

# **SUBJECT REVIEW REPORT**

**DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS**



**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE  
UNIVERSITY OF KELANIYA**

21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2007

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# 1. SUBJECT REVIEW PROCESS

## *Introduction*

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

There are four main components of a quality assurance programme:

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

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

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

1. Curriculum design, content and review
2. Teaching, learning and assessment methods
3. Quality of students
4. The extent and use of student feedback
5. Postgraduate studies
6. Peer observation
7. Skills development and
8. Academic guidance and counseling

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

The external evaluation comprises a three-day review visit carried out by a team of reviewers.

The purpose of the review visit is to review, consider and test the evidence provided by the study program in the light of the aims and intended student learning outcomes. Reviewers do not use any externally set standards against which the programmes are judged. There are

three options open to the Review Team in making the overall judgment concerning the quality of provision in the department of study concerned:

- Confidence
- Limited Confidence
- No Confidence

In all cases, the overall judgment will be supported by the evidence contained in the report. In addition to the overall judgment, Review Teams will provide a separate judgment of each subject review aspect. The Review Team will summarize its findings on each aspect, emphasizing strengths, good practices and weaknesses. At the end of each aspect, they will use one of three judgments:

- Good
- Satisfactory
- Unsatisfactory

In judgments of 'good' or 'satisfactory', the Review Team will wish to highlight strengths and good practice relating to the aspect concerned; in the 'unsatisfactory' category there are likely to be fewer examples of strengths or good practice. The key elements of the process followed by the Review Team in conducting this subject review and shared with the two departments included an emphasis on the voluntary nature of this exercise as well as the fact that it is undertaken by peers. While the assessment is broadly based on the self-evaluation of the respective academic departments, the success of the review depends on the findings and process being validated and owned by the members of these departments. Hence, a detailed debriefing and feedback session was held at the end of the two-and-a-half day review, where doubts were clarified and the preliminary findings were shared and informally validated.

### ***Review Visit***

Prof. Colin N. Peris, Quality Assurance Specialist of the QAAC by a letter dated 26<sup>th</sup> April 2007 notified that the following team has been appointed to perform the Subject Review of the Department of Economics (DoE), University of Kelaniya from 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2007:

- Prof. D. Atapattu, Department of Economics, University of Ruhuna
- Dr. (Ms.) J.M.N.G. Samarakoon, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka and
- Dr. (Ms.) S.M.K. Herath, University of Colombo.

The Review Team visited the DoE of the University of Kelaniya during the period 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2007 and initiated the peer review process. The purpose of the visit was to search for evidences and observe those pertaining to the aims and the intended learning outcomes as stated in the Self Evaluation Report (SER) of the DoE and evaluate them according to the set guidelines.

At 8.30 a.m. on the 21<sup>st</sup> May, the Review Team met the Quality Assurance Specialist, Prof. Colin N. Peris and Quality Assurance Consultant Prof. Mohandas at the University of Kelaniya to be further familiarized with the Subject Review process. At 9.00 a.m. on the 21<sup>st</sup> May the Review Team met Prof. Sunanda Madduma Bandara the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Prof. Prema Podimanike, the Head of the DoE. The Dean briefed the Review Team of the activities of the faculty in general and current trends in undergraduate and postgraduate teaching in the DoE in particular.

The agenda for the review process was discussed and finalized with the Head of the DoE who then made a presentation on the SER, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the department, clarifying certain points and explaining where necessary, some information

included in the report. The other members of the academic staff of the DoE were also present at this meeting. The open and frank discussion that followed was extremely helpful for the evaluation exercise.

Data were gathered additionally by meeting with the non-academic staff, undergraduate and postgraduate students, and observing lectures and student presentations. The Review Team also went through relevant documents (see annex 2), inspected facilities provided by the DoE including lecture theatres, computer laboratory, staff rooms, faculty library and main library and the equipment available for teaching, research and other activities.

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

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

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

1. Commerce and Management Studies
2. Humanities
3. Medicine
4. Science
5. Social Sciences and
6. Graduate Studies

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

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

Today, the University of Kelaniya is one of the major national universities. The main campus is located about 8 km away from Colombo along the Colombo-Kandy highway, consists about 58 acres. The University of Kelaniya serves over 8000 internal students and affiliated institutes serve about 1000 students. Over 25,000 students are registered for various external degree programmes.

### ***Department of Economics***

The DoE is one of the oldest departments in the University of Kelaniya. Since its establishment in 1959, the department has produced several well known economists in the country. It has contributed effectively in promoting teaching and research within and outside the university. Moreover, its tentacles have spread beyond the parameters of Economics and served as a breeding ground for other related disciplines in Social Sciences. Two such examples are the Departments of Mass Communication and Commerce which are currently two fully fledged departments in the Faculties of Social Sciences and Commerce & Management Studies respectively. Similarly, the Department of Sociology also had its infancy with the DoE in early 1970s.

The mission of the DoE is *to see boundaries in promoting the knowledge of Economics and other related disciplines in meeting the challenges of the new millennium.*

The number of students registered for Special and General Degree programmes conducted by the DoE are given in the Tables below.

#### **Number of Students following Special Degree Programmes**

<b>Discipline</b>	<b>Part of the Programme</b>	<b>No. of Students</b>
Economics	Part I	125
	Part II	118
	Part III	298
Social Statistics	Part I	32
	Part II	31
	Part III	49
Political Science	Part I	27
	Part II	26
	Part III	47
International Studies	Part I	37
	Part II	39
	Part III	31

#### **Number of Students following General Degree Programmes**

<b>Degree Programme</b>	<b>Part of the Programme</b>	<b>No. of Students</b>
Economics	Part I	199
	Part II	66
	Part III	40

Social Statistics	Part I	82
	Part II	23
	Part III	13
Political Science	Part I	219
	Part II	77
	Part III	47
International Studies	Part I	164
	Part II	101
	Part III	53

### 3. AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

#### 3.1. Aims

The main aims of the Economics component of any program are:

- To provide knowledge and understanding of
  - The principles of economics and their application;
  - Key concepts of economics;
  - Techniques of economic analysis;
  - The workings of the economy and major policy issues;
  - The scope of economics.
- To develop skills in communication, analysis, problem solving, learning and self-management of value in the study of economics and in a wide range of careers.
- To stimulate interest in using and developing this knowledge and understanding and these skills.
- To provide the knowledge and skill base needed to proceed to further studies in Economics, related areas or in multi-disciplinary areas that involve Economics.
- In sum, to provide an education in economics that adds to the value of the graduate as a member of society in terms of both their general ability and their specialist ability to think and work as an economist.

Political Science is an academic and research discipline that deals with the theory and practice of politics and the description and analysis of political systems and political behavior. Social Statistics is the use of statistical measurement systems to study human behavior in a social environment. This can be accomplished through polling a particular group of people, evaluating a particular subset of data obtained about a group of people, or by observation and statistical analysis of a set of data that relates to people and their behaviors.

International Studies is an academic and public policy field, a branch of Political Science, dealing with the foreign policy of states within the international system, including the roles of international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and multinational corporations (MNCs). Because international relations seek to analyze as well as formulate foreign policy, it can be either positive or normative.

The study programmes in the DoE are designed to:

- attract students of high quality and potential;
- encourage high quality teaching and learning in a flourishing research environment;
- provide coherent and, in the case of high quality degrees, progressive degree pathways;
- operate a learning, teaching and assessment system which allows students to acquire and/or develop the knowledge and skills appropriate to their chosen pathway;
- develop the capacity of students to plan and manage their own learning and undertake independent work in the relevant subject;
- provide students with opportunities to develop general and subject-specific skills which help prepare them for further study or progression to relevant careers.

### **3.2. Learning Outcomes**

The learning outcomes described below generally apply to the core modules from the introductory modules onwards. Those who continue further through the sequences of modules will acquire a firmer and more extensive knowledge and understanding and have more opportunities to practice and refine skills. If those who study economics beyond the introductory level only achieve an outcome, placing in brackets after the outcome the code of the modules to which it applies indicates this.

In addition to the outcomes listed here, the specific content of each module will lead to knowledge and understanding as detailed in the module descriptions.

Knowledge and understanding specific to Economics

- A coherent set of economic principles and their application to economic policy.
- Analytical methods and model-based arguments.
- The performance of the Sri Lanka and other economies.
- Major economic policy issues in Sri Lanka and the rest of the world.
- Relevant quantitative methods and computing techniques, and their use on actual economic data

#### ***Knowledge and Understanding of Key “Transferable Concepts”***

(Concepts of economics those are useful in solving problems in many fields)

- Opportunity cost
- Marginal valuations
- Comparative advantage
- Sunk cost
- Optimization and constraints
- Incentives, market forces
- Equilibrium, disequilibria, and stability
- Strategic behavior
- Expectations and surprises

## ***Transferable Skills***

### *Written and Oral Communication*

The ability to:

- Present arguments clearly and concisely both in writing and orally;
- Give a direct answer to a question;
- Present both brief summaries that identify the key points and fuller treatments of a topic that are well structured;
- Present a balanced view of different opinions on an issue;
- Separate fact from opinion, yet present your own views where appropriate;
- Use suitable means of presenting arguments, e.g. visual aids in oral presentations, diagrams in written work;
- Contribute constructively to a group discussion;
- Communicate concisely to different audiences, including those with no training in Economics.

### ***Analysis and Problem Solving***

The ability to:

- Abstract and simplify in order to identify the essence of a problem;
- Analyze and reason;
- Identify what should be taken as given or fixed for the purpose of solving a problem;
- Set up and analyze a model;
- Develop logical arguments;
- Marshal and evaluate evidence;
- Assimilate, structure and analyze qualitative and quantitative data;
- Apply general principles to a specific case;
- Make use of previous work but be prepared to develop original ideas where appropriate;
- Exercise independent judgment;
- Draw conclusions and decide what to do;
- Think critically about the limits of your analysis;
- Draw policy conclusions and recognize the potential constraints on their implementation;
- Evaluate alternative strategies;
- Keep an open mind about different methodological approaches;
- Relate issues to a wider context;
- Think imaginatively and creatively.

### ***Learning***

The ability to:

- Search out relevant material;
- Frame and ask questions that elicit the information required;
- Synthesize relevant material;
- Learn independently;
- Make use of the services of libraries and other sources of help and information.

### ***Self-Management***

The ability to:

- Work under pressure;
- Meet deadlines;
- Manage your time effectively;
- Plan projects;
- Prioritize tasks;
- Work methodically;
- Set personal goals and evaluate your own performance;
- Work without supervision;
- Take initiative and develop ideas independently.

### ***Computing and Statistics***

The ability to:

- use information technology
- use and interpret statistics

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

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

The subjects offered for the BA General Degree programmes are Economics, Political Science, Social Statistics and International Studies. The BA General Degree programme covers three academic years of six semesters of 15 weeks each. To be eligible for the BA General Degree, a student must accumulate a minimum total of 76 credits with at least 24 credits in each academic year. At least 44 credits of these should be obtained from the two main subjects with a minimum of 20 credits from any one of the main subject.

The BA Special Degree programme is offered for four major disciplines, viz. Economics, Political Science, Social Statistics and International Studies. To be eligible for the BA Special Degree, the credit requirement is a total of 120 credits and the relevant period of study is a minimum of four academic years (16 credits per semester) within six semesters after the foundation year. Special Degree programme in Economics offers a number of optional fields for specialization.

They cover the following areas:

- (a) Monetary Economics
- (b) Agriculture Economics
- (c) Accountancy
- (d) Transport Economics
- (e) Industrial Economics
- (f) Statistics
- (g) Political Economy
- (h) Economic Planning and
- (i) Political Economy.

From year 2000, the DoE has introduced three course modules on Group Seminars for Special Degree students. It is an innovative approach to develop inter-personal communicative skills and presentation skills among undergraduates. In addition, it has made a significant contribution to improve the student-teacher relationships in the department.

All Special Degree candidates are required to submit a dissertation based on an independent research conducted in their final year. This aspect of the curriculum aims at improving research and presentation skills of students.

Both BA General and Special Degree programmes work on a credit system which is a time based quantitative measure assigned to course units. One lecture hour per week throughout a semester (15 weeks) is equivalent to one credit.

The Review Team has noted the present curriculum has been designed about seven years ago. Therefore, there is a greater opportunity to review the current curriculum to reflect the present and future needs of the society.

The credit structure adopted for the curriculum appears to be non-conventional. For example, most of the course modules are six credit courses which require at least six hours of learning per week during the semester. This also can lead to problems in time and space allocation for teaching and learning process. Furthermore, ten credits assigned for the final year dissertation is also appear to be very high for an undergraduate project. The implication of having course modules with relatively very high credit points is to restrict the degree program to a limited number of courses, thus, preventing the ability of the Special Degree programme to generate a broader knowledge in the main subject.

The content of the Special Degree programme in Economics can be further improved by introducing several core courses such as Advanced Economic Theory, Econometrics and Research Methods, which in the opinion of the Review Team should be made compulsory for the degree programme.

According to the current curriculum, the General Degree programme requires only 76 credits which is far below the norm of 90 credits prevailing in most of the other universities in the country.

Aims and learning outcomes have been specified only for the Special Degree programme in Economics. There are three other special Degree programmes, viz. Political Science, Social Statistics and International Studies, for which aims and learning outcomes have not been developed. In the absence of learning outcomes, it may not possible to assess the relevance and effectiveness of curricula.

The present contents of study programmes are not adequately addressing the development of skills such as English and Computer Literacy.

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

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

The learning process still depends heavily on teacher-centered instructions. Formal lectures are conducted with restricted use of audio visual and interactive learning methods in disorganized and untidy class rooms. A comprehensive course outline consisting of course objectives, learning outcomes, detailed syllabus, assessment methods, and recommended readings are hardly provided. However, some lecturers occasionally provide handouts for students. When the course module system is adopted to replace the traditional curriculum, it is necessary to introduce other innovative components of teaching learning process such as course guides and course outlines to improve the effectiveness of teaching process. The efforts made by the DoE in this direction are inadequate.

There is an acute shortage of internal staff to conduct the degree programmes in Political Science and International Studies. As a result, the DoE is heavily dependent on the visiting staff. According to the Self Evaluation Report, there are 11 Visiting Lecturers for Political Science and 5 Visiting Lecturers for International Studies. Overdependence on visiting lecturers to conduct regular teaching programmes adversely affects quality of the degree programme. Very often visiting lecturers are not in a position to cover the entire course modules during their lectures as their attendance is not regular. Since they do not stick to a regular time table and the attendance is irregular, allocation of permanent classrooms for the visiting staff to conduct their lectures for long hours has been very difficult.

The composition of the internal staff according to their specialisations displays some imbalance. Of the total number of 24 internal staff members in the department, only three belong to Political Science and the rest belong to Economics. This imbalance in staff composition often causes problems in appointing supervisors for final year dissertations in the fields of Political Science and International Studies. The students who met with the Review Team complained about the unsatisfactory status of the study programmes in Political Science and International Studies.

Due to the non availability of adequate number of modern teaching equipments such as multimedia projectors, laptops and OHPs, chalk board has become the main means of teaching in the department. It should be mentioned, however, that the use of an overhead projector to show transparencies would have certainly increased the effectiveness of the lectures.

The Review Team observed some of the lectures conducted by the internal staff. The pace at which lectures were conducted was good. Lecture rooms are well ventilated and fitted with ceiling fans and seating arrangements are also satisfactory.

The DoE utilizes a combination of different assessment methods for the overall evaluation of student progress throughout the course. In the absence of course objectives and learning outcomes, the Review Team was not in a position to evaluate the assessment schemes used match the course objectives. However, the assigning of a heavy weight on the end-semester examination is common in almost all course modules. The courses conducted by the visiting staff are evaluated entirely on the basis of end-semester examination. Implementation of an unambiguous, proper continuous assessment without adequate permanent staff is a difficult task.

The final year dissertation is assessed according to their performance at research work, presentation at the group seminar, and content of the dissertation. Marks are allocated on the basis of 10 % for research work, 20% for presentation and 70% for content of dissertation.

All question papers are moderated either by senior members of the internal staff or senior academics of other universities. Classes are awarded based on the Grade Point Average (GPA). The minimum GPA required for a First Class Honours in BA Special and General Degrees is 3.5. The GPA will be calculated as a weighted average on the grade points obtained for the different courses and the number of course credit hours.

However, unusually very high rate of honours passes at the Special Degree programmes tend to question the validity of the existing assessment criteria of the study programme. As shown in the following table, nearly 79% obtained honours passes in Economics during the academic year 2005/06. The corresponding figures for Political Science and Social Statistics were 87% and 90% respectively.

**Performance at the Special Degree Programme**

<b>Performance Level</b>	<b>Economics</b>	<b>Political Science</b>	<b>Social Statistics</b>
First Class	05	02	12
Second Class Upper	79	33	18
Second Class Lower	114	06	13
Ordinary Pass	53	01	05
Incomplete	47	05	01
<b>Total</b>	298	47	49

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

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

Recruitment and admission of students to the Faculty of Social Sciences are carried out by the UGC as in other universities and the department has no control over this process.

However, because of the popularity of the University of Kelaniya among Arts stream students, substantial competition exists to enter the Faculty of Social Sciences and therefore, students' z-score remains at a higher level.

To recruit quality students to the Special Degree programmes, students are selected on the basis of the results of the two semester examinations of the first year. A student should obtain at least an average of B grade or above for the relevant subject at the first year to qualify to follow the Special Degree programme. In addition student should complete all the requirement and examinations of the first year. However, as compared with the human and physical resources available in the department, the number of students selected for the Special Degree programme in Economics, in particular appears to be very high. This number was 298 during the academic year 2005/06. When the size of the intake to Special Degree Programme is too large, individual supervision and conducting of tutorial classes may not be practically possible. Under the circumstances, the review of admission criteria to Special Degree programmes is warranted.

High performance levels recorded at the final examinations are a good indicator of the students' quality and achievements. The percentages of students achieved honours passes in

Economics, Political Science and Social Statistics in the academic year 2005/06, were 79%, 87% and 90% respectively.

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

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

There is no formal mechanism by which student feedback is accessed in any of the teaching modules taught in the DoE. The standard end-semester student evaluation forms have not been administered so far in the department, though there is consensus that this practice should be implemented from the next academic year. The DoE has already taken steps to construct a comprehensive questionnaire for teacher evaluation.

In discussion with staff and students, however, it became evident that more ad hoc processes of obtaining feedback, such as informal discussions carried out by individual teachers with students. But it is still not clear how this ad hoc feedback influences changes in course content and logistics and student assessment methods.

The weekly seminar programme also serves as an indirect method of obtaining student feedback on the study programme. At the weekly group seminars, students are encouraged to express their views freely on the effectiveness of course units, and the ways in which the quality of lectures can be improved. However, the students in each seminar group do not belong to one particular subject discipline. Every group has students from all four main subjects, viz. Economics, Political Science, Social Statistics and International Studies.

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

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

The DoE conducts two postgraduate programmes leading to the Degrees in Master of Arts (MA) and Master of Social Sciences (M.S.Sc.) for Economics and Political Science. Master of Arts programme is a one year taught course comprising of six course modules (five compulsory course modules and one optional module).

Master of Social Sciences is a two year programme where the first year focuses on course work and the second year on the dissertation based on an independent research project. Both postgraduate programmes are conducted in Sinhla medium and therefore they are very popular among school teachers and government employees. The number of students enrolled in the post graduate programmes conducted by the DoE is given in the Table below.

**Student Enrolment in Postgraduate Programmes, 2003 – 2005**

Postgraduate Programme	2003	2004	2005
Master of Arts:			
Economics	157	155	253
Political Science	56	25	41
Total	213	180	294
Master of Social Sciences:			
Economics	28	25	07
Political Science	10	06	03
Total	38	31	10

When there are large numbers seeking admission into postgraduate programmes, it is important to take precautionary measures to maintain academic standards. Special attention should be drawn on the improvement of English language skills among postgraduate students and supervision of students writing their dissertations.

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

#### **4.6. Peer Observation**

As mentioned in the SER, the DoE has taken several measures in this direction. At the beginning of each semester, the timetables for all members of the teaching staff are issued and the progress of the lecture programme is reviewed at the departmental meeting which is conducted on weekly basis.

The handouts prepared by the lecturers-in-charge of each course module are also reviewed by another senior member of the staff.

In addition, all question papers pertaining to special degree programmes are moderated and the answer scripts are sent for evaluation by an experienced second examiner.

However, further strengthening of peer review process is important as there are large number of visiting lecturers handling two major special degree programmes, namely Political Science and International studies.

***It is the view of the Review Team that the Peer Observation of the department can be judged as SATISFACTORY.***

#### **4.7. Skills Development**

The DoE has taken steps to improve generic skills as well as subject specific skills of their graduates. The group seminar programme plays a major role in developing extracurricular skills among special degree students. Each group comprises of about 50 students drawn from all three batches (2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year students). They meet once a week for two hours. The group assessment is largely based on the extracurricular skills they display. These skills include presentation skills, organizational skills, music and dancing skill etc.

“The Economics Week” organized by the department is another important innovative method to develop skills among undergraduates. The students met by the Review Team expressed their appreciation about this event. Although the DoE has placed major emphasis on extracurricular skills development, the attention paid on the improvement of English Language skills appears to be inadequate.

Academic programme may also be made more practical oriented by introducing practical training as an embedded component in the study programme. Students may be released from their regular work for practical attachments for one semester or half a semester.

All students in the special degree programmes are expected to submit a dissertation in their final year. One of the main objectives of this activity is to develop research skills such as data collection, data analysis and report writing skills.

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

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

Although the DoE does not have an organized academic counseling system, all members of the staff are engaged in counseling in an informal manner. Academic counseling is taking place in the form of advising students in the selection of course modules, especially at the beginning of academic year.

Although the efforts of the members of the academic staff are commendable, it would be much better if the DoE could establish an organized system for academic counseling within the department.

All final year students in the special degree programmes are assigned an academic supervisor to guide their research project and the preparation of the dissertation. The group seminar programme also plays a very important role in academic counseling. The lecturer-in-charge of the group is the academic counselor for that particular group of students. This has contributed to develop a very good student-staff relationship within the department.

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

### **5. CONCLUSIONS**

The strengths/good practices and weaknesses identified in each of the aspects of evaluation of this review are summarized below:

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

##### *Strengths/Good Practices*

- Credit-based course modular system
- Knowledge and skills development objectives have been sufficiently addressed within the curricula.
- Large number of optional fields for specialization in the BA Special Degree programme in Economics
- Innovative modules such as group seminar programme have been added to the curriculum to improve skills and staff-student relationships.

##### *Weaknesses*

- Aims and learning outcomes for the Special Degree programmes in Political Science, Social Statistics and International Studies have not been specified.
- The present curriculum is seven years old and has not been subject to a major revision with stakeholder participation.
- Practical training has not been adequately addressed within the curriculum.
- The number of credit points (i.e. 76) assigned to the BA General Degree programme is far below the acceptable standard.

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

##### *Strengths/Good Practices*

- Standard and adequate methods to deliver the planned curriculum.

- Combination of different assessment methods for the overall evaluation of student progress throughout the course.

#### *Weaknesses*

- The composition of the internal staff according to their specializations displays some imbalance. Of the total number of 24 internal staff members in the department, only three belong to Political Science and the rest belong to Economics. This imbalance in staff composition often causes problems in appointing Supervisors for final year dissertations in the fields of Political Science and International Studies.
- Overdependence on visiting lecturers to conduct regular programmes
- Non availability of course outlines and course guides prevents achievement of successful learning process.
- Very limited use of modern teaching technologies such as multimedia and OHP

### **3. Quality of Students**

#### *Strengths/Good Practices*

- Students are enthusiastic and motivated. Their performance at the examinations is very impressive.
- High performance levels recorded at the final examinations are a good indicator of the students' quality and achievements. The percentages of students achieved honours passes in Economics, Political Science and Social Statistics in the academic year 2005/06, were 79%, 87% and 90% respectively.

#### *Weaknesses*

- Department does not maintain a database to monitor the progress of their graduates.

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

#### *Strengths/Good Practices*

- Informal discussions carried out by individual teachers with students
- Weekly seminar programme also serves as an indirect method of obtaining student feedback

#### *Weaknesses*

- No systematic effort has been made to obtain students feedback formally.

### **5. Postgraduate Studies**

#### *Strengths/Good Practices*

- The DoE conducts two postgraduate programmes leading to the Degrees in Master of Arts (MA) and Master of Social Sciences (M.S.Sc.) for Economics and Political Science.

#### *Weaknesses*

- Given the limited human and physical resources, the admission of a relatively large number of students into postgraduate programmes can affect the quality of the programme.

## 6. Peer Observation

### *Strengths/Good Practices*

- Moderation of question papers and second marking of answer scripts by senior academics within and outside the department are carried out.

### *Weaknesses*

- Despite the availability of senior members in the department, peer observation with respect to the conducting of lectures by new staff and visiting staff is not practiced

## 7. Skills Development

### *Strengths/Good Practices*

- Group seminar programme plays a major role in developing extracurricular skills among special degree students
- “The Economics Week” organized by the department is another important innovative method to develop skills among undergraduates

### *Weaknesses*

- The present arrangement to provide English language skills and IT skills is inadequate and far from satisfactory.

## 8. Academic Guidance and Counseling

### *Strengths/Good Practices*

- All members of the staff are engaged in counseling in an informal manner.
- All academic staff members come to the department every working day and are available for student consultation throughout the day.
- Student-staff relationships are very good.

### *Weaknesses*

- Lack of an organized system for academic counseling within the department

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

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Judgment</b>
Curriculum Design, Content and Review	satisfactory
Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods	satisfactory
Quality of Students including Student Progress and Achievements	good
Extent and Use of Student Feedback	satisfactory
Postgraduate Studies	satisfactory
Peer Observation	good
Skills Development	good
Academic Guidance and Counseling	good

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings indicated above, the Review Team wishes to make the following specific recommendations.

1. A major revision of the existing curriculum with stakeholder participation is recommended.
2. BA General Degree programme need to be redesigned to be consistent with the standard minimum credit requirement.
3. The department may consider incorporating practical training into curriculum.
4. It is recommended to introduce compulsory course module (credit-based) for English Language proficiency and Computer Literacy to at least all special degree students.
5. Admission of a large number of students into the special degree programme in Economics needs to be reconsidered in view of maintaining the quality of the programme
6. Overdependence on the visiting lecturers to conduct regular teaching programmes needs to be reduced.
7. It is recommended to introduce continuous assessments for the courses conducted by the visiting lecturers as well.
8. Course outlines or Course Guides needs to be prepared for every course module in order to develop more student-centered learning process.
9. Staff should be encouraged to use modern teaching technology and lecture handouts when conducting lectures.
10. In the opinion of the Review Team, preparation of a student handbook to provide information on course structure in the special degree programmes is essential.
11. It is recommended to devise more formal methods to obtain teacher evaluation and student feedback
12. The department may explore the possibility of implementing a formal and effective mechanism for peer observation.
13. It is recommended to construct a database of the departmental graduates.
14. It would be advisable to establish a formal system of educational guidance within the department.

## 7. ANNEXES

### Annex 1. AGENDA FOR THE SUBJECT REVIEW VISIT

#### **DAY 1 – 21<sup>st</sup> May 2007**

08.30 - 09.00	Private Meeting of Review Panel with QAA Council Representatives
09.00 – 09.30	Meeting with the Dean/Social Sciences and Head/Economics
09.30 – 10.00	Discuss the Agenda for the Visit
10.00 – 11.00	Department Presentation on the Self Evaluation Report
11.00 – 12.30	Discussion
12.30 – 13.30	<i>Lunch</i>
13.30 – 14.30	Observing Departmental Facilities
14.30 – 15.30	Observing Other Facilities (Faculty Library, Computer Unit)
15.30 – 17.00	Observing Documents ( <i>working tea</i> )
17.00 – 17.30	Brief Meeting of Reviewers

#### **DAY 2 – 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2007**

09.00 – 10.30	Meeting with Undergraduate Students
10.30 – 11.30	Meeting with Postgraduate Students
11.30 – 12.30	Meeting with Some Members of the Academic Staff
12.30 – 13.30	<i>Lunch</i>
13.30 – 14.30	Meeting with the Dean (who is also a Member of the Department of Economics)
14.30 – 15.00	Meeting with the Technical Staff and other Non-Academic Staff
15.00 – 16.30	Meeting with Head and staff
16.30 – 17.30	Meeting of Reviewers

#### **DAY 3 – 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2007**

09.00 – 09.30	Observing Teaching – Lecture
09.30 – 10.00	Observing Teaching – Lecture
10.00 – 11.00	Meeting Student Counselors/Academic Advisors
11.00 – 11.30	Reviewers' Private Discussion
11.30 – 12.30	Meeting with Head and Staff for Reporting
12.30 – 13.30	<i>Lunch</i>
13.30 – 17.00	Report Writing

## **Annex 2. LIST OF DOCUMENTS OBSERVED**

- University of Kelaniya: Calendar 2006
- Student Handbook on List of Course Units 2006/2007
- Examination question papers
- A set of answer scripts marked by a second examiner
- BA Special Degree Syllabus
- BA General Degree Syllabus
- Questionnaire developed to obtain students' feedback (course evaluation)
- The assessment format used in student group presentation programme
- Final Examination results in BA Special Degree in Economics, Political Science, Social Statistics and International Studies
- Examination results in MA and MSSC Degree in Economics and Political Science
- Lecture handouts
- Faculty Journal: Studies in Social Sciences
- Journal of the Master of Social Science Programme
- Department of Economics Research Journals: Artha Niyama and Review of Economics
- Student Poster presentations on their research proposals
- Picture Albums related to "Economics Week"
- Grades and relevant Grade Points used in the examinations
- Some books published by the academic staff of the department
- List of Course Units for Students in the Faculty of Social Sciences, 2003/2004
- Bachelor of Arts Special Degree by-laws
- Bachelor of Arts General Degree by-laws
- Postgraduate Prospectus in the Faculty of Social Sciences
- Samples of lecture handouts distributed among students