

SUBJECT REVIEW REPORT

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCES



***FACULTY OF ARTS AND CULTURE
SOUTH UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA***

16th to 18th June 2008

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1. SUBJECT REVIEW PROCESS

The subject review process introduced by the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Directors and the University Grants Commission of Sri Lanka, now directed by the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council, has been designed to evaluate the quality of education within a specific subject or discipline, for both undergraduate and postgraduate programs in a university. It specifically focuses on the quality of the student learning experience and student achievement.

Higher education is a 'public good' and plays a crucial role in the economic and social development in Sri Lanka. As public institutions engaged in the delivery of this public good, the universities in Sri Lanka have a responsibility to maintain and improve upon the high standards and the quality of higher education.

This report presents the findings of a review of the quality of education provided by the Department of Social Sciences, Faculty of Arts and Culture of the South Eastern University of Sri Lanka (SEUSL). The review was conducted at the Department from 16th to 18th, June 2008 adhering to the guidelines provided in the *Quality Assurance Handbook for Sri Lankan Universities*, published by the CVCD and University Grants Commission in July 2002. The review process was based on the Self Evaluation Report (SER) submitted by the Department of Social Sciences and supported by the information gathered from the three-day site visit made to the department at Oluvil.

The SER has been prepared under following headings:

1. Introduction to the University, Faculty and the Department
2. Existing Situation of the Department
3. Curriculum Design, Content and Review
4. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods
5. Quality of Students
6. Student Feedback
7. Institutional Extension.
8. Peer observation
9. Skills development
10. Academic Guidance and Counseling
11. Appendix

In the review process attention was focused on the following eight aspects as given the *Quality Assurance Handbook*:

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

The evaluation of eight aspects was supplemented by the information gathered at the,

- discussions held with the, Vice Chancellor, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Culture, Head of Department, academic staff, non-academic and undergraduate students representing different years.
- observation of department facilities (lecture rooms, laboratories, staff rooms, office space etc.) and other facilities
- observation of teaching sessions
- reviewing of documents available at the department, such as question papers, minutes of departmental meetings, magazines and journals

Each of the eight aspects was judged as good or satisfactory or unsatisfactory paying attention to the strengths, good practices and weaknesses found in each area.

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

The South Eastern University College of Sri Lanka (SEUCL) was established by an order through gazette notification 88/9 of 26 July, 1995 made by the then Hon. Minister of Education and Higher Education under the provisions of section 24A of the University Act No 16 of 1978 as amended by Act No 07 of 1985. Encouraged by the progress made by the University College in providing basic facilities for the academic activities within a short spell of time, the Government decided to elevate the college to a university. Accordingly, by an order made by the Minister of Education and Higher Education by Gazette notification 916/7 of 27th march 1996 the SEUCSL became a national university under the corporate name the South Eastern University of Sri Lanka and commenced its activities from 15th May, 1996. The SEUSL is located on a beautiful 225 acres of green land in the coastal village of Oluvil in the Ampara district, which is 350 km from the national capital, Colombo.

At the beginning it had only two faculties: the Faculty of Arts and Culture and the Faculty of Management and Commerce. Today, it has four faculties with the commencement of the Faculty of Applied Sciences in 1997 and the Faculty of Islamic Studies and Arabic Language in 2005, respectively.

The vision of the university is to emerge as a centre of excellence for dissemination of knowledge through teaching, learning and research of highest quality, relevant and most appropriate to the needs of the individual, the region, the nation and the global community.

The Faculty of Arts and Culture and the Department of Social Sciences

In order to materialize the University's mission the **Faculty of Arts and Culture** envisages, as mentioned in its mission statement, to produce high quality graduates with analytical mind, research capabilities, leadership quality, managerial skills and ethical and moral values by creating a conducive environment to adopt innovative teaching, learning and research to meet the fast changing needs of the society with dedication and commitment of competent academic and supportive staff.

The Faculty of Arts and Culture has two departments of study: **The Department of Social Sciences (DSS)** and the Department of Languages. The **Computer Unit** and the **English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU)** are within the perview of the Faculty of Arts and Culture.

Established in 1995 with the inception of the university the DSS offered four subject units, namely, Geography, Economics, Political Science and Philosophy at the beginning. In 2001, making the number of subject units offered by the department seven, History, Sociology and Statistics were added to the curriculum. At present, DSS offers two Bachelor of Arts Degree programs: A Special Arts Degree program in each of the subjects of Geography, Sociology, Economics, Politics and Peace Studies and Philosophy and Psycho Counseling and a General Arts Degree program.

The academic programs of the DSS are conducted by 17 permanent members of teaching staff assisted by 9 temporary members. Most of the permanent members are young and only very few has completed their Ph Ds. The majority of them have Masters level qualifications. The details of the members of the academic staff are given in Appendix 1.

In 2004, DSS was granted Rs Million 106 under the World Bank Project for Improving Relevance and Quality of Undergraduate Education (IRQUE) to improve its academic programs.

3. AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

3.1 Aims

- Transmit the required knowledge to the undergraduates enabling to serve in the field of Social Sciences as a potential graduates
- Producing quality graduate to meet the needs of the employment market and to serve the nation
- Offering a range of learning opportunities
- Ensure a conducive environment to develop positive attitude of students
- Encourage research activities among staff and students for dissemination of knowledge
- Improving the attitude of community participation among staffs and students
- Support the academic and supportive staff for their carrier development

3.2 Learning Outcomes

At the end of the degree program students must be able to have

- Wider knowledge and conceptual understanding of the areas in the field of social sciences
- Ability to perceive the behavior of the social environment of different field and its consequences on national development
- Understanding the way of searching and assimilating the knowledge through research activities
- Competency with transferable skills useful in decision making, IT knowledge, team work, presentation and leadership
- built self confidence for independence, commitment to save the public and nation, self motivation for life long learning in the field and go for post graduate studies

4. FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW TEAM

4.1 Curriculum Design, Content and Review

The Department of Social Sciences offers two Bachelor of Arts Degree programs: the BA General Degree and the BA Special Degree. A student following the General Degree Program has to select three main subjects from the available subjects in the Faculty. The subjects are offered through a credit-based course unit system and in order to earn a Bachelor of Arts (General) Degree a student must obtain 90 credits. Out of these 90 credits 54 should be earned from the course units of the main subjects. A **main course unit** is worth of 3 credits and in each year 18 credits should be earned from them. Another 24 credits should be obtained from **compulsory course units** and in an academic year which is divided into two semesters student must obtain 8 credits from 4 such units (4 x 2). The remaining 12 credits must be derived from the **auxiliary course units**. An auxiliary course unit is worth of 2 credits and in an academic year 4 credits (2 x 2) must be earned. Thus the total number of course units (main, compulsory and auxiliary) completed by a student to obtain 90 credits is 36.

The duration of the General Degree program is three years and to obtain a merit pass (class) students should complete the degree in three years. However, they are permitted to complete the degree in five years but will not be qualified for a merit pass.

Students are admitted to Special Arts Degree Program at the beginning of the second year. A student following a Special Degree requires to collect 120 credits in four academic years. Of these 120 credits, 58 credits (inclusive of the 7 credits derived from the dissertation) will be earned from the course units of the subject of specialization. Another 26 and 6 credits will be earned from the compulsory and auxiliary course units respectively. The credits collected in the first year will also be taken into account.

The duration of the Special Degree program is four years and to obtain a merit pass (class) students should complete the degree in four years. However, they are permitted to complete the degree in six years but will not be qualified for a merit pass.

The **review of the course content of the curriculum** revealed that the subject contents of the course modules offered for the Special Arts Degree as well as the General Arts Degree are sufficient and appropriate for the respective programs. Also, it is the view of the review team that they are of relevance in the development of the country in general.

Most of the syllabi of the subjects offered by the DSS have been revised by the academic staff of the respective units with the assistance of consultants under the Project for Improving Relevance and Quality of Undergraduate Education (IRQUE). Subsequently, under the same project, the revised syllabi have been reviewed by professors in the respective fields. The reviewers have thoroughly gone through the contents of the syllabi and submitted reports. It is suggested that the observations and recommendations contained in the review report should be incorporated into the final documents. For example, in almost all syllabi, the overall objective/s and learning outcomes have to be explicitly indicated. It is also suggested that in incorporating objectives and learning outcomes, Subject Benchmark Statements prepared by the QA Council should be consulted.

It is the view of the review team that the curriculum design, content and review of the Department can be judged as GOOD

4.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods

Since DSS encompasses a range of subjects a variation in teaching methodologies can be seen. However, the common method practiced is the delivery of lectures. In addition, attempts have been made to obtain the active participation of students through group presentations. In these presentations, students are given an opportunity to present their reports. However, the use of modern methods, such as multi-media is rare. Only in GIS laboratory the use of multi-media was observed. However, teachers as well as students in their presentation use Overhead Projectors. The widely used teaching aide was the white board.

At the commencement of a lecture program course guides containing details of the course, i.e., the name of the lecturer, major topics to be covered and a list of recommended reading, are distributed among students. In some instances, the details of the lectures are provided but it is not widely practiced. Also, handouts related to the lecture are also provided. However, study guides containing more details of the contents of the syllabus will be more useful to the students.

In some subjects field studies are carried out but it is not widely practiced. Particularly, field studies/trips involving the general degree students are absent and those students strongly feel that they should be provided with an opportunity to participate in such studies.

The learning environment is generally satisfactory. The lecture rooms are well-ventilated and lighted and fitted with ceiling fans. The general library of the university is well organized and houses a good collection of material for social sciences. Under the Quality Enhancement Fund Project won by the DSS has added a special section on Social Sciences to the library.

It is the view of the students that the medium of instruction must be changed to English. They have realized the value of English in securing employment but it is advisable to adopt a bi-lingual (Tamil and English) approach at the first two years of the degree program.

The method of assessment includes end-semester examinations and a mix of continued assessment methods such as mid-semester examinations, assignments and presentations (the weightage given to end-semester written examination is 70 percent and the remaining 30 percent is allocated to above mentioned continued assessment methods). The Special Degree students are required to submit a dissertation worth of 7 credits in the final year. However, the students, particularly the special degree students, would like to undergo a practical training/internship session in order to supplement their theoretical knowledge gained through the in-campus teaching-learning process.

It is the view of the review team that the teaching, learning and assessment methods of the department can be judged as SATISFACTORY.

4.3 Quality of Students including Student Progress and Achievements

The quality of students at entry (measured in terms of Z-score) to SEUSL is t in other universities in Sri Lanka. It ranges from 1.75 to 1.27. The Z-score of students admitted to the university as special intake ranges from 1.27 to 1.1, however. As far as students enrolled in the DSS are concerned they have progressed well after entering the University. For example, during the period 2003- 2006, of the total number of students who followed the general degree program nearly 50 percent have obtained classes. However, the majority of these

students have obtained Second Class Division honors (30 percent of the total classes) and there had been only one first class. The performance of the General Degree students during the above-mentioned period is shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Performance of the General Arts Degree Students, 2003-2006
Department of Social Sciences

Year	Total Number of Students	First Class	Second Class Upper Division	Second Class Lower Division	Total Number of Classes
2003	34	-	2	16	18
2004	44	-	4	10	14
2005	69	-	16	19	35
2006	169	1	35	50	86

Source: DSS, Self-Evaluation Report, 2008

As Table 1 shows, the number of students following the courses offered by the DSS has increased during the period. At the same time, the total number of students securing classes has also increased.

The progress of the students who were following the special degree programs of the DSS is more spectacular. During the period 2002-2006 of the total number of students who followed the Special degree program 92 percent secured classes. In the case of Special students, too, first classes were rare being only 4 percent of the total number of classes. A large majority of students secured Second Class- Upper Division classes, 70 percent of the total number of classes. Table 2 depicts the performance of the Special Arts Degree students in Department of Social Sciences during the period 2002-2006.

Table 2
Performance of the Special Arts Degree Students, 2002-2006
Department of Social Sciences

Year	Total Number of Students	First Class	Second Class Upper Division	Second Class Lower Division	Total Number of Classes
2002	29	-	19	9	28
2003	25	-	12	10	22
2004	44	1	31	10	42
2005	58	4	43	9	56
2006	43	2	25	10	37

Source: DSS, Self-Evaluation Report, 2008

It is the view of the review team that the quality of students, student progress and achievements can be judged as GOOD.

4.4 Extent and Use of Student Feedback

The Department of Social Sciences employs both qualitative and quantitative methods to obtain students' feedback on its teaching program.

The qualitative methods include informal responses from the students on teaching of the academic staff. However, a detailed questionnaire containing questions on various aspects of teaching and teaching related activities are given to students. The responses of the students are analyzed and therefore a feedback on teaching is available.

It is suggested that the analyses of the responses of students must be discussed and remedial measures must be taken.

It is the view of the review team that the extent and use of student feedback methods of the department can be judged as SATISFACTORY.

4.5 Postgraduate Studies

At present, no postgraduate programs are conducted by the department. This can be attributed to the lack of qualified staff in the department. Most of the members of the staff are engaged in their postgraduate studies.

The Faculty of Arts and Culture publishes a journal and some members of the DSS have contributed. However, the journal has not been published in recent years.

As such, the review team is of the view that the Postgraduate and research activities in the department of Geography could be rated as UNSATISFACTORY.

4.6 Peer Observation

At DSS, Peer Observation per se is not practiced. However, peripheral methods, which are commonly practiced in the university system, can be seen. These peripheral methods includes, review of syllabi by senior academics in other universities, moderation of question papers and marking of answer scripts by second examiners, both internal and external. Thus DSS has to evolve a systematic method of Peer evaluation involving all members of the academic staff. At the observation of teaching it was noticed lecturers need some advice and second opinion on their approach to and delivery of lectures.

It is the view of the review team that the peer observation of the department can be judged as UNSATISFACTORY.

4.7 Skills Development

The DSS has made an appreciable effort to develop subject specific as well generic and employable skills of their students. As far as improvement in subject-specific skills is concerned measures have been adopted to review and revise syllabi of almost of the subject taught in the department.

As far as generic skills are concerned, the faculty and the department have taken steps to improve IT skills of their students. With the financial assistance of IRQUE project DSS has been able to provide computer facilities for students. Students utilize these facilities for

preparation of their dissertations and gather information through internet. DSS has made IT, compulsory course unit for students in all academic years.

Also, at DSS a well organized GIS facility is available and students are able to learn and gain a skill which is of increasing value in modern world.

English language skills are provided through ELTU and the DSS has made English Language compulsory for students in all academic years.

In the teaching program students are being trained to make presentations but it must be mentioned that multi-media faculties should be made available to train them in the use of modern techniques and make presentations more effective. In some subjects, especially geography, students are given a training in field studies.

It is the view of the review team that the peer observation of the department can be judged as GOOD.

4.8 Academic Guidance and Counseling

Although the general student counseling at university level is available an academic counseling program at Departmental level aimed at advising students on academic matters is not available. At the discussions with the members of the academic staff of the DSS it was revealed that there was an academic advisory program in the past but no such organized practices, other than informal responses to student queries, are seen at present.

It is the view of the review team that the academic guidance and counseling at the department is SATISFACTORY.

5. CONCLUSIONS

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

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

The overall judgment is suspended

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the Self-evaluation report and the visit of the review team following recommendations could be made:

- It is suggested that the observations and recommendations made at the review of syllabi should be incorporated into the final documents. For example, in almost all syllabi, the overall objective/s and learning outcomes have to be explicitly indicated. It is also suggested that in incorporating objectives and learning outcomes, Subject Benchmark Statements prepared by the QA Council should be consulted.
- In addition to theoretical subject knowledge students should be provided with practical training of market value (internships)
- It is suggested to explore the possibility of implementing a formal and effective mechanism for peer observation.
- An academic counseling program must be launched
- Possibility of commencing a post-graduate program utilizing the available resources must be explored.
- Medium of instruction should be gradually changed to English
- Students should be taught Sinhala as a subject.
- In the undergraduate dissertations an abstract in English must be included
- Improve the teaching methodologies by using more and more modern equipment like multimedia projectors
- Computers in the Social Sciences laboratories must be networked.

7. ANNEXES

Annex 1. ACADEMIC STAFF – DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

No	Name	Date of Appointment	Educational Qualifications	Designation
1.	Dr. SMM. Ismail	02 -12 - 1996	M Sc in Economics, PhD in Economics	Snr. Lecturer in Economics Gr – I
2.	Mr. MIM. Kaleel	01 - 11 - 1995	B.A (Hons) in Geography, M. Phil in Geography, Reading Ph.D in Geography	Snr. Lecturer in Geography Gr – I
3.	Dr. (Ms) S. Anuzsiya	01 - 06 - 2004	BA. , MA. ,M. Phil ,PhD in History	Snr. Lecturer in History Gr – II
4.	Mr. SM Aliff	01 -11 - 1995	BA. (Hons) in Political Science, M. Phil Degree in Political Science	Snr. Lecturer in Political Science Gr - II
5.	Mr. KMM. Faleel Haque	15 - 11 - 1996	BA. (Hons) in Economics, M. Phil in Economics	Snr. Lecturer in Economics Gr – II
6.	Mr. K. Kanesarajah	01 - 04 - 1997	B.A (Hons) in Philosophy, PG. Dip. in Education, M. Phil in Philosophy	Snr. Lecturer in Philosophy Gr - II
7.	Mrs. Rafeeka Ameerdeen	02 - 01 - 1996	B.A (Hons) in Geography, M. Phil in Geography	Snr. Lecturer in Geography Gr - II
8.	Mr. SM. Ahamed Lebbe	03 - 08 - 1998	BA. (Hons) in Economics, M. Phil in Economics	Snr. Lecturer in Economics Gr – II
9.	Mr. AAM. Nufile	03 - 08 - 1998	BA. (Hons) in Economics, MA in Economics, M. Phil in Economics	Snr. Lecturer in Economics Gr – II
10.	Mr. ML. Fowzul Ameer	01 - 08 - 1998	B.A (Hons) in Geography, M. Phil in Geography	Snr. Lecturer in Geography Gr– II
11.	MR. ML. Issadeen	03 - 08 - 1998	B.A (Hons) in Philosophy, Reading M. Phil in Philosophy	Lecturer in Philosophy (Prob)
12.	Mr. MA. Jabbar	03 - 08 - 1998	BA. (Hons) in Political Science, Reading M. Phil Degree in Political Science	Lecturer in Political Science (Prob)
13.	Mr. ILM. Mahir	01 - 03 - 2000	B.A (Hons) in Philosophy, Reading M. Phil in Philosophy	Lecturer in Philosophy (Prob)
14.	Mr. ALM. Riyal	03 -11 - 2003	B.A (Hons) in Philosophy, M. Phil in Philosophy, Reading Ph.D in Philosophy	Lecturer in Philosophy (Prob)
15.	Mr. MM. Fazil	07 - 02 - 2005	BA. (Hons) in Political Science, Reading M. Phil Degree in Political Science	Lecturer in Political Science (Prob)
16.	Mr. A. Rameez	15 -11 -	B.A (Hons) in Sociology,	Lecturer in Sociology

		2006	Reading M. Phil in Sociology	(Prob)
17.	Mr. SM. Ayoob	15 -11 - 2006	B.A (Hons) in Sociology, Reading M. Phil in Sociology	Lecturer in Sociology (Prob)
18.	Mr. A. Sarjoon	01 - 04 - 2002	B.A (Hons) in Political Science, MA. in Political Science Reading M Phil. in Political Science	Asst. Lecturer in Political Science (Temp)
19.	Mr. P. Arafath	01 - 11 - 2006	B.A (Hons) in Political Science, Reading MA. in Political Science	Asst. Lecturer in Political Science (Temp)
20.	Ms. MT. Jesmin	01 -11 - 2006	B.A (Hons) in Geography, Reading MA. in Geography	Asst. Lecturer in Geography (Temp)
21.	Mr. MN. Saseer	01 -11 - 2006	B.A (Hons) in Philosophy, Reading MA. in Philosophy	Asst. Lecturer in Philosophy (Temp)
22.	Mr. SA. Ieefan	01 -11 - 2006	B.A (Hons) in Sociology, Reading M. Phil in Sociology	Asst. Lecturer in Sociology (Temp)
23.	Ms. MFU. Safaya	09 - 02 - 2007	B.A (Hons) in Political Science	Asst. Lecturer in Political Sc.(Temp)
24.	Mr. ALM. Sathaak	14 -11 - 2006	B.A (Hons) in Geography	Asst. Lecturer in Geography (Temp)
24	Ms. MI. Mujeeba	01 -11 - 2006	B.A (Hons) in Geography	Asst. Lecturer in Geography (Temp)
27	Ms. AR. Jazeema	01 -11 - 2006	B.A (Hons) in Sociology	Asst. Lecturer in Sociology (Temp)