

SUBJECT REVIEW REPORT

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY



**FACULTY OF ARTS
UNIVERSITY OF PERADENIYA**

12th to 14th October 2009

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CONTENTS

	Page
1. Subject Review Process	1
2. Brief History of the University, Faculty and the Dept. of Sociology	2
3. Aims and Learning Outcomes	4
3.1 Aims	4
3.2 Learning Outcomes	4
4. Findings of the Review Team	5
4.1. Curriculum Design, Content and Review	5
4.2. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods	7
4.3. Quality of Students including Student Progress and Achievements	9
4.4. Extent and Use of Student Feedback, Qualitative and Quantitative	11
4.5. Postgraduate Studies	12
4.6. Peer Observation	13
4.7. Skills Development	14
4.8. Academic Guidance and Counseling	16
5. Conclusions	17
6. Recommendations	20
7. Annexes	22

of the subject review conducted at the department of Sociology, University of Peradeniya during 12th to 14th of October 2009 under the guidance of Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council of the University Grants Commission of Sri Lanka. Subject review is conducted in a particular university department under the auspices of Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council of the University Grants Commission of Sri Lanka for the purpose of assessing how the study programmes offered by that department cater to produce high quality, employable graduates against the objectives and learning outcomes of the department. It also looks at the ways in which the programmes offered by the department attempts to meet the national level demands made on university education.

The subject review of the Department of Sociology at the University of Peradeniya was conducted by a four member review team on the basis of the self evaluation report submitted by the department to recognize its contribution in meeting the objectives of university education with reference to the aims and outcomes identified by the department. Subject review also pays attention to the possible gaps which may hinder the achievement of the desired objectives and make suggestions informed by the accepted good practices that may help to remedy them.

The review process began with a discussion Prof. Colin N. Peiris, the QA specialist of the Quality Assurance and accreditation Council of the University Grants Commission of Sri Lanka, had with the review team to layout the procedures of the review process helping the reviewers to recall and prepare for the protocols of the process. This was followed by a brief meeting of the review team and the QA Specialist with the Vice Chancellor of the University of Peradeniya, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Director of the Staff Development centre, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and the Head of the Department of Sociology.

The review team had a brief meeting at the department with Dr. Vijitha Nanayakkara, Head of the Department of Sociology and Prof. Tudor Silva, former Head of Sociology to discuss and agree on the agenda in order to ensure effective time management during the three day review within the regular academic activities in the department. The Review Team had the opportunity to observe a lecture prior to the meeting with the Head and the academic staff where the head of the department made a presentation on the academic programmes of the department based on the self evaluation report. The review team had a lengthy discussion with the Head and the staff clarifying the issues related to the presentation and the self evaluation report.

The members of the department assisted the review team in conducting the review providing necessary information and accompanying the team to observe various facilities, documents, lectures etc. (List of the facilities observed is given in Annex 2). The review team was able to observe two lectures conducted by two members of the department Dr. Sisira Pinnawala and Dr. Vijitha Nanayakkara. The team also observed two students presentations based on their field research.

Discussions were held with two groups of students; one with the general degree students of all three years offering sociology as a subject and the other with the special degree students of third and fourth years. A meeting was held with the members of the non-academic staff

office assistant and the staff employed by the IRQUE project named as IRQUE Shakti project.

A variety of documents were pursued by the review team (A list is provided as Annex 4). Separate meetings were held with the staff of the department in the absence of the Head of the Department, with Post Graduate students and with department student counsellors which provided useful insights into different aspects assessed in the review.

The final agenda item of the three day review was the presentation made by the Review team on their findings during the review to the Head and the staff of the Department of Sociology allowing the reviewers to further clarify certain hazy points and come into consensus with the members on the department on the issues raised at the presentation.

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

University of Peradeniya

The University of Peradeniya is the heir to the oldest university tradition in Sri Lanka as the successor to the University of Ceylon, and was established in Colombo on 1st July 1942. After a long battle for the selection of sites, the University was shifted to the present site of great natural beauty at Peradeniya on 6th October 1952.

University of Peradeniya is located just 8km from the city of Kandy - the historic capital of last independent kingdom of Sri Lanka, and 100km from Colombo, the current capital of the country. The university covers about 700 hectares of land located on the flood plain of Mahaweli River as well as on the lower slopes of the Hantana range. The developed area, known as the University Park, is about 150 hectares while the rest of the land remains afforested.

The university consists of eight academic faculties, namely; Faculty of Agriculture, Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Dental Sciences, Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Science and Faculty of Veterinary Medicine & Animal Science and the latest addition Faculty of Allied Sciences. About 1800 undergraduates enter the university annually, to make up an undergraduate student population of 6600, and the total number of postgraduate students registered is over 1200. Out of the total undergraduate student population, about 5100 are provided accommodation on and around campus.

Vision and Mission of the University of Peradeniya

The Vision is to

- be a leading university in the region with international standing

The Mission is to

- Promote excellence in higher education and research
- Contribute towards national development

The university intends to achieve its mission by

- Giving students intellectually rigorous and creative education in their chosen disciplines
- Encouraging the total and harmonious development of every student regardless of sex, race, religion, case or physical disability
- Maintaining an environment in which a community of scholars and students can flourish
- Supporting creatively in aesthetic activities

ates back to the early beginnings of university education. The Faculty of Arts in Peradeniya University was established in Colombo, as part of then University of Ceylon, as two faculties called the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Oriental Studies. These two faculties were moved to Peradeniya in 1952, and were amalgamated in 1972 to form the Faculty of Arts.

The twenty years from 1952 to 1972 saw the expansion of the Faculties of Arts and Oriental Studies. The original seven departments of study of the two faculties were Classics, Economics, English, Geography, History, Oriental Languages, and Philosophy. The Department of Oriental Languages was divided in 1943 into the four separate departments of Sinhalese, Tamil, Pali and Sanskrit.

This was followed by the addition of several other academic disciplines to the faculty: Law and Arabic in 1945; Sociology, Education and Modern Languages in 1949 (French and German had been taught for many years as subsidiary subjects); Archaeology in 1959; and Buddhist Philosophy in 1964. The most recent additions to the faculty are the departments of Fine Arts and Management Studies, established respectively in 2001 and 2002.

A sub-department of English for the teaching of English as a second language was set up after the swabasha (i.e., non-English medium) students entered the university. In addition, French is also available as a subject to students following the General Degree Programme. In terms of both the number of students and staff, the Faculty of Arts is the largest of the seven faculties of the University of Peradeniya. At present there are sixteen departments of study and a teaching unit called the English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU) in the faculty. The ELTU, which is separate from the Department of English, is responsible for teaching English to students doing their degrees in the Sinhala and Tamil media. Student enrolment in the Faculty of Arts is around 3000 at present.

Department of Sociology

Established in 1949, the Department of Sociology at Peradeniya is the first Department of Sociology in Sri Lanka. As its reputation grew, the number of enrolments also increased, and the Department of Sociology is now the largest academic department catering to over 1000 students in the Faculty of Arts. Since 1970s, the department introduced courses in Sinhala and Tamil media and diversified the subjects available for undergraduate students. The department is fully representative of diverse languages and ethnic groups in the country.

The theoretical orientation in teaching and research programs have been complimented with fieldwork and practical activities in all relevant areas targeting to elevate the quality of undergraduate courses. Students majoring in Sociology have the opportunity to specialize in one chosen fields designed to encompass a variety of social issues and concerns such as development, health and nutrition, conflict and resolution, social work and welfare.

In 2004, the Department of Sociology was placed first in a nationwide competition for awards for improving quality and relevance of undergraduate education. Thus the IRQUE/SAKTI project was launched subsequently and accelerated efforts were made to improve the quality of undergraduate education with revised curricula, practical experience and internship programs. The department was improved with modern facilities and infrastructure such as air conditioned lecture halls, multimedia assisted lecture facilities, an



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t, and a department library containing over 3000 subject

The Department of sociology conducts research activities in underserved communities with the participation of undergraduates and fresh graduates. The department journal, *Samaja Vimasuma* includes scholarly articles from professionals and eminent scholars for the benefit of students in the field and the interested public.

The Sociological Association was founded in the 1960s by students and still functions effectively.

3. AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The mission of the Department of Sociology is to produce graduates empowered with the skill and competence to work with dedication and commitment to the betterment of the society. The Department of Sociology emphasizes the importance of quality graduates who are gifted with creativity and personal initiative, computer literacy and the much desired language competency.

3.1. Aims

The department has listed following as its aims to produce sociologists who are practical-oriented and possess the capacity, capability and the right attitude to serve the society. In meeting this aim the department has designed a number of objectives separately for the special and general degree students.

Special Degree

- 3.1.1.1 To build a sound foundation with thorough knowledge on Sociological theory
- 3.1.1.2 Provide access to the various fields within the subject while offering the opportunity to specialize in an area of individual interest
- 3.1.1.3 Familiarize different tools used in the applied sector
- 3.1.1.4 To develop applied skills of the students by providing opportunities to conduct field work/ research

General Degree

- 3.1.5 Acquire a sound knowledge in theories and approaches in Sociology
- 3.1.6 Acquire some degree of applied knowledge in field work

3.2. Learning Outcomes

The department expects the students to have achieved following learning outcomes upon successful completion of courses offered by the department.

- Knowledge of basic Sociological theory, increasing in standard progressively according to academic levels
- A sound practical knowledge base and the ability to apply theoretical knowledge in the field
- An understanding of the Sri Lankan society, its background, history, current social issues, and social change, as well as the ability to recommend applicable/ feasible solutions for a given social problem or issue within a practical framework

environment in which they could;
critical and analytical thinking
communication skills

- Enhance IT skills such as word processing, use statistical packages and improve presentation skills assisted by modern technology.
- Learn to work in teams and conduct research in underserved communities under minimal facilities and thereby cultivate the essence of empathy, spirit, skill and capacity to work for the people in need

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 department offer courses for B.A.General degree and special degree in Sociology as well as M.A, Mphil and PhD programmes in Sociology. The department also offers a Post Graduate Diploma course which allows the facility for both graduates from other disciplines and Sociology graduates who do not have required qualifications to enrol in Higher Degrees in Sociology pursue higher education and advance their knowledge in Sociology.

The Department offers Total number of course offered by the department for the General and Special Degree students is 38 out of which two are foundation level courses taught in the First Year. The department does not deprive the general degree students of any course units that are in offer for the special degree students. However, not a single course unit is made compulsory by the department for the general degree student, on the one hand providing them a wider flexibility yet, on the other, allowing them to complete the degree with Sociology as a subject while having no background in basic theoretical or methodological knowledge in the subject. This visibly contradicts the objectives and learning outcomes designed by the department for the general Degree.

The department has the facility to specialize a number of subject streams within the broad specialization of Sociology. Students majoring in Sociology are required to select a track of specialization at the beginning of their second year. At the moment following tracks are offered by the department;

- Track 1-Sociology and Social research
- Track 2- Social Policy and Development
- Track 3- Health and Social Work
- Track 4-Conflict and Social Harmony

The department is planning to change the track system and offer a common set of course units providing more options in the future which could be considered a better system as it will allow access to a wider knowledge base within the discipline of Sociology at the undergraduate level than limiting their knowledge to a subfield which might limit their scope for employment.

As at present compulsory subjects at the special degree level is designed according to the track system which also may change in the future with the changes expected in the system.

course units have been made compulsory for all tracks. The subject knowledge that the track specialization may offer in a manner that it advances knowledge from one level to the other. The course content seems to be fairly up to date.

Students seem to have provided with a wider choice of courses to select from allowing a larger flexibility in deciding the course units they want to follow. Both the conventionally accepted course units in teaching undergraduate level sociology which are considered essential in laying the foundation in sociology, and new and more pragmatic sociology units are offered by the department providing students with access to newly advancing and practical knowledge in the discipline.

Nevertheless, course content in a number of courses seem to heavily overlap with each other. Appropriateness of the content of some course units seems somewhat questionable. Eg. Criminology course unit deals basically with sociological theories of crime (sections 5-8) and types of punishments (10-12) rather than engaging in a critical approach to concepts of crime and punishment within the sociological perspectives developed in the field. Unit on Gender and Society has listed 15 broad themes that have to be covered within 30 hours. Course unit on Social Psychology present a long list of concepts only and does not provide any subtopics.

There is no consistency within the department in the format of course units. Several units do not have intended objectives or learning outcomes. Some have detail descriptions while the others have listed only the concepts without indicating what aspects of the concepts would be taken into consideration. At times there is a mismatch between the title of the unit and the content provided. Some course titles such as "Types of Society" seem to be rather vague. Mistakes, typographical and other could be often noticed in the course outlines. It would be useful if a committee of senior members of the dept. carryout a careful scrutiny of the course outlines identifying and addressing such problems.

The bibliographies provided along with the course outlines also need to be reconsidered. A large number of fairly outdated readings were given as major readings. Although the review team accepts the fact that sociological classics and other well acclaimed secondary sources can never be considered outdated, bulk of the secondary readings need to be comprised of more contemporary sources.

The department however, has undertaken the task of revising its curriculum with international and national level consultation under IRQUE grant. The services of four International Consultants have already been obtained to revise, update, change or add to the existing subject curricula of each track while academic members of the department, current students, members of the alumni, and employers from government, private and non governmental organizations also have given opportunity through workshops and meetings organized by the department to contribute to the curriculum revision. As a result, several new subjects have already been introduced into the curriculum such as SOC 419 Social Policy and Planning and SOC 416 Social Work and Welfare. These subjects have been developed to meet current social needs and demands in the career market. The review committee sincerely hope that the well organized process adopted for curriculum revision would largely contribute to address many of the above mentioned drawbacks.

Dissertation component of the department which entirely field based and is a mandatory element for the final year special degree students is composed of several components,

...y, research design, selection and application of data analysis and writing. Each student is assigned a ... However, the department does not seem to have clear guidelines on the dissertation process nor the department has produced a formal document in this regard. The department has made it a requirement for the students to get their dissertation topics approved and the research proposals to be accepted by the department. Yet, the absence of formal guidelines could hamper the success of the whole process as it could lead to confusions about the objectives and levels of expectations of this very important component in the study of Sociology.

Overall judgment given in this regard is 'SATISFACTORY'.

4. 2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods

The department has 15 qualified members in the academic staff including 3 professors, 1 associate professor, 11 senior lecturers and also 8 temporary assistant lecturers/ tutors who are involved in teaching, and supervision of students offering sociology in the Special or General degree programmes. Study programmes are offered in three media, Sinhala, Tamil and English. No special degree programme is offered in Tamil medium; those who complete their first year in the Tamil medium are allowed the opportunity to continue their studies in the English medium. Attempts have been made to teach some special degree courses in English, yet no adequate positive response has been extended by the students.

Sociology is one of the most popular subjects in the faculty and over 500 students register each year to follow Sociology in the first year. At the end of the first year examination students are selected for the special degree programme based on their performance at the examination and at the interview specifically held for this purpose.

Teaching schedule follows the accepted standards of 30 hours of teaching and 15 hours of discussions per semester for each course unit. Teaching in the department is often done by the senior staff and the temporary staff assists them in conducting discussion classes. The practice of temporary staff following the lectures of the course units which they take discussion classes in adds to the consistency of factual information provided in the lectures and discussion classes.

Small classes including special degree classes promote an interactive learning environment. However, first year and the general degree classes are too large to utilize interactive learning methods. Nevertheless it is commendable that teachers are taking an attempt to encourage the students to involve in interactive learning in fairly large classes as well. From the students' point of view, lectures are clear and well prepared. This fact was substantiated by the lectures observed. Lecturers possess good presentation skills and demonstrate the ability to maintain the attention of large numbers of students throughout the lectures. Handouts are cyclostyled and distributed and the lectures seem to follow the schedules provided in the handouts.

Department has been successful in receiving the Quality Enhancement Fund competitive grant of the IRQUE project which has immensely supported them in upgrading the teaching environment in the department. All the class rooms within the department are equipped with modern technological equipments such as multi media projectors, overhead projectors and internet facilities that can be used in improving the teaching and learning in the department. Department has been totally refurbished creating an attractive learning environment. The

facilities to a considerable extent. Audio visual aids used in conducting lectures, and students are given presentations. Reviewers were informed that the department has taken measures to use prior recorded lectures to continue classes uninterrupted in the occasions when lecturer is unable to attend due to unavoidable circumstances. Although this is a rare facility that the department has it would be important to take precautions to not to excessively use such facilities that may hinder the benefits of interactive learning opportunities. However, it is important to mention here that limited space has seriously hampered the achievements of the department that could have obtained through the massive funding opportunity the department has worked hard to obtain.

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. Moreover with the new funding, the department has been compelled to use a few rooms that have been used as the staff rooms before for other purposes such as building a new department library, a reasonably good computer unit, a project office etc. restraining the space further. However, these new facilities provide immense help for the students and the staff to enrich their teaching and learning.

Such facilities however, have not catered to improve the overall learning environment of the department. Due to the shortage of large class rooms in the department, teachers have to heavily rely on other common lecture halls available in the faculty that have no modern technological equipments provided. All classes with large student numbers are held in these lecture halls with no facilities other than, chairs and black or white boards, limiting most of the teaching to conventional forms of teaching despite the physical developments the department has achieved.

Maintenance of the equipments in the long run also would be important to ensure continued use of them in quality teaching. Non academic staff is holding the responsibility of the equipments at present despite little or no training they have in handling them. A large number of files need to be maintained in addition to regular records. Non academic staff was of the view that it would be important to provide them with necessary technical training to better handle filing systems and equipments while both the staff and students are trained to handle them with more care and responsibility. They were also of the view that with new facilities in the department they are over loaded with work and in order to provide necessary support in the teaching and learning process, they need more cooperation from the staff as well as from the students in sharing activities even in small ways such as making sure that the computers, multi media projectors and Air Conditioning are turned off before they leave the respective rooms.

Teachers and the students have access to a department library containing over 3000 books. However, this becomes a problem when 50-60 students need to use the facility at once. Moreover, University main library is a highly reputed library in the region which has an enormous collection of books, periodicals and archival collections related to the discipline. There seem to be a reduction in the number of periodicals purchased by the library which would impede the access of the students and the staff to current knowledge in the field. Still, it contains approximately 11,000 books in the discipline. It was noticed however, the libraries are not

and they often rely on classroom teaching, and texts it would be important take measures to promote the use available for the students in the department in improving

the quality of learning.

The department utilizes field based learning in relation to several course units. Community service related learning and internship programme also add to enhance students' capacity to practically apply knowledge gained through academic courses. However, students were not fully knowledgeable about these components including the requirements of the dissertation component. It would enhance the benefits of such arrangements if these components can be better regularized. It is a good practice in the department that general degree students are also provided the opportunity to take part in field work, service learning sessions and training sessions relevant to the course they are taking.

Assessments in the department also follow the standard practice of allocating 40 marks for the continuous assessments and 60 marks for the final examination with exceptions in practical/ field work related courses. A variety of continuous assessments are used including mid semester exams, assignments, presentations etc. Department has adopted the credit based system of evaluation and standard 120/ 90 credits respectively for the special and general degree have been allocated.

Examination procedures follow the accepted guidelines, papers are moderated, and second marking is usually done. Setting examination papers however, seem to need much care as these could become public documents once they are released. Problems with regard to setting, moderating and proof reading were noticed by the review team. The review team is of the view that it would be good to adopt a more strict scrutinizing process with regard to the question papers before they are finalized.

Dissertation also is marked out of hundred which is not the usual pattern followed with regard to dissertation writing. Dissertation component in the department is carried out in two stages, the first is the preparation and presentation of the proposal and the second deals with the research and report writing. Thirty and seventy marks are allocated respectively for these two components. Considering the time and effort that the students may involve in the dissertation, the standard practice is to allocate 6 credits for this component. It would be reasonable to reconsider the marks allocated for this component, perhaps regarding it as two course units allocating more credits than for a normal course unit. Despite these shortcomings the review team is of the view that this is a fairly good aspect in the department.

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

4.3 Quality of Students including Student Progress and Achievements

Given the fact that sociology seems to be a popular subject in terms of an assumption that it offers job opportunities, the Department records the highest enrolment rate in the Faculty of Arts, particularly in the 100 level classes. Though typically, about 400 eligible candidates apply to enter the special degree program, only about 50 to 60 placements are available inclusive of 10 placements for Tamil and English media. Given the high competition for entry and the strict guidelines followed by the department, it can be assumed that students

course need to be above average. At the moment first to Soc 101 and Soc 102, English language competency count when making special selections. In addition, these students also have to go through an interview that is worth a maximum of five marks. In general, the quality of students at entry level seems to be reflected at their performance in the program. According to the data in the *Self Evaluation Report*, students obtaining second class upper division degrees have been on the rise. It has risen from 50% in 2005/2006 to 61% in 2006/2007 to 62% in 2007/2008. Interestingly however, the according to the Department's own assessment the number of students obtaining first classes have been fluctuating over the years. Perhaps the Department should pay some significant attention to why performance at the top end fluctuates while at intermediate level it has been increasing given the stringent criteria adopted at entry level.

On the other hand, it is significant that the dropout rate in the special degree program in nil. IN terms of departmental surveys, students English test scores for 2008 averages just over 60 while their computer skills also show a similar degree of achievement. The average GPA for 2008 hover just over 3.4 while the waiting period for entry into the first job after completion of the special degree is less than five months. All these indicate the above average performance of special degree students which is also partly at least indicative of their quality at the level of entry.

However, there is no indication on the performance of the larger group of students in general degree program who offer sociology as subjects. It should perhaps be taken as an important future plan to assess the general performance of these students in sociology classes as well as their job entry time etc as they constitute a larger group of students who are also serviced by the department.

It is also note worthy that the majority of the students who are in the special degree programme have obtained classes and a negligible number of students obtain ordinary passes. Even though this can be considered a clear indication of the quality of the students, given the GPA levels adopted by the faculty and the department which is lower than the average, there is a possibility that the achievement levels could have a correlation with the GPA levels. Having a lower GPA level also could affect the target levels of the students. Bringing the GPA levels on par with the nationally accepted levels while preventing any possible grade inflation that could result due to marking procedures adopted by certain individual examiners would be necessary steps to do justice to above average students.

The quality of the dissertation which the Special Degree students are supposed to write in their final year based on an independent research project is also an indication of the quality of the students. Students have selected a variety of topics and have been able to complete fairly standard dissertations. Introducing a few Gold medals and Prizes also would add to enhancement of quality by compelling the students to strive hard to achieve these goals. The progress ad achievements of the students have enabled some students to obtain various scholarships at the postgraduate level and also provide them opportunities to participate in various undergraduate level student exchange programmes and workshops.

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

Department of Sociology has two avenues to present their feedback; namely, through the faculty nominees represent the Student Union who are discussing their academic matters at the Faculty Board Meeting and through the formal questionnaire given by the department.

The department has adopted and practice the formal system of student feedback since several years and the department has a standard student feedback form which is in use. However, it was noted that this 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.

The practical sessions which require involvement of the students in field activities 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 Department of Sociology offers a number of course units that entail extensive supervised field work which provide the opportunity for the teachers and the students to share their views in a more friendly environment.. The entire process covering the final year dissertation component that is done under close supervision is another important opportunity to obtain student feedback.

Interactive teaching and learning process that is carried out by the department in comparatively smaller classes creates another great opportunity for the lecturers to receive student feedback. However, the feedback received through such informal methods heavily depends on the rapport the lecturers have developed with the students and the confidence that the students have on the teacher that s/he can provide such information to the teacher without hampering his/ her regular study programme. Whether the students go beyond asking for a few clarifications in such situations is entirely in the hands of the individual lecturer and discussions with the students revealed that such instances are rare.

The department also does not practice the student feedback system in the implementation of various forms of teaching adopted by the department, for instance, practical training, research supervision, postgraduate teaching, etc. These are areas where there is a dearth of clear guidelines in the department and student feedback system could be highly beneficial in this regard. It was also noticed that feedback system has been used in all three mediums yet, forms have not been classified according to the medium.

The department does not maintain any records of quantified student feedback data and also there was no evidence on faculty level handling of student feedback. In certain courses, only a small number of students have opted to return their feedback forms to the department. 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 'SATISFACTORY'.

Department of Sociology operates as an independent programme and is heavily sponsored and run by course fees levied from the students. There are four postgraduate programmes conducted by the department namely a Post Graduate Diploma in Sociology, MA, M. Phil and Ph.D. Post Graduate Diploma in Sociology is a one year programme by coursework only and consists of 4 courses. MA is a two year degree programme and consists of 7 courses and a dissertation. M.Phil is a 2-3 year programme and requires 7 papers and a thesis to be completed. The selection criteria of all three programmes are sound and appropriate for the levels concerned.

Currently there are no Ph.D applicants registered in the department. The M Phil Programme usually attracts more temporary academic staff members employed in the university system. However the MA programme attracts a higher number of registrations due to its shorter duration and its marketability for those who pursue a career path.

The Postgraduate Diploma replaced the Master's Preliminary course in 2006. However, the department has taken steps to reintroduce the one year MA programme only by course work to facilitate those who need to further their knowledge in sociology at a postgraduate level yet do not have the necessity to involve themselves in the lengthy task of writing a dissertation. Postgraduate diploma programme allows students who do not have a background in Sociology to enter sociology studies and progress up to the level of Doctoral studies if they wish. The department is in the process of designing a preliminary course for the Postgraduate diploma course for students who have not studied Sociology in their first degree.

The postgraduate programmes are weekend programmes. Courses are common for both MA and MPhil students. All lectures are conducted in the English medium. However students are allowed to submit their assignments and sit examinations in Sinhala medium. Standard assessment methods are in practice for all postgraduate programmes including continuous assessments and year end examinations. One of the major drawbacks in the postgraduate programmes is that none of the programmes provide adequate optional course units for the students to select from and all course units have become compulsory. No clear guidelines or prospectuses have been developed with regard to the Postgraduate programmes. Number of hours allocated for teaching also needs to be paid some attention. For instance, total number of teaching hours allocated for the Diploma programme is less than the norm of 450. The MPhil programme obviously requires a higher standard than the MA programme; nevertheless, the guidelines do not demonstrate a considerable difference between M.A. and M. Phil other than the number of words of the thesis. At the M.A and M.Phil.levels, no course units are offered in Sociological Theory or Research Methodology causing some deficiency with regard to the course content.

Department has a Higher Degrees committee which includes all the course coordinators and the Head of the Department and is responsible for designing and implementation of postgraduate degree programmes under the direction of a chairman other than the Head of the Department. However, the official authority responsible for all postgraduate programmes is the Head of the Department, and participates in matters related to the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee and the Faculty Board. Any proposal concerning department level postgraduate programmes need to be approved by the Department Higher Degrees Committee before it is forwarded to the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee.

programmes seem to be very low mainly due to the fact that students do not return to the programme after the completion of course work, and as a result of the dissertation indefinitely. However, the reintroduction of one year M.A. programme is expected to resolve this issue to a certain extent.

Part-time nature seems to diminish the quality of the postgraduate programmes to a great extent. Student contact with lecturers is minimal and limited to the week end. Generally, the majority of the postgraduate students are employed and hence the week end organization of the programme seems to be facilitating their attendance and involvement in the programme. Ironically the very same reason has influenced the postgraduate students to treat postgraduate studies with less importance.

Research students are assigned a supervisor(s) after the approval of the proposal. In general, supervisors are from the department but for specific cases supervisors may be appointed from other universities or research institutes. Despite the fact that postgraduate students are allowed access to the library, few students use the facility on weekdays.

Sufficient revenue is generated by the department through postgraduate and extension programmes, however, the department at the moment has no access to utilize any amount of this income for the development of the departmental facilities making it impossible for the department to self sustain.

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.

Department library maintains a good collection of textbooks and other reading materials which help research students other than the large number of sources available at the main university library. Computer laboratory of the department provides an additional facility for the postgraduate students.

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

4.6 Peer Observation

Despite the fact that the Department does not have any formalized mode for peer observation, a variety of forms of peer review are frequently utilized by the department with regard to teaching and examinations. Flow of knowledge from the senior lecturers to the temporary staff members occur on a weekly basis with regard to teaching methods, stretching out the guidelines to students regarding assignments, marking of assignments, tutorials and mid semester answer scripts. Temporary staff members on the other hand are required to report to the lecturer on student attendance and the progress of the class.

ers is necessary in teaching the same course in different on 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 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. The review team however noted that minutes of the department meetings were available only for every other month. 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 department. Additionally collaborative research and publications done by the department members are another way of peer observation.

Moderation of papers and second marking adds to the opportunities available for peer observation in the department. The review team however, noted that second marking is limited only to the Special Degree programmes due to the large number of students appearing for General Degree examinations. It was also noted that there are no mechanisms available for further scrutinizing of question papers beyond moderation that would have contributed to the enhancement of the quality of question papers before they are made public documents. Errors that appeared in the question papers concerning subject matter, language, and typography could be minimized by such a procedure.

The department does not seem to be adequately utilizing the opportunities available during the close cooperation between the senior and junior staff taking place in teaching, paper setting and other activities in a friendly manner to receive feedback from the junior staff.

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

4.7. Skills Development

The Department of Sociology 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. The department has earned a considerable amount of financial resources through IRQUE competitive grants and those resources have been utilized in different ways to improve students' skills. The skills development aspects have been given priority in the funding plan of the IRQUE SAKTI project are Research skills, Language skills, .IT skills, and Interpersonal skills

The Department of Sociology skills development strategy has a clear focus on developing cognitive and interpersonal skills of the students. As highlighted above 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.

THE SAKTI Project the department is in a better position to assess different aspects of the students and the members of the department in utilizing the opportunities available for this purpose.

Several field based course units have been introduced in the department and students are given opportunity to develop interpersonal skills and work in groups while practically applying the knowledge they received in the class room. There are at least three course units (SOC 212, SOC 310, SOC 415) focused considerably on field activities under supervision. Yet, it was noted by the review team that the participation of the senior academics in such training stays at a low level other than the head of the department and the lecturer in charge. This may deprive the students of the opportunity to interact closely with the senior academics of the department in a less restricted environment than the classroom, learn and improve their skills.

The department also 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. Nevertheless it is important to mention that a large proportion of the students did not welcome the idea of teaching in English either due to their fear or actual lack of competency. In the occasions where the latter is the case, there should be a method adopted by the department to counter the effects that could have in grasping the subject knowledge. Discussion classes are held in Sinhala for this purpose, yet, at this point it would be more productive to adopt a system of bilingual teaching evading the possibility of marginalising these students both at the level of academic achievement and the employment market. Tamil medium also may need some attention in this regard.

The department has taken commendable efforts to improve the language skills other than English, mainly Sinhala (for Tamil students) or Tamil (for Sinhala students) which is promoting language skills as well as social harmony. Further there is a component catering to the development of interpersonal skills through service learning programmes that also provides the students with ability to adjust to situations and work with people of different social levels and backgrounds.. There are two such programmes (Vedda community at Hennenigala and Udunuwara Elder's home) launched last academic year. In addition to this, mentorship programme launched in two government schools (Gohagoda Vidyalaya and Saralankara Vidyalaya) and -Sanhinda's programme also can be considered as interpersonal skills development efforts.

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. However, it is important to mention that the review team noticed that the time that academics spend in the department is considerably restrained perhaps by their various involvements in academically related activities; however, this may seriously limit the student contact hours. It was told that in some instances not even two hours a week is allocated for student contact by certain academics in the department.

Development of IT skill is another such element focused by the department to improve students' cognitive and personal skills. The department has its own IT lab enabling students to involve in IT related activities frequently. Review team noticed that the students have

uring their programme of study. In addition to this, the p programme for all students completing Special Degree s them a good platform to apply what they have learnt in

the class room.

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. 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 special degree entry requirements are further elaborated as part of the faculty orientation program organized for first year students. Course information is also available in the CI forms distributed to students at the commencement of each course. The department also organizes its own orientation program for second year students once they are selected to follow the special degree course in sociology. It is in this orientation that students get their first formal instructions on course and track selection. The supervision of dissertations also offers a good academic counselling and guidance opportunity; however, this opportunity can be beneficial much beyond the dissertation related work, which the department can think of exploiting more formally for the benefit of its special degree students.

In addition to these, the Alumni Mentorship program which brings together past and present students of sociology as well as the Junior ó Senior Mentorship Program that brings together current junior and senior students following special degree programs offers formally organized but a relatively informal and unique setting for academic guidance and career counselling. 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.

The department recognizes that more than its formal counselling and guidance programs, what is more appealing to students are the informal channels open to them. 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. We noticed that a greater burden of this kind of counselling had fallen on the junior temporary lecturers who were very passionate about it. In comparison, senior colleagues were often unaware of and aloof from specific student matters.

Lapses in academic guidance could be noticed in relation to the awareness of the students on certain important academic matters. Students were not well aware of the credit based system of evaluation, requires number of credits, GPA levels etc. No clear formal guidelines are available on the requirements of the dissertation component and students were not very clear about the levels of expectation. According to the students, this situation tend to lead them to seek guidance from senior students on these issues and rely on their advise rather than having confidence on the department in receiving information. These components the review team considered as needing more formal establishment at the department level.

In relation to academic guidance and counselling the judgment of the team is ‘SATISFACTORY’.

ground and the access to financial resources, the advantaged position in terms of Higher Education in 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.

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

5. CONCLUSIONS

1. Curriculum Design, Content and Review

Strengths/ Good practices

1. Curriculum covers expected knowledge at different levels and knowledge advances in a gradual incremental fashion
2. Inclusion of a number of theoretical and practical courses in the curriculum strengthening students capacity in theory as well as in their practical application
3. A major curriculum revision is in progress

Weaknesses

1. Format adopted in designing curriculum does not seem to be consistent across the border and objectives and learning outcomes are not provided for most of the course units
2. Certain units seriously overlap, and disparities exist between the titles and content, too many topics are expected to be covered within the given timeframe for certain course units and content cover seem to be too general with regard to certain units
3. Recommended readings are fairly out dated with regard to certain course units
4. General degree students are not expected to gain a basic necessary level of knowledge in completing the degree with Sociology as a subject

ent Methods

1. Classes are well organized and teachers are well prepared
2. Interactive teaching and learning
3. Use of modern technological equipments in effectively facilitating dissemination of knowledge
4. Opportunity to learn through exposure in practical settings / internship programme
5. Use of a variety of standard assessment methods

Weaknesses

1. Dissertation component need to be more formalized in order to reap its full benefits
2. Internship programme need a system of monitoring
3. Need a more formalized field training programme to help the students in practicing field techniques under close supervision

3. Quality of Students, Students Progress and Achievement

Strengths/ Good practices

1. Process adopted in selecting students for the special degree allows clear screening of students providing space for better able students to enter into the programme
2. Majority of students receive classes
3. No failure or dropouts in the programme
4. Comparatively less time taken by students to receive employment

Weaknesses

1. Lower GPA level accepted by the faculty might have an effect on overall quality
2. Given the nature of the selection criteria and the lower GPA level, student achievement at the first class level seem questionable
3. The department has no records with regard to the performance of the general degree students

4. Extent and Use of Student Feedback

Strengths/ Good practices

1. Adoption of the practice as an important element of teaching and learning process.
2. Junior academic staff, temporary lecturers, and IRQUE project staff considering it as an important aspect
3. A few senior academic staff members have identified it as a vital aspect

Weaknesses:

1. Collecting Students feedback is not an integral part in many course units
2. lack of serious consideration of the system among many senior
3. Low student response
4. No classification of forms according to medium of instruction.
5. No analysis available and no utilization of the system in improving the quality of education in the department

1. Four postgraduate programmes are conducted.
2. Department has a higher degree committee responsible of all postgraduate programmes.
3. Students registered for the Diploma have opportunity to continue up to the level of Ph.D.
4. Department has a well qualified staff to teach at the postgraduate level
5. Many senior members of staff are involved in supervision, teaching and coordination of the postgraduate programmes.
6. Many senior staff continues to involve in quality research and publications.

Weaknesses

1. Total of teaching hours of the Diploma programme is less than the norm of 450.
2. Only 4 compulsory courses and no options given for the Diploma
3. No postgraduate prospectus developed
4. Completion rate of MA and M. Phil. is very low.
5. There is no significant difference between M.A. and M. Phil other than the number of words in the thesis
6. No theory or research methodology courses are offered in M.A and M.Phil. programmes.

6. Peer Observation

Strengths/Good practices

1. Moderation of question papers and second marking of answer scripts are in practice.
2. Departmental meetings are held regularly.
3. Junior staff members are guided by senior staff.
4. Collaborative research and publications

Weaknesses

1. No formal peer observation
2. Second marking is limited
3. No further scrutinizing after moderation
4. Junior staff attends the lectures done by the senior staff; however no feedback is expected.
5. Some Senior staff members are not fully involved in the department activities

7. Skills Development

Strengths/Good practices

1. Having a strong physical and human resource base facilitating skill development
2. Obtaining the QEF competitive grant and establishing IRQUE/SAKTI project
3. Practically oriented teaching
4. Taking steps to improve language competency
5. Development of interpersonal skills through service learning programmes
6. Development of IT skills catering to improve cognitive and personal skills.
7. Improvement in writing and presentation skills through assignments and dissertation components

emics in field programmes.

by certain academic members seem to be minimal

3. Language competency might affect the achievement of some students with lower second language skills in transferring to English medium teaching by some teachers
4. Field internship is not a part of the Degree Programme and no monitoring involved in measuring its success

8. Academic Guidance and Counseling

Strengths/Good practices

1. Availability variety of modes of academic guidance including Faculty Handbook, the Department Prospectus, University website.
2. Orientation programmes providing the students with necessary information and backgrounds.
3. The system of distributing CI forms among the students at the commencement of each course.
4. Alumni Mentorship program
5. One to one basis dissertation supervision providing a private space for the students to seek counselling in need.
6. 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. having no formal system established for academic guidance and counselling
2. Students relying more on informal rather than formal counselling and guidance programs
3. Greater burden of this kind of counselling falling on junior temporary lecturers
4. Many senior academics being somewhat estranged from student matters.
5. Students heavily relying on senior students for guidance due to deficiencies in the formal system
6. Not adequately exploiting the available opportunities for student guidance in field related activities, dissertation supervision etc.
7. Not properly utilizing the potentials of Alumni mentorship programme in this regard

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Expedite the curriculum revision process addressing all the identifiable deficiencies
2. Thorough scrutiny of all the course units identifying existing lapses.
3. Identifying clear objectives and learning outcomes for each course unit making them on par with the general department aims and learning outcomes
4. Paying more attention to the examination procedures including paper setting, moderation and language scrutinizing.
5. Reconsider dissertation component including the credit system adopted therein. Adopting clear guidelines with regard to the dissertation component
6. Devise a method to increase the use of library facilities and reading in English perhaps by incorporating material in English as essential readings and conducting discussions based on reading rather than delivering lectures making reading in English an essential part of learning contributing to increase their interest and the confidence.

- s in the postgraduate programmes to clearly distinguish each programme differently beneficial and attractive. Undergraduate programmes synchronizing them with the nationally accepted standards
9. .More effectively utilizing the existing human resources in the department for the development of the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes
 10. Student feed back 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
 11. 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.
 12. 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.
 13. Making the internship programme more systematic and part of the Special Degree Programme.
 14. Allocating more time for student related matters including individual supervision especially by senior academic staff members
 15. Formalizing academic guidance and counselling processes in the department and senior academic members playing an important role in this regard.
 16. Academic guidance and counselling aspects could be strengthened in linking the existing resources with the external resources such as carrier guidance programme, alumni work etc.
 17. Strengthening the capacity of the non academic staff in handling large numbers of students and material resources pertaining to the department while enhancing effective utilization and management of the existing resources for the benefit of the department staff, students and for their own future development
 18. Concern on a proper filing system would enable the smooth functioning of the department.

Day 1 – 12th October 2009

08.00 ó 8.30	Private meeting of Review Panel with QAA Council Representatives and discussion of Agenda for the visit
08.30 ó 9.30	Meeting(s) with the Vice Chancellor/Chairman, Internal QA Unit/Dean Head of the Dept/Head, Faculty QA Cell etc. (<i>Working Tea</i>)
10.00 ó 10.30	Observing Teaching ó Lecture
10.30 ó 12.00	Department presentation and discussion
12.00 ó 13.00	Lunch
13.00 ó 13.30	Meeting with the non-academic staff
13.30 ó 14.30	Observing Departmental Facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Library ▪ IT Center ▪ Lecture Halls ▪ Audio Visual Room etc
14.30 ó 16.30	Observing Documents

Day 2 – 13th October 2009

09.00 ó 10.00	Meeting with Sinhala, Tamil and English medium students (3 rd year and 4 th Year)
10:00 ó 10:30	Tea
10.30 ó 11.00	Observing Teaching ó Lecture
11.00 ó 11.30	Meeting with academic staff
11.30 ó 12.30	Department extracurricular activities/ Contribution of IRQUE/ SAKTI ó presentation and discussion
12.30 ó 13.30	Lunch
13.30 ó 14.15	Student presentations
14:15 ó 15:00	Meeting with postgraduate students
15.00 ó 16.30	Observing documents

Day 3 – 14th October 2009

09.00 ó 09.30	Meeting Student Counselors/Academic Advisors/Personal Tutors
09.30 ó 10.00	Reviewers Private Discussion
10.00 ó 10.30	Tea
10.30 ó 12.00	Meeting with Head and Staff for Reporting
12.00 ó 13.00	Lunch
13.00 onwards	Report writing

2. Lecturers' Rooms
3. Lecture Halls
4. Computer Unit
5. Department Library
6. Main University Library

Annex 3. LIST OF AVAILABLE RESOURCES (MATERIAL) IN THE DEPARTMENT

Telephone

3 Computer for the office with printers

1 Computer for the Head of the department with printer

All staff rooms with shared or personal internet connected computers and printing facilities

A computer lab with 30 computers with internet facility

Audio-visual unit with 1 TV set and 1 DVD player

5 Multi media projectors (including 2 class rooms with multi media connected)

1 Video camera

1 Photo Copy Machine

1 Duplo Machine

1 Roneo machine

2 OHPs

1 Scanner

Adequate stationary available for hand outs and documentation

Annex 4. LIST OF DOCUMENTS OBSERVED

- Faculty and Department Hand Books
- Course Outlines
- Handouts
- Past Examination Papers (End of Semester)
- Mid Semester Examination Papers
- Attendance Sheets
- Mark Sheets
- Dissertations
- Assignments
- Student evaluation forms
- Minutes of the Department Meetings
- Academic staff Publications