

SUBJECT REVIEW REPORT

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL STUDIES



**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES
OPEN UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA**

19th to 21st November 2009

Review Team :

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The subject review conducted at the Department of Social Studies (DSS), Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) during 19th to 21st of November 2009 under the guidance of Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) Council of the University Grants Commission (UGC) of Sri Lanka. Subject review process evaluates the quality of education within a specific subject or discipline. It is focused on the student learning experience and on student achievement; and designed to evaluate the quality of both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. However, the responsibility for quality and standards lies within the institution itself, since it alone has the power to control and to change existing practices

Review process was conducted according to the guidelines given in the quality assurance handbook for Sri Lankan universities, published by the CVCD and UGC in July 2002. The DSS, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FHSS), OUSL submitted a Self Evaluation Report (SER) consisting of eleven sections, namely: aims, learning outcomes and programme details; students, staff and facilities; curriculum design, content and review; teaching, learning and assessment methods; quality of students: recruitment, admission, student progress and achievement; extent and use of student feedback: quantitative and qualitative; postgraduate studies; peer observation; skills development; academic guidance and counseling; and academic-industry links, public awareness initiatives and research collaborations. The quality of education was reviewed according to the aims and learning outcomes given in the (SER).

The following eight aspects of education were reviewed at the subject level:

1. Curriculum design, content and review.
2. Teaching learning and assessment methods.
3. The quality of students including student progress and achievements.
4. Extent and use of student feedback: qualitative and quantitative.
5. Postgraduate studies.
6. Peer observations.
7. Skills development.
8. Academic guidance and counseling.

The review team visited the department from 19th to 21st November, 2009. The agenda of the three day visit is attached (see annex 1)

The evaluation of eight aspects was based on:

- Meetings held with the QA specialist of the QAA Council of the UGC of Sri Lanka;
- Vice Chancellor of the OUSL, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Dean of the FHSS, Head of Department, academic staff, non-academic staff, library staff of the university, Chief Student Counselor, Student Counselors of the Department, Undergraduates, Postgraduate students;
- Observation of physical facilities of the Department, lecture rooms of the Colombo Regional Centre, Department's computer center, seminar rooms, University and Departmental libraries, etc.;
- Presentations of AV Teaching materials, On-line programmes and outreach activities by the academic staff, and students' oral presentations;

and available documents at the Department; and
review team on their findings during the review to the
reviewers to further clarification of certain points.

Each of the eight aspects was judged as good/satisfactory/unsatisfactory, based on strengths, good practices and weaknesses in each.

2. BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY, FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT

The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) was set up for the purpose of providing higher educational facilities to persons above 18 years of age with relevant basic qualifications. Established under the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978, incorporating with its system the External Services Agency (ESA) and the Sri Lanka Institute of Distance Education (SEIDE) the OUSL commenced its operation in 1980. The present activities of OUSL are based on the provisions of the above Act and Open University of Sri Lanka Ordinance No.1 of 1990, as amended by the Ordinance No.12 of 1996. Currently OUSL operates through 28 Regional Educational Service Centers. The network consists of 4 regional centers in Colombo, Kandy, Matara and Jaffna and 17 study centers and 7 smaller teaching centers. The Central Campus and the Colombo Regional center of OUSL are situated in Nawala.

OUSL has the same legal and academic status as any other national university in Sri Lanka. It is the only recognized university in Sri Lanka where students are able to pursue further education by distance education techniques in keeping with the philosophy of Open and Distance Learning. The programmes are conducted by the four Faculties viz. Education, Engineering Technology, Humanities and Social Sciences and Natural Sciences through nineteen Departments of Study.

Vision of the University

The OUSL vision is to *be the leader in distance education in South Asia within the first decade of the 21st century and be a premier centre of learning, renowned for excellence.*

Mission Statement

The OUSL mission is *to enhance opportunities for life-long learning of adults through Open and Distance Learning and support excellence in research and scholarship.*

Unlike in conventional universities, the students of the OUSL have to bear a part of the cost of their education. However, the openness of the university with regard to its academic activities makes it an attractive choice for the employed and therefore approximately 80 percent of the student population today is those who are employed. It also has the largest student population with over 25,000 students on roll.

The organizational structure of the OUSL is similar to that of conventional universities. Apart from the academic departments, there are other units that are under the guidance of the Registrar of the University. In attempting to meet the demands for globalization of education, equality in educational opportunities and provision of lifelong education, OUSL offers 42 programmes with over 900 courses.

SD) was set up as a multidisciplinary unit in the Faculty of the OUSL in January 1990. Initially, it offered the

Foundation Course in Social Sciences for the benefit of those who could not gain access to the conventional universities, and for those who did not have any formal secondary level qualifications. Since then, the Department has developed to cater to undergraduate degree programmes. In 2004, DSS introduced a collaborative Postgraduate Diploma Programme in Development Studies and Public Policy. Based on the success of this programme, the Department intends to launch a M.A. Programme in Development Studies and Public Policy shortly. Apart from its academic programmes, the Department is also involved in collaborative research, community development and public awareness programmes.

A distinctive feature of the study programmes and courses offered by the Department is that all of them have a robust multidisciplinary perspective. The academic staff members of the Department strongly believe that the students should be well equipped with multidisciplinary tools of analysis and applications to enable them to work effectively and efficiently in public, private or international institutions. Therefore, the subjects offered under different programmes/courses include modern history, geography, economics, sociology, mass communications, culture, management, statistics, public policy and youth development. In a conventional university, each of these subjects is usually entrusted to a separate Faculty or to a Department. Thus, the DSS with its limited amount of human and physical resources plays a unique role in the entire university system of the country by offering a multitude of social science disciplines. In collaboration with the Language Studies Department, students are also assisted to develop their English language skills.

The Vision of the DSS

To emerge as a Centre of Excellence in Development Policy and Conflict Studies through multi-dimensional social science education based on Open Distance Learning.

The Mission of the DSS

To facilitate empowerment of people and pave the way for sustainable and equitable socio-economic, political and cultural development of the country through study programmes ranging from Certificate Courses to Postgraduate levels.

Objectives

The primary objectives of the Department are:

- To build an academic environment inspired by pluralism;
- To ensure capacity building of academics to excel in social science teaching and research;
- To equip students to address socio-political, economic and cultural aspects of development and social change in a globally relevant manner;
- To provide a firm foundation for personality development through competencies and skills required for national development;
- To forge a vibrant and mutually beneficial relationship with the industry.



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The Department to society's development has paved the work in the fields of current interest and to contribute to

The DSS is located in the premises of the FHSS, which is a part of the central administrative precinct of the OUSL in Nawala. The main lecture halls that DSS uses for day schools are located within the Faculty premises and the Colombo Regional Centre. All lecture rooms are equipped with white boards and overhead projectors. The DSS also has multi-media facilities. The students registered for the undergraduate programmes and post graduate studies can use the OUSL Library located within the central campus. Library facilities are also available at Regional Centers. The Department also provides limited services to students through the OUSL's network of Regional Centers and Study Centers scattered all over the island. Services available at some of these centers include day-schools, text book reference, audio-visual aid, Computer lab with Internet facility, distribution of printed study texts and conducting examinations and counseling. The Certificate Programme in Social Sciences day school activities take place at Anuradhapura, Batticaloa, Kandy and Matara regional centers and at Hatton study centre. The BA Degree in Social Sciences day schools for all levels are conducted at Batticaloa Centre and only level III day schools are conducted at Kandy centre. Currently Department has 2 professors, 5 senior lecturers with PhD, 3 senior lecturers with other postgraduate qualifications, 7 lecturers, 3 consultants and 3 project assistants.

3. AIMS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND PROGRAMME DETAILS

3.1 Aims

In order to acquire a range of skills to enable students to understand the structure and functions of the society, and to deal with the emerging social, political, economic, cultural and ethnic issues, the DSS aims to provide:

- different academic programmes with a multi-disciplinary perspective enabling the students to develop their academic knowledge, skills, applied research and practical applications;
- wider and challenging learning opportunities within the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) education mode practiced by the OUSL;
- opportunities for life-long learning that enable students for continuous professional updating;
- effective institutional support through specific quality assurance committees of the Department which constantly review and upgrade teaching, learning, study materials and assessment;
- opportunities for students from other departments in the university to study social science-related subjects;
- assistance for career development of the teaching staff, including provision of student feedback, peer advice, postgraduate and professional training, collaborative research and academic-industry links;
- a friendly and supportive departmental environment that is conducive to effective learning, high productivity and high standards;
- encouragement to students to apply the knowledge and skills gained by them to deal with socio-economic problems, with particular reference to Sri Lanka, and to provide realistic recommendations to policy makers.

of the programmes of the Department, students should

have:

- gained subject knowledge and understanding in the areas of social sciences, based on programmes that provide initial broad frameworks followed by progressively increasing depth of study;
- developed ability to apply subject-specific skills to conduct research;
- acquired a range of cognitive and transferable skills (e.g. critical thinking about complex socio-cultural, economic and political issues, information technology skills, effective oral and written communication, self-motivation and team work) and ability to apply them in different situations;
- gained technical and analytical skills to collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data through field research, and suggest policy recommendations to deal with practical problems in the society;
- developed ability to work independently and innovatively.

The learning outcomes of different programmes of the Department are outlined below:

- **B.A Degree in Social Sciences:** Students should have obtained multi-disciplinary knowledge and understanding of Sociology, Mass Communication and Economics.
- **Certificate in Social Sciences:** Students should have gained multi-disciplinary knowledge and understanding of Modern Sri Lankan History, Geography, Economics, Mass Communication, Political Science, Management, Sociology and English for Social Sciences.
- **Masters of Arts Degree in Development Studies and Public Policy:** Students should have gained multi-disciplinary knowledge and understanding of social, political, economic and cultural fundamentals of developments through the modules based on historical, theoretical and thematic issues. The students will also develop their skills of communication, presentation, data processing and management.
- **Diploma in Youth Development:** The empowered youth practitioners should be potential leaders with a set of generic core competencies in youth development through knowledge, values and skills development. These competencies will enable to; carry out need assessment of young people in different social contexts, help others in allied fields to facilitate youth development, Initiate and manage youth programmes and develop, understand and interpret policy pertaining to youth development programmes. Initially this programme was developed and implemented as a Commonwealth Youth Programme.
- **Advanced Certificate in Tourism and Travel Operations:** Students should be able to conceptualize practical training related to Tourism, Hospitality and Travel Management.

To help to achieve the learning outcomes of DSS programmes offer learning experiences that are intended to enable students to:

- build upon their potential at entry by progressively developing their academic knowledge, understanding and skills, based on a broad and multi-disciplinary approach;
- benefit from a curriculum in which the design and teaching are developed by the collective efforts of the department staff and academics from other institutions;
- learn from study programmes that focus on complex issues in a modern dynamic society;

committed to teaching and learning within an ODL

guidelines on the academic programmes;

- receive continuous assessment for progression and grading, and feedback on individual progress;
- be facilitated with academic support and resources.

Programme Details

The following courses/programmes are reviewed in this self-evaluation report.

| Programme | Duration No. of Years | Number of Students (2009) |
|---|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Certificate Course in Social Sciences - Level I & II | 2 | 791 |
| B.A. in Social Sciences - Level III, IV, V | 3 | 665 |
| Masters of Arts Degree in Development Studies & Public Policy ó Level VI & VIII | | 30 |
| • Post graduate Diploma in Development Studies & Policy Planning (1 st Year) | 1 | |
| • Masters of Arts Degree in Development Studies & Public Policy (2 nd Year) | 2 | |
| Diploma in Youth in Development óLevel I & II | 2 | 20 |
| Advanced Certificate in Tourism and Travel Operations | 1 | 39 |
| Sri Lankan Studies | | 819 |

4. FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW TEAM

Findings of the review team are presented here under the 8 categories given in the guidelines for subject reviews.

4.1 Curriculum Design, Content and Review

The DSS have designed itsø academic programs on the basis of a multi-disciplinary framework to meet national educational and training needs focusing on outreach. The Department offers certificate courses in social sciences, Advanced Certificate in Tourism and Travel operations, Diploma in Youth in Development, B.A. General Degree in Social Sciences and Postgraduate Diploma in Development Studies and Policy Planning leads to M.A in Development Studies and Public Policy. In addition, MPhil and PhD programmes are also conducted.

Although there is no special degree programme is offered for the students, the learning outcomes of existing programmes are clear and sound. The DSS has structured the programmes so as to develop cognitive skills and subject-specific knowledge of the students. The programmes are also designed to enable students to enhance their transferable skills including oral and written communication, critical thinking and analysis, information technology applications, decision making, team work and self-motivated initiatives. The academic programmes are designed to pursuit self and distance learning which are more suitable for employed persons. The programmes are intended to improve the attitudes of the

mercantile and NGO sectors so as to enable them to work places. The programmes provide opportunities for employment of those who are already employed without disrupting their duty-related commitments. Especially, DSS is received a special grant from Asian Development Bank (ADB) to improve their curriculum and IT facilities.

The Department offers the Certificate Course in Social Sciences for those without conventional qualifications like G.C.E. (A/L). Any person with basic literacy and above 18 years is eligible to register for this program. The Certificate Course provides various opportunities for students to pursue higher studies. The students who successfully complete the Certificate Course are eligible to register for the B.A. Degree Programme in Social Sciences. Also, they can enroll for the Bachelor of Management Studies Program and sit for the entrance examination for the LL.B. Degree Program conducted by the OUSL.

All the academic programmes conform to the University's credit rating system. The term 'credit rating' implies the number of self-studying hours that a student has to devote to a particular course. Each student is expected to allocate 450 hours of self-study per credit (15 hours per week x 30 weeks). Each regular course carries a credit rating of 1/3 (150 hours). Continuing education courses carry credit ratings ranging from 1/6 (75 hours) to 1/2 (225 hours) credits.

The **Certificate Course** is offered in Sinhala, Tamil and English media. The Level 1 courses include Modern History, Geography, Economics and English for Social Sciences. The Level 2 courses cover Political Science, Management and Mass Communication, in addition to English for Social Science. The **B.A. Degree Programme** in Social Sciences comprising Levels 3, 4 and 5 conform to the three years of a general degree at a conventional university. It is a six-credit programme of three years duration. It is offered in the English medium. The programme consists of compulsory courses and a mixture of optional courses drawn from the academic disciplines of Economics, Sociology and Mass Communication. At Level 3, a student is required to offer 6 compulsory courses consisting of two courses from each academic discipline. Students who wish to quit their studies having completed Level III are awarded the Advanced Certificate in Social Sciences while those quitting at Level IV are awarded the Diploma in Social Sciences. At Level IV and V, students are required to offer a maximum of one compulsory and one optional course in each subject discipline. In addition, a set of continuing education courses intended to enhance knowledge is included in the curriculum as adjunct courses. However, students seem to have not provided with a wider choice of courses to select from allowing a larger flexibility in deciding the course units they want to follow. This may be due to the shortage of academic staff from different disciplines. At present DSS has several disciplines that are not represented by a single permanent staff member.

The Postgraduate Diploma in Development Studies and Public Policy, introduced in 2004, is an innovative programme conducted by the Department of Social Studies in collaboration with the Marga Institute. This programme, which is built on a multi-disciplinary approach, is designed to enhance the knowledge base, analytical skills and research capabilities of graduates and other qualified persons employed in public and private sector institutions and civil society organizations. This programme consists of 6 main subjects, with the subject matter arranged as modules dealing with Historical, Theoretical and Thematic issues relating to development. The Historical Module takes the student through the different phases of development process in Sri Lanka since independence. The Theoretical Module

as they evolved in the UN System and in the academic disciplines of the three main social sciences, i.e. Economics, Sociology and Political Science. This module also includes research and survey methodology as well as development indicators. The Thematic Module consists of 12 cross-cutting themes and case studies which are relevant to the understanding of the development process in Sri Lanka. The programme consists of 2 credits worth of regular courses and 1/3 worth of adjunct courses.

Currently, this Programme has been designed and developed as a Master of Arts in Development Studies and Public Policy. The duration of the new programme is two years with an exit point offered after the first year for those who wish to obtain only a Postgraduate Diploma Programme in Development Studies and Public Policy. This programme has been conducting collaboration with Marga Institute ó Centre for Development Studies ó which is non-profit research organization in Sri Lanka. DSS is providing all human resources to conduct the programme and Marga Institute is managing the financial closure and all administrative works including facilitating lecture halls and materials.

It is observed that subjects have been developed to meet current social needs and demands in the career market. The course content seems to be fairly up to date. However, some course unites are not revised for several years (though the department is having a principle to revise each curricular in every five years). Therefore, such course unites need to be updated. In designing and developing the course material, the Department has been successfully obtaining services from outside experts as well. The academic staff members have been continuing to maintain the programmes up to date incorporating contemporary socio-economic developments into courses on a regular basis. Innovative changes are also introduced from time to time. The Certificate Programme in Social Sciences course material in all three mediums has been revised by 100% in year 2008/2009 and will be distributed to the students in the academic year 2010. According to the University standard requirements the Department of Social Studies have been updating 20% of the course material in the Degree programme as well. **Diploma in Youth Development** sixteen course modules are been translated to Sinhala and Tamil medium and translationsø will be completed by end of October 2009. The course material for the Master of Arts in Development Studies and Public Policy has been written in order to launch the Distance Learning mode masters programme in the near future.

The Department has successfully completed the new course material for the following programmes.

1. Certificate in Journalism
2. Certificate in Social Marketing
3. Certificate in Good Governance and Leadership
4. Advance Certificate in Tourism and Travel Operations

The Advance Certificate in Tourism and Travel Operations has already been launched as a CERC project and other programmes will be launched in year 2010. The Department is also working on an on-line programme and at the initial stage it will be limited to few selected courses from the Degree Programme. Currently, the outline will be power point presentation supported by audio-video material. Though they have a full pledged media house the communication discipline seems not benefited from it.

It is noted that the well organized process adopted for curriculum development addresses many of the issues of curriculum. The content of the curriculum is subject to new curricula and any revisions to the existing curricula are subject to the approval of the university's statutory bodies like the Curriculum Development Committee, By-Laws Committee, Faculty Board and Senate.

Overall judgment given in this regard is 'GOOD'.

4. 2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods

Teaching, Learning

The department has a well qualified teaching capacity with 2 professors, 5 senior lecturers with PhD, 3 senior lecturers with other postgraduate qualifications, 7 lecturers, 3 consultants and 3 project assistants to manage the existing academic programmes. However the student staff ratio is badly above the university norms and the every academic staff member is involved in a kind of administrative works. Therefore, an additional staff is needed to conduct existing multidisciplinary degree programmes effectively and introduce new programmes demanding by the country.

Most teaching staff members are actively involved in field-based research pertaining to socio-cultural, economic and communication issues. University main library has a sufficient collection of books, periodicals related to the disciplines and teachers have access to a small department library. The library research and other research involvements have enabled them to keep abreast of most recent development in their respective fields, and to update their teaching accordingly. The teaching capabilities of the academic staff are improved through the staff development programmes of the OUSL including postgraduate training, regular meetings and specific workshops.

Many teachers, except the most senior academics are supposed to share their office rooms with others. The small crowded rooms do not provide them with the necessary private space that is needed to engage in academic activities. It appeared to be extremely difficult in this situation for academics and students to give and receive individual level guidance and support that is very much needed in a university academic environment.

The Facilities in the Colombo regional centre, are not appropriate to improve the overall learning environment. Due to the shortage of large class rooms, teachers have to heavily rely on other common lecture halls available in the Centre that have no modern technological equipments provided. However the lecturers manage to do these day school classes with the fullest support from the non academic staff.

Unlike the conventional universities the DSS follows the guidelines of Open and Distance Learning developed by the OUSL. Accordingly priority is given to self directed and self-paced learning supported by various facilities including printed study texts, face-to-face day-school sessions and audio-visual material. The printed texts formatted using the OUSL's manuals, 'Bridging the Gap' and 'House Style' which contain guidelines for writing study texts for self-learning, which usually consist of two blocks for each course, provide adequate subject coverage. It is noteworthy to state that each study text contains about 20-25 lessons written by course development teams consisting of internal academic staff, academics from other universities and experts from industry. Audio-visual supplementary study material is available for certain courses. AV centre in the library which is the important mode of self

ts. Using media technology for their mode of delivery
t. Even, many available audio-video materials are very
and the quality of the product should be improved. It is
also advisable to link NAC centers with regional centers.

The principal source of teaching input, study texts are interactive in style and contain in-text questions, activities and relevant review questions for students to reflect on their work and self-assessment. In each semester, a few day schools are conducted for each course by both internal staff and visiting academics to provide a forum for students to discuss critical issues and problems that they encounter in studying the course material. Modern technological equipments such as multimedia projectors, overhead projectors and internet facilities are adequately available at the department and can be used in improving the teaching and learning in the department.

The study system adopted by the Department is geared towards guided self-study, where study aid is given to motivate self-learners. To make the best use of this opportunity, learners are expected to arrange their time schedules systematically so as to have adequate time for self-study.

The students view is that the day schools are very effective as they have an opportunity to interact with the teaching staff in coping with study texts. These sessions are not conducted in the form of conventional lectures but they are more interactive discussions on the subject matter. Therefore, students are encouraged to optimize benefit by attending day-schools and effectively participating in the discussions. The students are demanding more day school sessions reflecting the effectiveness of the way conducting these day school sessions. The DSS also encourages students to form peer groups of five to seven students for group studies at times and venues convenient to them inculcating team spirit among learners.

Assessment Methods

The DSS adopts a variety of assessment methods in all programmes, in terms of the OUSL's By-Laws. The scheme of assessment for each regular and adjunct course consists of Continuous Assessment (formative assessment) and Final Examination (summative assessment) components. The Continuous Assessment (CA) component consists of one Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA) and two Continuous Assessment Tests (CAT) for each course. Of them the marks of the highest scored two are considered for CA marks. Those who obtain a minimum of 40 percent for the two components are eligible to sit the final examination. A written final examination is conducted for each course at the end of the semesters.

The overall marks for each course is determined by a combination of the CA mark and the final examination mark, provided that the student has obtained not less than 35 marks at the final examination. The weightages given for final grading are 30 percent for Continuous Assessment and 70 percent for Final Examination. Students who are unsuccessful at the final examination in each course are considered as re-sit candidates. These students are allowed to sit for the relevant final examination when it is offered again in a subsequent academic year. The continuous assessment in Level 4 and 5 also include oral examinations which permit students to display their analytical and communication capabilities.

Examination papers are reviewed by both internal and external examiners to ensure clarity, fairness, coverage and overall balance. The internal and external examiners scrutinize the examination marks and assessment methods at the Board of Examiners' meetings conducted

ls. Examination scripts are marked anonymously in
Preparing marking schemes of question papers are very
ing; however that is not in practice.

The review team is of the view that assessment methods of the DSS are very clear and effective. However credit values and GPA system that currently adopted in the university system is not in practice in the department. The discussion had with the Vice Chancellor revealed that the credit values and GPA system will be incorporated near future. As the DSS programmes are basically student centered or learner centered the weightages given for final grading are not well balanced. The review team is of the view that the weightage for the assignments be increased from 30% to 40%.

The judgment of the team with regard to this aspect is 'GOOD'.

4.3 The quality of Students including Student Progress and Achievements.

Given the fact that Social Studies seems to be a multidisciplinary subject in terms of an assumption that it offers job opportunities and a three year degree programme, students from all levels are attracted. The entry requirements are more flexible, unlike in the conventional universities where entry is exclusively based on the results of GCE Advanced Level examination. The students generally entering the degree course are heterogeneous with above 18 years, mostly employed, sometimes retired and matured implying a mix of quality at entry level. Interaction with each other makes students responsible people. English language competency of the students is fairly high as the DSS introduces compulsory course modules on English Skills Development.

As the students are permitted to complete a particular course or a programme at their own pace and convenience in accordance with ODL practices, progression from one level to the next level may not be continuous unlike in the case of conventional universities. As students have the flexibility to progress within their own time frames, they may postpone completion of a particular course or a programme for reasons such as exigencies of work at their work places, family commitments or personal problems. Therefore, the rate of completion is rather discrete and irregular.

Most of them are gainfully employed in private and public sectors, NGOs and international agencies. The University offers a gold medal annually to the best performing student at the examination of B.A. in Social Sciences which would add to enhancement of quality by compelling the students to strive hard to achieve these goals.. Some of DSS graduates pursue higher studies or follow professional training programmes.

Quality of the students is reflected that during the academic years from 2000-2009, number of students have secured first classes and second class upper and lower divisions. None of the students in the failure category thus ensuring 100% passes. It is noteworthy to mention that the oldest BA degree holder has been produced by the DSS.

In relation to this aspect the judgment of the team is 'GOOD'.

Department of Social Studies has many avenues to present their

feedback formally. They are:

1. Through the student representatives at the HSS Faculty Board.
2. Occasions where students and teachers meet at Day Schools to discuss their subject matters.
3. Through the students counselors.
4. Through the formal questionnaires occasionally given to the students get their response on the courses given by the department.

It was noted that a Formal student feedback is not a regular practice in the department adopted by all lecturers for all courses. In the course units where receiving student feedback is an accepted practice, the information has not been formally analysed even though informally it might have been used for the purpose of improving the quality of the course. However, the review team noticed some informal students' feedback form is lined to very few course units in Sociology and it can be considered as a good initiative by the DSS. It should be further discussed and develop in order to use in all programmes.

The day school sessions which require involvement of the students in discussion classes under close supervision of the academics of the department is another important occasion that facilitates an opportunity for the staff to receive student feedback. The staff has the opportunity to receive feedback when the students visit the Department for various purposes. The Course Coordinators, who are in charge of each Level, discuss pertinent issues with the students, and help to resolve them in consultation with the Head of Department and other staff members. The Coordinators also liaise with the relevant units in the OUSL's central administration such as Regional Educational Services Division and Student Affairs Division. The benchmark surveys on student performance conducted by the staff also provide useful data on students' opinions with regard to academic matters.

The department does not maintain any records of quantified student feedback data. In such instances, the department has not taken initiatives to ensure that the system is properly in place. The review team is of the view that this is an aspect that needs to be formalized and strengthened.

Judgment given in this regard is 'UNSATISFACTORY'.

4.5 Postgraduate Studies

The Department conducts the Postgraduate Diploma in Development Studies in collaboration with the Marga Institute. The major objective of this programme, which is based on a sound multi-disciplinary approach, is to enhance the knowledge and analytical skills of development practitioners employed in various sectors. The Department offers a new postgraduate programme titled as Master for Arts Degree in Development Studies and Public Policy from 2008 onwards with the collaboration with Marga Institute. This is a two year programme with an exit point offered after the first year for those who wish to obtain only a postgraduate Diploma in Development Studies and public policy. This programme is facilitated by the Marga with lecture halls, library and well qualified outside academics from the university. DSS operates post graduate programmes as independent programmes and is heavily sponsored and run by course fees levy from the students. DSS operates post graduate

...times and is heavily sponsored and run by course fees

The Open University on her part, provides the necessary quality assurance to the teaching function, final examination and certification of the successful students. Eligibility for admission is sound consisting of a written examination and an interview. Medium of Instruction is English. Assessment systems and grading policy are also sound and maintained a high quality. Further MPhil and PhD degree programmes are also introduced so that students have an opportunity to go to the highest level; however only one MPhil degree is produced so far in the history. With a well qualified academic staff this situation is not praiseworthy.

In addition to the postgraduate programmes the extension courses are also conducted by the DSS such as Advanced Certificate in Tourism operations. This programme is a one year programme and well suited for the employed people in the industry. However the review team is of the view that the name of the programme be changed as Diploma in Tourism Operations as the duration and contents of the programme are well suited for that. AS there are academics with micro finance research training in microfinance in different areas can be promoted as a contribution to national development. Almost all the academic staff members are involved in postgraduate teaching, supervision and coordination. Most of the lecturers are affiliated to various local and international associations and professional bodies.

Majority of the staff in the department have obtained foreign training at the postgraduate level. Many of them also have contributed to research and publications at local and international levels, paper presentations at international conferences, and have published textbooks and other reading materials for local readership. It is noteworthy to mention that many publications are done jointly contributing to an informal practice of peer observation to take place.

In relation to the postgraduate studies the judgment of the team is 'GOOD'.

4.6 Peer Observation

Despite the fact that the Department does not have any formalized mode for peer observation, the academic staff is encouraged to pair with one another, and to observe teaching of each one of them at the day-schools. Flow of knowledge from the senior lecturers to the temporary staff members occur with regard to teaching methods, stretching out the guidelines to students regarding assignments, marking of assignments and answer scripts.

Some form of Peer observation occurs with regard to certain subjects where there is no single lecturer, but topics are covered by different lecturers who have specialized knowledge in the areas. Staff members and the visiting academics informally exchange their teaching experiences at various meetings. Visiting academics are specifically guided to conduct day-schools in an open and distance learning environment.

Staff meetings are supposed to be held regularly and devote a considerable time for lecturers to put forth their problems and discuss ideas regarding the courses they take, and for others to review them. A praiseworthy extent of uniformity and standardization are achieved in the courses offered by the department due to the close collaboration of lecturers in the

ive research and publications done by the department
ervation.

Moderation of papers and panel marking adds to the opportunities available for peer observation in the department.

In relation to the peer observation the judgment of the team is SATISFACTORY.

4.7 Skills Development

The DSS has recognized skills development as one of the key to producing quality graduates. Skills development aspect also is given priority in the department aims and learning outcomes and in its vision and mission.

As highlighted above the DSS should have a strong strategy on developing cognitive, personal, and interpersonal skills of the students. The cognitive skills are essential to know how to take appropriate decision including problem solving and critical thinking in any social situation encountered by the students. Personal skills are important to manage/control him/herself, manage his/her own feelings, and manage stress. The other most important element is interpersonal skills which lead to provide a good understanding on how to live together having sound interpersonal communication, negotiation and refusal, empathy, cooperation and team work, and advocacy skills. Overall, the department has taken steps to encapsulate many aspects of skills development in their different programmes.

All courses and programmes are delivering as a method of open and distance learning and this method is helping all students to develop their cognitive skills extensively. All course coordinators and student counsellors are helping them to improve their cognitive skills while they are pursuing their studies. Furthermore, day school system is another platform for developing cognitive skills.

The open and distance learning method is not supporting much to develop student's interpersonal skills due to lack of continuous interactions between academic staff and their fellow students. However, there is a component catering to the development of interpersonal skills through peer groups that also provides the students with ability to adjust to situations and work with people of different social levels and backgrounds. It is important to mention that the review team noticed that the time that academics spend in the department and their unity help the increase of student contact hours so that increase the skills.

As a major strategy of developing these skills, the department has considered that language competency as a major component of skills development. Department is taking numerous efforts to improve language competency of the students over and above the regular language programmes conducted by the English Language Teaching Unit. English is used as the medium of instruction whenever possible.

The courses and programmes in the department significantly contribute to the development of writing and presentation skills of the students. Dissertation is an important component which provides an opportunity for the students to develop their field skills, writing and analytical skills. Many course units and field programmes require presentation of findings supporting the development of presentation skills to a considerable extent. The review team had a few opportunities to observe students presentations and their capabilities are satisfactory.

such element focused by the department to improve ment has its own IT lab enabling students to involve in IT related activities frequently. However, some students are requested to improve the online facilities to carry their studies. The online study programme is viable if all students are having accessibility for computers and internet. Though some students in urban centre are having such facilities many peripherals do not have such facilities and the DSS is facing difficulties to continue online study programme. However, DSS is having at least three (two for Mass Communication and one for Sociology) online programmes at the time of review.

Judgment given in this regard is 'GOOD'.

4.8 Academic Guidance and Counselling

A number of programs are in place to offer academic guidance and counselling to students. Details on events such as day-schools, academic activities and examinations are disseminated to students mainly by mail. Basic course information is available in the Faculty Handbook and the Department Prospectus given to new entrants as well as in the University website. Course information and degree entry requirements are further elaborated as part of the faculty orientation program organized for first year students. It is in this orientation that students get their first formal instructions on course.

Academic staff is readily available to provide guidance and assistance to students, with prior appointment. Initial counselling is given to students at registration. Since then the facility is provided throughout the academic year. The Course Coordinator is the focal point dealing with all academic matters pertaining to a particular Level.

We understood that alumni activation occurs mostly through the prompting of the Department. Perhaps the Department should take an initiative to enhance the dynamics of the existing alumni association and make its work more formal so that it can play a more formal and dynamic role, particularly in career counselling, job placement and offering internship opportunities for graduating students.

This constitute of individual access to lecturers who can advise students on a wide range of issue from academic matters to personal issues. While this opportunity clearly and has been recognized and utilized by the Department, it is our observation that its outreach potential can be further expanded.

In relation to academic guidance and counselling the judgment of the team is 'GOOD'.

The following overall judgments were assigned to the 8 aspects reviewed in the Department of Social Studies of the Open University of Sri Lanka, considering the information presented in the Self Evaluation Report and during the review process. It was noted that the department has the internal capacity to improve and address much of the deficiencies prevailing at the moment. However, certain structural limitations faced by the department at the time of the review including the inadequate physical space and large student numbers were taken into consideration in arriving these judgements by the review team.

| Reviewed | Judgment Given |
|---|----------------|
| Review | Good |
| Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods | Good |
| Quality of Students including Student Progress and Achievements | Good |
| Extent and Use of Student Feedback | Unsatisfactory |
| Postgraduate Studies | Good |
| Peer Observation | Satisfactory |
| Skills Development | Good |
| Academic Guidance and Counselling | Good |

5. CONCLUSIONS

1. Curriculum Design, Content and Review

Strengths/ Good Practices

1. A sound curriculum revision procedure is adopted
2. Curriculum covers expected knowledge at different levels and knowledge advances in a gradual incremental fashion
3. Inclusion of a number of theoretical and practical courses in the curriculum strengthening students capacity in theory as well as in their practical application
4. Curriculum is in multidisciplinary nature enabling students to improve their skills.
5. Curriculum is upgraded regularly and new programmes are designed
6. Initiated on-line programmes
7. Designed curriculum to enabled employed people to enrol and be flexible
8. Enrolment is open for all levels of students including whom do not have GCE A/L
9. ADB supports curriculum development
10. Credit system is applied
11. Medium is English for courses other than certificate course
12. Collaboration with Marge Institute for Postgraduate and MA programme
13. Outside experts assistance is taken in curriculum upgrading

Weaknesses

1. Limited choices of course units for BA
2. Recommended readings are out dated with regard to certain course units.
3. Some course units content did not revised within the departmental time framework of curriculum revision.
4. No special degree offered
5. Major curriculum revision is not done

ent Methods

1. Use of modern technological equipments in effectively facilitating dissemination of knowledge
2. Self directed and self paced study
3. Main teaching modes are students texts and day schools
4. Peer groups of students are encouraged
5. Opportunity to learn through exposure in practical settings.
6. Teaching strength is adequate as the department is having well qualified teaching staff including 5 PhD holders and three are pursuing their PhDs at the time of review.
7. Junior staff members and non-academic staff give fullest support to teaching and assessment activities
8. Good library, AV centre and media house facilitate the teaching learning environment more effective
9. CA and oral examinations are adopted in assessments
10. Papers are reviewed internally and externally

Weaknesses

1. Physical facilities for teaching and learning are inadequate and not satisfactory
2. Lack of staff for introducing new course units
3. Need a more formalized field training programme to help the students in practicing field techniques under close supervision
4. Weightage for CA marks is not adequate
5. No marking schemes are developed
6. No second marking of answer scripts.
7. Existing AV and Media House are not effectively and fully utilised
8. No link between NAC and regional centers
9. Day schools are limited

3. Quality of Students including Student Progress and Achievements

Strengths/Good Practices

1. Entry qualifications are more flexible having opportunity for whom even do not have GCE A/L
2. Heterogeneous group of students
3. Majority of students receive classes
4. No failure or dropouts in the programme
5. Comparatively less time taken by students to receive employment
6. Gold medal is offered to encourage students

Weaknesses

1. Rate of completion is irregular
2. The department has no records with regard to the positions of alimonies.

1. Mainly used informal ways.
2. Students' Representation at faculty level
3. An attempt is made in introducing a feedback form into the teaching and learning process.
4. A few senior academic staff members have identified it as a vital aspect.

Weaknesses:

1. Lack of serious consideration of the system among many senior staff members.
2. No analysis available and no utilization of the system in improving the quality of education in the department

5. Peer Observation

Strengths/Good Practices

1. Moderation of question papers is practice.
2. Departmental meetings are held regularly.
3. Setting, moderation and pan marking
4. Junior staff members are guided by senior staff.
5. Collaborative research and publications

Weaknesses

1. No formal peer observation
2. Second marking is limited
3. Junior staff attends the lectures done by the senior staff; however no feedback is expected.

6. Postgraduate Studies

Strengths/Good Practices

1. Four postgraduate programmes are conducted.
2. Students registered for the Diploma have opportunity to continue up to the level of Ph.D.
3. Department has a well qualified staff to teach at the postgraduate level
4. Many senior members of staff are involved in supervision, teaching and coordination of the postgraduate programmes.
5. Many senior staff continues to involve in quality research and publications.
6. Academics are engaged in professional associations
7. Some extension courses are introduced

Weaknesses

1. Completion rate of MA is very low.
2. MPhil and PhD programmes are not given sufficient attention
3. No higher degree committee responsible of all postgraduate programmes.
4. Certificate course in Tourism and Hospitality Management be reorganised

1. Having a strong physical and human resource base facilitating skills development
2. Practically oriented teaching
3. Taking steps to improve language competency
4. Development of cognitive skills through service learning programmes
5. Development of IT skills catering to improve cognitive and personal skills.
6. Improvement in writing and presentation skills through assignments and dissertation components

Weaknesses:

1. Filed investigations and practical are inadequate or lack
2. Lack of time for extracurricular activities such as sports.

8. Academic Guidance and Counselling

Strengths/Good Practices

1. Availability variety of modes of academic guidance including Faculty Handbook, the Department Prospectus, University website.
2. Usual university counselling system is in practice
3. Course coordinators are appointed
4. Orientation programmes providing the students with necessary information and backgrounds.
5. Informal contacts between individual lecturers and the students providing opportunity to give and seek advise on issues pertaining from academic matters to personal issues.

Weaknesses

1. no trained counsellors
2. No office space for counselling
3. Students relying more on informal rather than formal counselling and guidance programs

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The review team is agreed unanimously on following recommendations. They are:

1. Considering the burden bared by the DSS it is advisable to established a Faculty of Social Sciences
2. Create carder provisions to fill the shortage of teachers for introducing more subject disciplines
3. Provision of appropriate physical facilities i.e. well equipped classrooms
4. More supporting staff to let loose the administrative works bared by the academics
5. Simplify the general administrative procedures to avoid delays and inefficiency
6. Conversion of semester, credit and GPA system in line with that of Sri Lanka University system
7. More day school sessions

system be introduced to the benefit of students in

counting the workload

10. Expedite the curriculum revision process addressing all the identifiable deficiencies
11. Marking schemes for all the Question papers be prepared
12. Adopt the practice of second marking of scripts.
13. Weightage for Continuous assessments should be increased from 30% to at least 40%
14. More field trips or field training programmes are conducted
15. Concern on promoting and encouraging students to use online study programmes.
16. More emphasis to conduct MPhil and PhD programmes
17. Higher degree committee/Postgraduate Faculty be set up to conduct all the postgraduate programmes.
18. There is an opportunity to conduct Micro Finance Skills Training Programme
19. Considering improving postgraduate programmes synchronizing them with the nationally accepted standards
20. .More effectively utilizing the existing human resources in the department for the development of postgraduate programmes
21. Student feedback procedures need to be formalized considering the future benefits that the department may receive through this process by making it an integral part of teaching in every study program
22. Adopt the practice of peer evaluation as a formal system according to established guidelines in this regard. This would prevent falling into various pitfalls with regard to the system which often causes unwanted problems.
23. Strengthening the informal systems of peer evaluation such as second marking, moderation of question papers, conference marking of large bundles of papers and team examining of presentations and dissertation related work.
24. Provide more residential facilities for students
25. Appointment of a professional counsellor.

E REVIEW VISIT

Day 1 – 19th November 2009

| | |
|---------------|--|
| 08.30 ó 9.00 | Meeting with the Vice Chancellor/ QAA Council Representative/ Dean/Head of the Dept and the Review Panel |
| 09.00 ó 9.30 | Private meeting of Review Panel with QAA Council Representative |
| 09.30 ó 10.00 | Meeting with Head of Department |
| 10.00 ó 10.30 | Discuss the Agenda for the meeting and self introduction of the staff of Dept. of Social Studies |
| 10.30 ó 11.30 | Department presentation on the SER |
| 11.30 ó 12.30 | Discussion |
| 12.30 ó 13.15 | Lunch |
| 13.15 ó 13.30 | Meeting with Student Counsellors |
| 13.30 ó 14.30 | Observing Departmental Facilities (Library, Computer, etc.) |
| 14.30 ó 15.30 | Meeting with academic staff |
| 15.30 ó 16.00 | Meeting with Non academic staff |
| 16.00 ó 16.30 | Brief meeting of Reviewers |

Day 2 – 20th November 2009

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|---------------|--|
| 09.00 ó 10.30 | Observation of Course materials, Admission criteria, Scheme of Evaluation, Students handbook, Question Papers, Enrolment and Completion rate, etc. of BA in Social Sciences |
| 10.30 ó 11.00 | Observation of Course materials, Admission criteria, Scheme of Evaluation, Students handbook, Question Papers, Enrolment and Completion rate, etc. of Certificate in Social Sciences and Diploma in Youth in development |
| 11.00 ó 11.30 | Observation of Course materials, Admission criteria, Scheme of Evaluation, Students handbook, Question Papers, Enrolment and Completion rate, etc. of MA degree in Development Studies and Public Policy |
| 11.30 ó 12.00 | Observation of Course materials, Admission criteria, Scheme of Evaluation, Students handbook, Question Papers, Enrolment and Completion rate, etc. of Advanced Certificate in Tourism and Travel Operations |
| 12.00 ó 12.30 | Observation of Course materials, Admission criteria, Scheme of Evaluation, Students handbook, Question Papers, Enrolment and Completion rate, etc. of (1) Sri Lankan Studies and (2) Environmental Economics and Management |
| 12.30 ó 13.30 | Lunch |
| 13.30 ó 14.30 | Observation of AV materials and On-Line Programmes |
| 14:30 ó 15:30 | Observation of Research Publications |
| 15.30 ó 16.30 | Meeting with BA (Batch 1) students |

Batch 2) students
(Prism, Certificates) students

| | |
|---------------|---|
| 10.00 ó 10.30 | Meeting with MA students (working Tea) |
| 10.30 ó 11.30 | Reviewerø Private Discussion |
| 11.30 ó 12.30 | Meeting with Head and Staff for Reporting |
| 12.30 ó 13.30 | Lunch |
| 13.30 onwards | Report writing |

Annex 2. LIST OF FACILITIES OBSERVED

1. Office of the Department
2. Lecturersø Rooms
3. Lecture Halls
4. Computer Unit
5. Department Library
6. Main University Library
7. Colombo Regional Centre

Annex 3. List of Documents Observed

1. Faculty and Department Hand Books
2. Course Outlines
3. Handouts
4. Past Examination Papers (End of Semester)
5. Mid Semester Examination Papers
6. Attendance Sheets
7. Mark Sheets
8. Dissertations
9. Assignments
10. Student evaluation forms
11. Minutes of the Department Meetings
12. Academic staff Publications
13. AV Materials