>Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences</b>	
13.15-14.00	Meeting with Dean, Heads of Departments and Coordinators/ Directors of units ( <i>Board Room</i> )	
14.00-14.30	Meeting with students ( <i>Board Room</i> )	
14.30-15.15	Meeting with academic staff (with tea) ( <i>Board Room</i> )	
15.15-16.00	Observing facilities at the FSSH	
16.00-17.00	Document viewing ( <i>SDC</i> )	
17.00	Leave to Hotel	
<b>Day 2</b>	<b>21.11.2017</b>	
<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	
08.00-08.45	Meeting with Registrar and Registrars' Department (DR/SAR/AR), Works Engineer ( <i>SDC</i> )	
08.45-09.30	Meeting with Bursar, Deputy Bursar, SABs and Abs ( <i>SDC</i> )	
09.30-10.15	Meeting with Council members (with Tea) ( <i>SDC</i> )	
10.15-10.45	Meeting with Internal Auditor/Assist Auditor( <i>SDC</i> )	
10.45-11.15	Visit to the Registrars Department, Finance Department	
11.15-12.15	Meeting with Librarian & Senior Staff of the Library and observing facilities ( <i>Library</i> )	

12.15-13.00	LUNCH ( <i>SDC</i> )
	<b>Faculty of Management Studies</b>
13.00-13.45	Meeting with Dean, Heads of Departments and Coordinators/ Directors of units ( <i>Board Room</i> )
13.45-14.15	Meeting with students ( <i>Board Room</i> )
14.15-15.00	Meeting with academic staff ( <i>Board Room</i> ) (with tea)
15.00-15.45	Observing facilities at the Faculty of Management Studies
15.45-17.00	Document viewing ( <i>SDC</i> )
17.00	Leave to Hotel
<b>Day 3</b>	<b>22.11.2017</b>
<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>
08.00-08.45	Visit to the Teaching Hospital (Professorial Unit)
	<b>Faculty of Agriculture</b>
09.00	Arrival at the Faculty
09.00-09.45	Meeting with Dean, Heads of Departments and Coordinators/ Directors of units ( <i>Board Room</i> )
09.45-10.15	Meeting with students ( <i>Board Room</i> )
10.15-11.00	Meeting with academic staff (with tea) ( <i>Board Room</i> )
11.00-12.00	Observing facilities at the Faculty of Agriculture
	Visit to the Farm
12:00-13.00	LUNCH and travelling to <b>Faculty of Medicine and Allied Sciences</b>
	<b>Faculty of Medicine and Allied Sciences</b>
13.00-13.45	Meeting with Dean, Heads of Departments and Coordinators/ Directors of units ( <i>Board Room</i> )
13.45-14.15	Meeting with students ( <i>Board Room</i> )
14.15-15.00	Meeting with academic staff (with tea) ( <i>Board Room</i> )
15.00-17.00	Observing facilities at the Faculty of Medicine and Allied Sciences
17.00	Leave to Hotel
<b>Day 4</b>	<b>23.11.2017</b>
<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>

08.00-08.45	Meeting with ELTD staff and Computer Centre staff ( <i>SDC</i> )
08.45-09.30	Meeting with Director SDC ( <i>SDC</i> ) and observing facilities
09.30-10.15	Meeting with Proctor/ Deputy Proctors/ Senior Student Counsellors/ Student Counsellors/ Wardens/ Sub-wardens/ Chief Security Officer/ Chief Marshal (with tea) ( <i>SDC</i> )
10.15-11.45	Visit to Computer Centre, CDCE, CGU, Cultural Centre
	Visit to Medical centre, Hostel, Canteen (main), Gymnasium (meeting with the Director Physical Education/ Sports advisory council)
11.45-12.30	Document viewing ( <i>SDC</i> )
12.30-13.15	LUNCH ( <i>SDC</i> )
	<b>Faculty of Applied Sciences</b>
13.15-14.00	Meeting with Dean, Heads of Departments and Coordinators/ Directors of units
14.00-14.30	Meeting with students ( <i>Board Room</i> )
14.30-15.00	Meeting with academic staff (with Tea) ( <i>Board Room</i> )
15.00-15.45	Observing facilities at the FAS
15.45-16.15	Meeting with the Chairpersons of Boards of Study and Coordinators of postgraduate programmes (with Tea) ( <i>SDC</i> )
16.15-17.00	Meeting with PG students and alumni ( <i>SDC</i> )
17.00	Leave to Hotel
<b>Day 5</b>	<b>24.11.2017</b>
<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>
08.00-08.45	Meeting with Academic support staff ( <i>SDC</i> )
08.45-09.30	Meeting with Non-academic staff ( <i>SDC</i> )
09.30-10.45	Document viewing ( <i>SDC</i> ) (with Tea)
10.45-11.00	Meeting with the Research and Publication Committee ( <i>SDC</i> )
11.00-12.00	Meeting with the Director and Management committee of CDCE and Chairpersons of Board of Studies, SAR/External Examination Unit ( <i>SDC</i> )
12.00-12.30	Meeting with students in external degree and other programmes

12.30-13.15	LUNCH ( <i>SDC</i> )
13.15-15.00	Reviewers meeting ( <i>SDC</i> )
15.00-17.00	Feedback meeting with Vice-Chancellor, Deans, Registrar, Librarian, Directors of Centres/ Units (with Tea) ( <i>SDC</i> )
17.00	Departure from the University

## **ANNEX 2: LIST OF EVIDENCE**

- Presentation made by Vice Chancellor, November, 20, 2017
- Presentations made by Deans (Between November 20- 24, 2017)
- Annual Report, 2016, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka
- Corporate / Strategic Plan (2016-2021), Rajarata University of Sri Lanka
- Student Handbook / Prospectus
- Curriculum of study programmes
- Course outlines / Course specification
- Senate Minutes
- Faculty Board Minutes
- Examination By-laws
- Employability Records
- Postgraduate Handbook, Education
- Courses conducted by Staff Development Centre
- Approved Cadres
- Work norms of academic staff
- List of duties of non-academic staff
- Minutes of the Faculty Boards
- Grants Received by Staff
- Research Awards by academic staff
- University Research Journals
- Procedure for advertisement and selection of academic and nonacademic staff
- Facilities: lab, equipment, library, student facilities
- Complaints and appeal procedure for the students
- Minutes of the Senate Meetings
- Minutes of the Curriculum Development workshop of Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
- Proceedings of the Annual Research Symposia - different Faculties
- Staff Development Centre, Training Manuals