

SUBJECT REVIEW REPORT

**DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND
ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE**



***FACULTY OF APPLIED SCIENCE
UNIVERSITY OF SRI JAYEWARDENEPURA***

1st to 3rd December 2010

Review Team :

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1. SUBJECT REVIEW PROCESS

The University system in Sri Lanka has been widely accepted as public higher education institutes proving a high quality education, although criticized at times for not being able cope up with rapidly expanding knowledge and failure to modernize courses to respond to the demands of job market. However until establishment of the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council under the University Grants Commission, a critical assessment of activities at Departmental level or at the institutional level by external evaluators did not take place. The QAA Council has trained a pool of reviewers from among the university academics and other experts in relevant subject areas and obtains their services to assess the departments through subject reviews and the institutions through institutional reviews, by peer evaluation by external experts to identify the strengths and weaknesses and to recommend measures to further strengthen the department/ institute and to overcome the weaknesses.

1. Institutional Review: Analysis and testing of the effectiveness of an institution's process for managing and assuring the quality of academic activities undertaken by the institution.
2. Subject Review: Evaluation of the quality of education within a specific subject or discipline at programme level, it is focused on the quality of students learning experience and on student achievement. Subject review evaluates the quality of both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

The subject review process commences with the submission of a self Evaluation Report (SER) by the relevant department. The QAA council appoints a panel of reviewers comprising usually of three reviewers; two subject specialists and one outside the main subject area. The panel makes its judgments and recommendations on the eight aspects listed below, by desk evaluation of the SER, verification of the facts provided in the SER and other relevant information by a site visit extending for three days. During the site visit the panel engages in discussions with various stakeholders (eg. both academic and nonacademic staff, both undergraduate and postgraduate students, alumni, persons in charge of supportive services such as student counseling, career guidance, sports etc.), observing facilities (eg. lecturer theatres, laboratories, library and gymnasium etc.), observing sessions of lectures and practical classes and presentations by students and perusing relevant documents (eg. syllabi, minutes of various meetings, sample question papers, answer scripts and comments by moderators/ second marking examiners, sample reports, dissertations and theses etc., examples of student work, student handbooks, student handouts, lesson guides, statistics on student achievements and progress and the proposals to develop a corporate plan of the University). The agenda of activities in the visit to the Department is annexed.

The eight aspects given special emphasis in evaluation process are:

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
8. Academic guidance and counseling

A report is submitted to the QAA Council by the panel of reviewers. The report covers the findings of the reviewers on the processes employed to achieve the aims and intended learning outcomes stipulated in the self evaluation report and their recommendations. The report is then accepted by the Department after settling any disagreement with the QAA Council and reviewers. The Department is required to take appropriate actions to rectify any shortcomings identified and to improve the quality of education provided by the Department. The Department of Forestry and Environmental Science had submitted its SER and the review panel appointed consisted of

- 1 Emeritus Professor H.P.M. Gunasena
(Retired Professor of Agriculture, Former Executive Director of CARP, Current Chairman, Coconut Research Board)
- 2 Prof. Sanath Hettiarachi
(Professor in Department of Botany, University of Ruhuna)
- 3 Mr. Sarath *Fernando*
(Conservator General of Forests, Sri Lanka)

The site visit of the review process took place from 1-3 December, 2010. The process started with a visit to the Vice Chancellors office and a brief meeting there with Vice Chancellor, Dean of the Faculty of Applied Science and Head of the Department of Forestry and Environmental Science. Then a presentation on the SER was made to the reviewers by the Head of the Department in the presence of academic staff. This was followed by a discussion which clarified certain issues. The afternoon of the day one began with a tour observing facilities in the Department and other facilities such as library, computer and sports. The next in the agenda was a meeting with academic staff excluding the Head of the Department and later there was a meeting with general degree students.

In the Day 2 reviewers had meetings with technical and other nonacademic staff, staff of the support services such as student counseling, career guidance and sports and special degree students. Reviewers also *observed* a lecture for first year students and a session of student presentations. The reviewers went through the documents supporting the claims made in the SER. Several other documents were also produced on the request of the reviewers. A practical class of first year students, a lecture for third year students and a lecture for M.Sc. students were observed on the Day 3. In addition a meeting with special degree students was also held. Prior to the conclusion of the review a debriefing session was held where all academic members were present. The reviewers took turns to express their views on the findings and suggestions to improve the quality of the education provided by the Department. The reviewers are very much thankful for the hospitality and assistance provided by the academic and nonacademic staff, and the students during the review process. It is also noted that excellent arrangements were made by the Department to facilitate the review process.

This report was prepared after the review visit incorporating the findings of the review team. In the report, the strengths, weaknesses and good practices are highlighted and some recommendations are given. Each aspect was given a judgment of good, satisfactory or unsatisfactory based on the strengths, weaknesses and good practices. The draft report will be sent to the Department and the feedback will be obtained. If there is disagreement with any judgment, it would be resolved by the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council (QAAC) through discussion. The judgment will be submitted to the Standing Committee on Quality Assurance of the UGC for approval. After its approval, the report will be published in the QAAC website, www.qaacouncil.lk. The Department has to improve the quality of the

aspects that receive a judgment of unsatisfactory within six months of approving the judgments by the Standing Committee on Quality Assurance of the UGC.

2. BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY AND THE DEPARTMENT

The University of Sri Jayewardenepura is one of the leading universities among the national universities in Sri Lanka. The University, with its motto “**Vijja Uppattam Setta**” meaning “Of things that arise, knowledge is the greatest”, stands firmly committed for the awakening of indigenous knowledge to promote national development. The origin of the University goes back to the historical Vidyodaya Pirivena at Maligakanda, which was founded by the well known Buddhist prelate Rev. Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala Thero in 1873. In 1958, by an Act of Parliament, this Pirivena was conferred University status and was named as the Vidyodaya University of Ceylon. Later, it was geographically moved from Maligakanda to the present location at Gangodawila. Rev. Welivitiye Soratha Maha Thero became the first Vice Chancellor of the University. In 1978 it was re-named as University of Sri Jayewardenepura in par with the establishment of Sri Jayewardenepura as the administrative capital of Sri Lanka.

During the early years, the University had to face strict competition with other Universities to attract sufficient main stream school students of a high standard. The total internal student enrolment stood at just 466 in 1959. The student choice for this university during this period was low. However, with time, the university was able to achieve considerable growth in student population and also to attract high quality students. Today, it stands as one of the major national universities in the country with an internal student population of almost 8500. It has also one of the largest enrollments of student in the external degree programme.

At inception, the Vidyodaya University had just three Faculties devoted to more of liberal arts and religious studies viz. the Faculty of Arts, the Faculty of Buddhism and the Faculty of Languages. Today, it offers more diversified study programs, offering undergraduate as well as postgraduate programs in Arts and Humanities, Management and Commerce, Applied Sciences and Medicine. The Faculty of Applied Sciences commenced in 1962 with only five students. It was the first Faculty of Applied Sciences established within the university system in Sri Lanka. At the time of establishing the Faculty of Applied Sciences in the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, there were only two other universities, which had Faculties of science which however were based mainly on fundamentals of science. The Faculty of Applied Sciences of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura deviated from others by providing novel combinations of subject for the undergraduates e.g. Biology, Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry. In 1982, the faculty policy was changed and the Department of Biology was separated into two Departments viz. Botany and Zoology.

At present the faculty has eight Departments viz. Botany, Chemistry, Physics, Zoology, Mathematics, Statistics and Computer Science, Forestry and Environmental Sciences and Food Science and Technology. These offer a wide variety of course units allowing students the choice of many different subject combinations.

History of the Department of Forestry and Environmental Science

The formalized education in forestry in the university has a history of 25 years, first as a unit in the subject 'Botany' and subsequently as a fully-fledged postgraduate degree programme

from 1983. Nevertheless the history can be traced back to 1960, when units of forestry related topics were incorporated to the subject of Botany. The Department of Forestry and Environmental science was successfully established in May 1996 with the intention of introducing more applied courses in university education to produce graduates who are more suited to contribute positively to the country's development process. Since then the Department offers the subject of Forestry and Environmental Science to the undergraduate programme of the Faculty of Applied Science. The establishment of this Department was the culmination of the Forestry Project of the university which was part of the education and training component of the national project - Forest Resources Development Project (1983-1990) - followed by Forest Sector Development Project (1990-1995) of the Government of Sri Lanka. This is the only Department offering courses on forestry and environment at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The Department has been able to reach wide horizons in training professionals who are capable of contributing effectively to the country's development process. About 450 personnel have been successfully trained at the Master's level since 1983 and many of them are employed in forestry and environmental sectors.

3. AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

3.1 Aims:

The Mission of the Department of Forestry and Environmental Science, University of Sri Jayewardenepura is to assist in the sustainable management of natural resources and environment through manpower and knowledge development. The main aim and objective of the Department is to develop decision making knowledge and skills and attitudes required to sustainably manage forest and other natural resources and manmade environment.

In this context the Department

- i. Provides multidisciplinary course units covering biophysical, socio economic and managerial aspects to get a wide knowledge and understanding on the ecosystem processes and management options to achieve sustainability. The courses are designed in such a way to provide a stable foundation in the initial years and then to go deep into the processes with the advancement of years.
- ii. Offers a high-quality learning experience in an environment of internationally recognized research, to expose the students to recent advances in knowledge and techniques, particularly those represented in the research strengths of the Department.
- iii. Provides opportunities for students to pursue high quality research focused on solving national issues and fundamental areas of their choice with the advice of academic staff, in both B.Sc. Special Degree and MSc. Degree.
- iv. Provides opportunities to put the knowledge thus learnt into practice both in the laboratory and in the field for almost every course unit taught.
- v. Provides opportunities to work as teams to achieve common goals.
- vi. Provides opportunities to acquire transferable skills such as written and oral communication, presentation and information technology (IT) skills required for lifelong learning process.
- vii. Provides opportunities to work in the industry as interns to expose the students to the world of work and shape them to acquire gainful employment.

- viii. Provides opportunities for students to work in projects and contractual assignments of staff on national scale to gain much needed work experience in the field of forestry and environment.
- ix. Provides opportunities for the students to work with the staff in social welfare projects which helps to develop environmentally and socially friendly attitudes.
- x. Provides a friendly, responsive and supportive Departmental environment conducive to the enthusiastic learning, high standards and good completion rate.
- xi. Provides opportunities to develop environmentally friendly attitudes required for sustainable living and reducing the ecological footprint.
- xii. Offers career guidance for students following undergraduate degrees to apply their knowledge and training in a wide variety of areas such as research, industry, university teaching, and management to allow them to seek employment within their chosen fields or multidisciplinary areas involving the subject.
- xiii. Offers counseling to students as and when necessary on both academic and private matters. Each member has displayed office hours on his/her door during which the staff member is available for student s. However, as there is an informal and friendly environment in the Department among staff and students counseling is not limited to office hours only.

The mission of the Department is to assist in the sustainable management of natural resources and environment through manpower and knowledge development. The main aim and objective of the Department is to develop decision making knowledge and skills and attitudes required to sustainable manage forest and other natural resources and manmade environments.

3.2. Learning Outcomes:

On the successful completion of any of our programmes, students should be able to:

- i. Gain knowledge and conceptual understanding on sustainable management of natural resources with special reference to forests and environment.
- ii. Be skillful to establish trees as plantations or integrate them in other ecosystems successfully. In this context, the students should be conversant in the site species matching, selection of plants suitable for the desired end use, tending the plants to reach the optimal output and selection of the most appropriate and environmentally friendly method of removal.
- iii. Estimate growing stock and rate of growth in both natural forests and plantations and use this information to prepare management plans.
- iv. Identify timber species in Sri Lanka using macroscopic and microscopic anatomical properties using conventional and computer keys.
 - v. Describe physical, chemical and mechanical properties of timber and understand the technology and management of solid wood and wood based panel product industries.
- vi. Identify pests and diseases in forests and plantations and offer remedial/prevention measures.
- vii. Integrate forests with agriculture and/or livestock towards profit maximization and sustainable development
- viii. Recognize the pollutants in ecosystems in all terrestrial, aquatic and atmosphere, identify the causes and effects and recommend preventive and remedial measures
- ix. Conduct environmental assessments for development projects.

- x. Prepare maps of geographic locations using GIS and Remote Sensing Technology and to make decisions in natural resource management.
- xi. Make economic appraisal on development projects.
- xii. Evaluate development projects and prepare monitoring plans and be able to make decisions using multi criteria decision making tools.
- xiii. Estimate natural resource damages and value of natural assets and integrate such values in policy making.
- xiv. Determine optimal harvesting levels for natural renewable and non renewable resources using economic instruments.
- xv. Conduct independent research inclusive of designing the experiments, procuring /generating appropriate data, analysis and interpretation of data, testing hypotheses and understanding the results, drawing conclusions, justifying the results, reporting and defending the research.
- xvi. Start and develop self employment in environment and forest related fields.
- xvii. Develop a range of personal and transferable skills (e.g. critical ability, independence of thought, data handling and interpretation, computer literacy, information management, oral and written communication, team work) and apply them to varied situations.
- xviii. Model the natural resource in mathematical backgrounds to project the present situation to the future or to predict scenarios using available information.
- xix. Identify tree families in a wide array of ecosystems and understand their interrelationships.
- xx. Develop a love of the forests and the outdoors, an ethical concern for natural resources and an appreciation of nature, and an interest in the complexity of natural ecosystems.
- xxi. Be skilled in problem solving, critical thinking and analytical reasoning.

(a) The B.Sc, Special Degree in Forestry and Environmental Science and the M.Sc. Degree in Forestry and Environmental Management have a comprehensive research project which is a mandatory course unit. By conducting this course unit the students are expected to gain the following learning outcomes.

- i. To acquire a broad and in depth knowledge and a conceptual understanding of the fundamental principles of ecosystem and functions, application of this core knowledge into sustainable forests and other natural resource management and detailed knowledge of a selected area of research.
- ii. To lay a strong foundation to technical and intellectual skills necessary for designing experiments, literature survey and critical thinking, acquisition and analysis of data through laboratory and field work.
- iii. Have developed reporting writing, presenting and defending skills.

4. FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW TEAM

4.1 Curriculum Design, Content and Review

The Department offers Forestry and Environmental Science course units to the three-year B.Sc. (General Degree) for both Physical and Biological Science students registered by the Faculty of Applied Science and a four year B.Sc. (Special Degree) in Forestry and Environmental Science. It also offers M.Sc., M.Phil. and Ph.D. programmes. B. Sc. and M.Sc. programmes are conducted on semester based course unit system.

As the Department offers Forestry and Environmental Science provides course units for one third of General Degree, the students follow two more subjects to complete the B.Sc. (General) degree. Once selected for Special Degree programme at the end of the second year, the students have to follow only the courses offered by the Department. The courses offered by the department are well designed to give students a good knowledge and understanding of the basic concepts of Forestry and Environmental Science and other related fields and are compatible with the intended learning outcomes of students by the department as spelled out in the curriculum.

The curriculum content of all the course units offered by the department reflects adequate academic standards and enables students to achieve the intended learning outcomes in the form of knowledge and understanding of the subject matter and development of a multitude of skills.

The students who have successfully completed the second year of the B.Sc. General Degree with a high GPA score are admitted to the B.Sc. Special Degree course in the subjects of Forestry and Environmental Science. In this course students are given an in-depth knowledge on the subjects covered in the first two years and also are exposed to research and modeling tools in environmental decision-making and a host of more applied subjects. This is intended to produce specialists such as Forest ecologists, Forest Managers, Natural Resource Economists, Biodiversity management experts, Waste management and pollution control experts etc. who would be able to address key issues related to Forestry and Environmental Sciences.

Practical classes, field visits, assignments, presentations enrich the experience of students and promote students learning and development of practical skills, other skills such as interpersonal and social skills and their ability to work in group etc. The reviewers appreciated the opportunity given to both general and special degree students to pursue course of independent study which motivates students to acquire variety of skills such as information gathering, independent work and computer skills and presentation competencies. However the highlight of the programme is the “Field/ Factory Assignment” (internship) where in the third year of study the students are placed for a period of one year on part time basis (while following the courses in the department) with a view to provide student with an opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills of a ‘real world of work’ environment. This programme had rendered the graduates more employable. This is the pioneering department in the Faculty of Applied Science to introduce such a programme to undergraduate and should be commended for this. However it is recommended that this field factory assignment should be carefully monitored by an academic adviser as well as industry experts in order to achieve the best results.

This department also offers a multidisciplinary M.Sc. programme in Forestry and Environmental Management. The overall objective of the programme is to develop decision-making knowledge and skills required to establish and manage forest, wildlife, water and other natural and environmental resources and prevent and control environmental pollution.

The curriculum content of both general and special degree and M.Sc. degree course units are of sufficient breadth and depth in terms of coverage.

The frequency of curriculum revision was specially mentioned in the SER. The minutes of the departmental committee meetings, faculty minutes and the discussion with the academic staff indicate that they have timely curriculum revisions with the participation of relevant stake holders wherever appropriate.

The reviewers particularly noted that a workshop has been organized with stake holders including the private sector to develop the curriculum to introduce the module system to the M.Sc. course and renew the curriculum of B.Sc. course.

The reviewers are convinced that the curriculum design and content adequately incorporated recent developments in Forestry and environmental Science and address the needs of the students following the subject and also enable students to achieve intended learning outcomes of the programme under review.

Nevertheless choice of the course units to suit the personal interests and capabilities of special degree students is very much restricted. They have a degree of freedom in selecting the research project and perhaps some case studies etc.

In relation to the curriculum design, content and review the judgment of the team is GOOD.

4.2. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods

The Department is blessed with qualified, skilful academic staff. The Department also obtains the services of many visiting lecturers with good qualifications and experience in the respective subject areas. The use of visiting lecturers from other institutes is highly desirable as it will enrich the teaching – learning process. All academic programmes and examinations are conducted in English medium.

The review had the opportunity to observe three lectures (two undergraduate and one postgraduate) delivered by three lecturers. The teaching methods used by them were different to different to each other and all were effective. Some lecturers distribute lecture handouts before the lectures and some others after the lectures and several lecturers publish their teaching aids in the Departmental Learning Management System.

A noticeable good practice was the introduction of peer assessment of group work by team members and taking the marks given by them in deciding the final marks of that activity.

The students are encouraged to engage in discussions and they do participate actively. This is more pronounced among undergraduate students than postgraduate students. Some lecturers used self learning activities for certain sections of their regular courses. It was noted that even the new entrants are given such tasks and they had collected and organized information on the subject and presented skillfully. There are also some course modules dedicated for self learning. The presentations by the special degree students were a proof of the very good training they obtained during the course of study. It may also be noted here that the incoming students have already had exposure to such activities as apparent from the level of presentations by the new entrants. Students engage in good discussions after seminar presentations.

The lecturers use PowerPoint presentations effectively. Some also use the chalk/ white boards extensively in parallel.

The auditorium is equipped with air conditioners and ceiling fans and the lecture rooms have ceiling fans. Lighting is generally good. The seating is not adequately comfortable and therefore the design is not suitable when students have to spend long hours in the same lecture room.

As demanded by the nature of the degree program, many course units are supported by field visits extending from one day to four days. Laboratory practical classes are held during the first and the second years and field practical classes and field and factory assignments are given in the third year. This arrangement seems to work well except the hindrance in the third

year for field and industrial assignments due to restrictions in the timetables as students have to study two other subjects as well. Another major problem is the difficulty obtaining transport facilities. In the past, the Department has had the luxury of holding several vehicles under its control as these were purchased through several projects. Now the University administration has taken all these to the University vehicle pool. Although this is a good move for facilitating resource sharing, the Department complains that it does not have priority in getting at least the vehicles that were purchased for the purposes of the Department.

The special degree students, while expressing their satisfaction on the field practical and industrial assignments, mentioned that it would be more useful if the period allotted for this could be increased. Presently it is limited as these assignments are coupled with those of general degree students. The students and also the staff welcomed the suggestion by the reviewers to extend the time allocation through the vacation between the third and fourth years and if necessary for another appropriate period from the first semester of the fourth year.

The Department gets the services of four temporary demonstrators and technical and other nonacademic staff in practical classes. The laboratories are spacious and sufficiently equipped. The supporting staff, space and the number of pieces of different equipment are adequate for the present number of students. It was observed that writing on some areas of the chalk board in the laboratory was not clear. This may be rectified by proper illumination. The air conditioner in the auditorium was too noisy, and hence students seated at the rear of the room had to strain to hear the lecturer.

The special degree is in the format of 2+2. All special degree students have to follow the same course units and therefore there is not much flexibility for students to orient themselves within the limits of the major subject area to suit their special interests and capabilities. They are however given a chance to choose the research project to their preference.

As foreign students visit the Yagirala Forest Reserve and use the facilities in the field station for their research work, the students in the Department also have the opportunity to meet them and to get good exposure by sharing experience. Although not a part of curriculum the opportunities given particularly to the special degree students in organizing the international forestry symposium provide them with good practical experience to learn how to manage and organize such an event. Students confidently handle the given responsibilities.

Proper assessment methods are in place. Course units are assessed by one or a combination of assessment methods. Theory and practical course units are assessed primarily by end semester examinations. Several course units are also assessed by continuous assessments by way of case studies, seminars, field tour reports etc. in addition to the primary test method. The criteria for assessment are clearly laid down. Question papers are prepared by the respective lecturers in charge and some degree of internal moderation is carried out. However by perusing sample question papers, it was noticeable that the structure of the papers and types questions can be improved quite considerably. A good way to achieve this is to get the opinion of external moderators. The external moderators could be experienced staff of other departments and other universities as necessary. The staff feels that the course of study is rather specialized and therefore subject matter covered is rather specific and experts to moderate the question papers may not be available outside the Department. However when individual course units are taken there are certainly experts in these fields elsewhere too. On the other hand, the academics with experience can improve the quality of the papers even without in depth knowledge of the subject. Although it is mentioned in the self evaluation

report, “direct questions which enable the students to provide direct answers by memorizing the notes are discouraged”, this is not seen in the majority of the questions.

The samples of marking schemes observed are of good standard. Second marking is done within the Department. Final year research project and field and factory assignments are assessed continuously and also at the end by thesis/ report and presentations/ *viva voce* examinations. The method of examination of these and allocation of marks for each component are clearly laid down.

Although some form of reconsideration of examination results is being practiced, this may be done in a more formal way, such as allowing the students appeal for verification of marks in a formal way accepted by the Senate of the University. The informal way of settling requests by students on the examination results by discussion with the relevant staff member cannot be considered as a good practice.

In relation to the teaching, learning and assessment methods, the judgment of the team is GOOD.

4.3 Quality of Students Including Student Progress and Achievements

Admission of students to the Forestry and Environmental Science programme is through the UGC based on the national policy on university admission. The Z-score of the present students who follow the Forestry and Environmental Science as given in the SER ranges from 0.8522 to 1.7236. As Department restricts the entry to 40 students, the intake depends on the merit and interest of the students. Out of the student's intake the majority is from the western and adjacent provinces. From the interaction the review team had with the students it became evident, that majority of the students command a very satisfactory level of proficiency in English. The satisfactory level of English in the answer scripts pursued by the review team also confirmed the above fact. Upon admission the students undergo an intensive course in English which is delivered at different levels depending on their knowledge of English determined at a placement test. The students expressed their satisfaction about the intensive English programme offered by the Faculty of applied Sciences.

Apart from the English programme, students also receive a well organized faculty level orientation program for two weeks. This also includes a basic knowledge in computer applications and introduction to centers of support services and proving learning and skill development facilities. The students expressed their satisfaction about the orientation program and were of the view that it was useful and relevant.

Students are required to select subject combination prior to the commencement of the first semester of the first year and according to Applied Science Faculty guideline students are allowed two weeks to make a final decision of the subject combinations.

For the selection to the M.Sc. course, the eligibility is B.Sc. Degree in Forestry or Environmental Science, Biological Science or Physical Science, Geography or Geology, Agriculture, Civil or Chemical Engineering. In the case of four year degree in Management, Social Science, Economics, at least 5 year experience in the field of Natural Resources and Environmental Management also required for the students to become eligible. Applications are called through a paper advertisement and the candidates who fulfill the basic qualifications are called for an interview and students are selected on the basis of this interview.

When the students come to the Department, staff member welcome the students and provide them with information on subject outline, facilities and opportunities available. They are provided with some field activities, social events together with staff members in order to develop close interaction among students and also to improve staff student relationship. The review team really appreciates this effort by the academic and non academic Staff of the department.

Curricula during the first two years follow a logical order starting from providing an understanding more basic sciences and proceeding to more applied aspects with the passage of time. This helps the students to consolidate the theoretical aspects and apply those to practical ones. In the third year of the general degree and also during the two years of special degree the course units become more practical and targets to the industry. Some of these are conducted by expert practitioners, so that the students are exposed to real life situation.

Students who perform well in the subject of Forestry and Environmental Science in the first two years are eligible to be selected follow special degree in forestry & Environmental science and are provided two years, thereafter to impart an in-depth knowledge and skills. Progress of both general and special students in forestry and Environmental science and M.Sc. students in each academic year is monitored by practical work, field work and continuous assessment done when the course units and by summative examination at the end of each semester. The examination is based on semester course unit system. The third year general and special students are required to undergo industrial training called “Field/ Factory Assessment” and are assessed by their presentations and reports produced by them. Furthermore both fourth year and M.Sc. students are assessed by research project presentation and *viva voce* in addition to the end of semester theory papers. Grade points of each unit will be informed in advance and students are able to assess their progress after each semester and rectify their shortcomings during subsequent semester.

The students who satisfy the requirements to follow a special degree program are given a chance to apply at the end of 2nd year. To be eligible, the students should obtain a minimum of GPA of 3 for the Forestry and Environmental Science in the first two years and they shall obtain a minimum GPA of 2.0 for the other subjects. As the maximum intake is 12, the selection will be based on merit.

Students’ attendance is continuously monitored both at lectures and practical classes. The students generally are not allowed to sit any examination unless the attendance is at least 80% and in the laboratory component the students are rewarded for attendance.

The introduction of course unit system has led to a significant increase in students’ performance at the special degree program (Table 2.5 of SER). After 2006, all special degree students obtain a 2nd class upper division or above and around 30% had obtained a 1st class. This is undoubtedly due to the quality of students and academic guidance given by the academic staffs. The failure rate of the general degree students is about 10–11 (Table 2.4 SER). The department has identified that most of the failures are those who do not attend classes regularly and involve in other activities or students with personnel/ financial problems.

From the evidence provided, the review team was convinced of the good academic performance of the students who follow forestry and environmental science as a subject.

Incentives are provided for students to perform well in the examinations. Jayantha Pathbariya scholarship is awarded to the students who obtain the highest average marks for Forestry and

Environmental Science degree in the 1st and 2nd academic year of the B.Sc. degree. Munasinghe Institute for development (MIND) undergraduate scholarship is a competitive scholarship selected among full time 3rd year students among all Science Faculty students. Since year 2001 eight students who follow the FES have won the MIND scholarship. The student who obtains a first class pass with the highest GPA at B.Sc. (Forestry and Environmental Science) Degree is awarded the Forestry and Environmental Science Gold medal sponsored by Touch Wood Investment LTD.

The department and the faculty provide ample opportunities for the students to improve general attitudes, self confidence (through the course on independent study, field classes, practical classes, Field/ Factory assessment for the 3rd year students and the research project in the Special program) and ethics (through a fundamental course in year 1). The review team during the meetings with students observed remarkable self confidence of the students and also good attitudes.

The discussion with the students following special degree program revealed that some special degree graduates are following postgraduate studies. There has been a gradual increase in the number of general degree students pursuing postgraduate studies. About 35% of special degree holders are employed in the private sector and around 50% in the Government sector. Many general degree students find employment soon after the graduation.

In relation to the quality of students, student progress and achievements, the judgment is GOOD.

4.4. Extent and Use of Students Feedback

Student feedback on lectures is taken by using a standard feedback questionnaire. The questionnaire is distributed at the end of a course unit, collected by a nonacademic staff and handed over to the relevant lecturer. Although the staff does not see any problem in getting a feedback in that manner, following a better accepted procedure (i.e. administration of feedback by the faculty office, not involving the academic staff, analysis of the data and presenting the summary data by the Faculty office to the lecturer) would provide a better feedback. The reviewers proposed to collect the feedback information at halfway through the series of lectures, analyze and discuss the strengths and weaknesses pointed out by the students. When students see that there is an improvement, they shall give a more honest and constructive criticisms on weak points in the next the round. It appears that the information collected is superficially scanned without proper analysis in order to look at the picture more realistically.

The staff is also happy about the comments given by the students about the courses in informal gatherings and during field classes and field trips. There is however no formal way of information gathering on the quality of the courses. It was apparent with discussions with students that they can easily approach the staff and discuss freely regarding various matters, yet they had some grievances not conveyed to the lecturers. It is normal behavior of the students that they do not come with formal requests during friendly informal gatherings. Therefore it is fruitful to have regular, not necessarily frequent formal discussions with students.

As such the department practices some form of gathering of students' feedback, but students had not been able to convey some of their grievances to the staff.

Therefore judgment for extent and use of students' feedback is SATISFACTORY.

4.5. Postgraduate Studies

The department has adequate experience in offering postgraduate programmes as it first evolved by offering a M.Sc. degree in Forestry and Environment Management as far back as 1983. The department currently offers three postgraduate programmes namely; M.Sc. in Forestry and Environment Management by course work and a dissertation which include a small research project. The research project selection, literature surveys and the programme development and implementation adheres to accepted academic procedures in postgraduate studies. M.Phil. and Ph.D. programmes are only by research. Currently there are six Ph.D., two M.Phil. and 21 M.Sc. students. The staff is well qualified and experienced to guide these students.

M.Sc. programme has sufficient demand registering about 20 students per year. In the last five years the enrolments have been around 20, which is highly satisfactory for fee levying courses. Most of these students are employed; hence the course will upgrade the skills and competence to enhance their careers and to opt for other job options.

M.Phil. and Ph.D. programmes are by research are administrated by the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University. The procedures involved in research proposal preparation and implementation of the research programmes also follow accepted procedures.

The department is equipped with modest research facilities. The laboratories have some important equipment for research, of which a Atomic Absorption Spectrophotometer is the most expensive and used by all department of the faculty. The research programmes are field oriented; hence the laboratories are used only for analytical purposes.

The postgraduate programmes should be further strengthened as there is a national need for foresters and environmentalists. These programmes should be developed based on national research priorities in order to meet the national manpower needs.

The review team rates the postgraduate study programmes as GOOD.

4.6. Peer Observation

Peer observation is meant to improve the teaching skills of academic staff and it is an accepted practice to enhance the student learning process. The process follows a sharing of teaching- learning experience among both senior and junior staff. This process eventually leads to a quality assurance mechanism as it will improve teaching quality. The peer observations also lead to closer interaction among the staff of an academic institution, changes of attitudes and respect for each other which will improve the entire academic programme benefitting the students. Peer observation often leads to self improvement and confidence building, particularly among the younger staff.

The academic staff of the Department of Forestry and Environment has recognized the importance of peer observation as a good practice to enhance the quality of teaching. The peer observation is also made easier due to the availability of teaching aids (overheads, and powerPoints etc) in the classrooms. Peer observation began in 2009 and up to the time of this review 7 peer observations have been completed with highly satisfactory results. The department plans to continue with peer observations as a regular academic activity.

The peer evaluation could also be extended by initiating moderation of examination question papers and marking schemes by external experts, in addition to the internal moderation carried out at present.

It was obvious from the sample question papers observed that style of the papers and types of questions can be improved considerably.

The review team considers that there is commitment on the part of the staff to continue this practice and hence rates peer observation as SATISFACTORY.

4.7. Skills Development

Skills development has been embedded into the curriculum of both undergraduate and postgraduate degrees of this department. As a consequence of high quality academic programme coupled with skills development, the students have been able to gain employment within a short period after the completion of the degree programmes (For details of courses that impart skills, see Chapter 09 of SER. Skills Development, pages 78 – 83).

In the three year general degree programme, all the courses include a skills development component. Basically, these cover areas such as forest tree measurements, sampling procedures, design and analysis of experiments, preparation of forest inventories, mapping, surveying and leveling, timber classification, environment aspects and mitigating climate change and preparation of EIA reports and many other areas relevant to forestry and environment.; Similarly the third year and 4th Year special students are also exposed to a total of 25 skills development programmes. These programmes have built up student confidence and enhanced their ability to compete with others in the job market. The forest field laboratory at Yagirala is managed by the department and serves as an asset in imparting the required hands on skills for the students.

The students also learn key skills required through the Key skills for resources managers' course which include English language training, speaking, writing and presentation skills. These skills were evident at the student presentations, which were up to a very high standard. The proficiency in the English language was evident at the seminars presented by the students.

The exposure to the world of work is gained through the field programmes organized by linking with the public, private sector institutions. This provides avenues also for employment if properly organized and timed. The use of modern information communication technology is a pathfinder for any present day student. Therefore, the course includes ICT skills and hand-on training in the use of such technologies. With regard to Internet connections at the department, some concerns were expressed by the students, but we learnt that the connections will be provided by the university shortly.

The field practical on Fridays and Saturdays in a host institution, which was reported as inadequate for gaining skills should be considered in the four-year programme. It could be increased further to expose the students to a real world of work enabling them to understand the internal operation of various institutions.

Besides the above, the department also organizes academic activities that expose staff and students to work in harmony with others and creating opportunities for developing organizational abilities. International Forestry and Environment Symposium is an annual

event at which policy makers, local and foreign scientists and many others in the fields of forestry and environment participate.

The review team learnt that the students take an active part in this symposium, and they are proud to be a part of it, which will broaden their outlook in life.

The review team rates skills development as GOOD.

4.8. Academic Guidance and Counseling

The prospective students are able to collect information on the study programme and the peripheral facilities offered by the Department through the Departmental web page. Upon arrival at the University they receive a good orientation programme in which they get more insights into the activities of different Departments of the faculty. In addition they also get an idea about the future employment prospects and all the support services provided by the Faculty and the University. The courses and facilities available and matters related to examinations etc. are described in the Faculty's students' handbook, which has been done very attractively and effectively. However it was noted that students do not receive the handbook on the day of arrival or within the first few days. Students are free to drop subjects and replace with another within the first couple of weeks. Students are made aware of various activities during the course of academic through announcements displayed on notice boards. Students are encouraged to meet the academic staff for any assistance they need. The available times of each academic member is displayed on the door of each staff member. Students also appreciate the availability of the lecturers not only during the prescribed times, but as and when they need their help.

The systems of Proctor, students counseling and academic counseling/ mentoring are in place. The Career Guidance Unit also plays a major role in preparing the undergraduate to suit for the future challenges. However students of the Faculty of Science do not seem to get the maximum benefit, probably because they have a high burden of academic work, and hence do not have sufficient time to take part in events organized by the Unit.

Students also have the opportunity in experiencing real world changes during some of their course modules, such as field/ factory assignments and case studies and by such events as organizing International Forestry Symposium, exhibitions etc. In these events they have to work independently as well as in close cooperation of the staff.

As testified by the acting director/ sports, the students of the Faculty of Science are actively taking part in sports, in spite of their demanding timetable. Captains of several sports events are from these students.

The overall judgment given to academic guidance and counseling is GOOD.

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

<i>Aspect Reviewed</i>	<i>Judgment</i>
Curriculum Design, Content and Review	Good
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	Good
Peer Observation	Satisfactory
Skills Development	Good
Academic Guidance and Counseling	Good

5. CONCLUSIONS

1. Curriculum Design, Content and Review

Strengths/Good Practices

1. Curriculum is well designed to cover sufficient breadth and depth to level required for B.Sc. Degree at both general degree and special degree level and M.Sc. level enabling achievement of the aims and outcomes of the Department.
2. Designing of the initial curriculum has had the blessings of the knowledge and experience of teachers, both within and outside the Department, having M.Sc. course prior to the B.Sc. course.
3. Incorporates specific modules for development of various skills and skills development is entrenched in several other course units.

Weaknesses

1. The special degree course does not allow students sufficient flexibility to pick and choose course units to suit the personal interests and capacities.

2. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods

Strengths/Good Practices

1. The staff is well conversant on the respective subject areas are skillful teachers.
2. Many visiting lecturers who are well experienced in subject area are involved in teaching.
3. All academic programmes and assessments are conducted in English medium.
4. Peer assessment of group work of students is being practiced.
5. Sufficient amount of self learning, peer learning and skills development are built-in to teaching.
6. Support staff and facilities for laboratory and field classes are available.
7. Filed/ factory assignments provide students with hands on experience in the world of work.

8. Combinations of assessment methods are used and students are informed about the system in advance.
9. The practice of assessment of research project, assignments are documented and satisfactory.
10. Marking schemes for assessment of theory papers are prepared and second marking is done properly.

Weaknesses

1. The transport facilities for field classes and field trips should be available more freely.
2. The time period allocated for Field/ Factory assignments may not be sufficient.
3. Moderation of question papers by external experts is not practiced.

4. Quality of Students Including Student Progress and Achievements

Strengths/Good Practices

1. The incoming students to the Department are of good quality having relatively high Z scores and knowledge in English.
2. The curriculum and other activities such as organizing various events form a graduate with knowledge and skills.
3. Students are provided with sports facilities, career guidance and academic and general student counseling services.
4. Graduates find suitable employment within reasonable waiting time. A good number of graduates also undertakes postgraduate studies.
5. The students maintain a good pass rate with classes and failure rate is low.
6. Some scholarship and award systems are available for needy and bright students.
7. Students, particularly the final year students, show good self reliance and attitudes.

4. Extent and Use of Students Feedback

Strengths/Good Practices

1. Formal and informal methods of collection of student feedback are practiced.
2. Students are aware of importance of feedback.

Weaknesses

1. The formal questionnaire based feedback information collection needs improvements such as timing of collection of information, debriefing the students and administration of it independent of the Department.
2. Feedback data are not methodically analyzed and used to improve quality.
3. There are no formal discussions with students to listen to their grievances and to obtain their suggestions.

4. Postgraduate Studies

Strengths/Good Practices

1. The Department commenced with postgraduate course and runs these courses concurrently with B.Sc. courses.
2. The recruitment criteria of postgraduate students are well defined.
3. The staff also engages in supervision of postgraduate research degrees (i.e. M.Phil. and Ph.D).
4. Facilities for research in the Department are adequate.

Weaknesses

1. Maintenance of the labs and plant houses is poor.

5. Peer Observation

Strengths/Good Practices

1. A formalized peer observation procedure has been introduced recently.
2. Departmental meetings are used as opportunity to discuss methods adopted by staff in teaching and evaluation

Weaknesses

1. Peer evaluation by external experts in assessment is not been done (eg. moderation of question papers)

6. Skills Development

Strengths/Good Practices

1. Staff members are engaged in research
2. Self learning course modules are available and several course units have in built skills development activities.
3. Field practical classes and group assignments particularly with peer evaluation are in-built to curriculum.
4. Students have the opportunity to take part as a group in activities such as International Forestry Symposium.
5. Students get a good service from support units such as ELTU, Computer unit, library and sports division.

7. Academic Guidance and Counseling

Strengths/Good Practices

1. Students counseling, Academic Counseling and Career Guidance are operating to satisfactory level.
2. Students' handbook and the Departmental website are very informative.
3. Students are exposed to real world of work early.

Weaknesses

1. There is no formal forum to discuss matters pertaining to teaching, learning and other matters with the students.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Following specific recommendations are based on the findings indicated above with a view to facilitate resolving of some weaknesses identified and further reinforcing the strengths and good practices.

1. Several course units such as Biometry and Statistics, Social Forestry, General Management may be introduced, although these are covered under certain other course unit to a certain extent.
2. Introduction of several elective/ optional course units to special degree students within the main discipline and/ or relevant but outside the main discipline
3. Convincing the University administration on the necessity of streamlining the process of acquiring vehicles for field classes
4. Considering the extension of the length of field/ Factory assignments for Special Degree students
5. External moderation of examination question papers external experts, in order to maintain standards and to increase visibility
6. Improving the effectiveness of students' feedback by formalizing its operation through Faculty office and analysis of the information methodically
7. Establishment of student staff liaison committee to discuss matters pertaining to the course of study and other related problems and suggestions
8. Developing a five-year training plan for academic and technical staff
9. Developing a long term (10 year) human resource development plan and a facilities development plan, considering the future development of the department. This should include the new fields, such as Climate change, Environmental Economics etc.
10. Establishment of a Committee for fund raising from local agencies/donors for research & development, scholarships etc.

7. ANNEXURES

Annex 1: AGENDA OF THE REVIEW VISIT

01st December 2010

08.00 – 09.00 Private meeting of Review Panel with QAA Council Representatives
09.00 – 09.30 Meeting with VC, Dean and Head of the Department
09.30 – 10.00 Discuss the Agenda for the Visit
10.00 – 10.30 Tea
10.30 – 11.30 Department Presentation on the Self Evaluation Report
11.30 – 12.30 Discussion
12.30 – 13.30 Lunch
13.30 – 14.30 Observing Departmental Facilities
14.30 - 15.30 Observing Other Facilities (Library, Computer Center, Sports...)
15.30 – 16.30 Meeting with Department Academic Staff
16.30 – 17.30 Meeting with Undergraduate Students
17.30 – 18.30 Brief Meeting of Reviewers

02nd December 2010

09.00 – 10.00 Observing Lecture – Prof. Hemanthi Ranasinghe (First Year – Key Skills for Resource Managers)
10.00 – 11.00 Observing Documents (*Working Tea*)
11.00 – 12.00 Meeting with Technical Staff and Other Non-Academic Staff
12.00 – 12.30 Observing Documents
12.30 – 13.00 Academic Guidance and Counseling Core Aspect Meeting
13.00 – 14.00 Lunch
14.00 – 15.00 Observing Students' Presentations
15.00 - 16.00 Meeting with Special Degree Students
16.00 – 17.00 Meeting of Reviewers

03rd December 2010

09.00 – 09.30 Observing Practical – Dr. Upul Subasinghe (First Year – Mensuration)
09.30 – 10.00 Observing Lecture – Dr. Hiran Amarasekera (M.Sc. – Timber Technology)
10.00 – 10.30 Tea
10.30 – 11.00 Meeting with Postgraduate Students
11.00 – 11.30 Observing Lecture – Mrs. Nilanthi Bandara (B.Sc. Waste Management)
11.30 – 12.30 Meeting with Head and Staff for Reporting
12.30 – 13.30 Lunch
13.30 - 17.30 Report Writing

Annex 2. LIST OF DOCUMENTS PRESENTED FOR PERUSAL BY REVIEWERS

1. Curriculum design, Content and Review

- 1.1 Program/course information (usually in student's handbook)
- 1.2 Detailed module information (credit weight, level of study etc.)
- 1.3 University/Faculty or Department regulations that is applicable to the program
- 1.4 Teaching, learning and assessment strategy (University/Faculty or Department)
- 1.5 Case study on the integration of the skills development in undergrad curriculum (If relevant)
- 1.6 Minutes of meetings that include discussion of curriculum matters and action
- 1.7 Notes of curriculum review processes

2. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods

- 2.1 Examples of teaching and learning materials (Handouts, copies of slides, videos, practical aids etc.)
- 2.2 Details of any arrangements for sharing good practices in teaching, learning and assessment
- 2.3 Minutes of departmental committee meetings
- 2.4 Regulations and Guidelines relating to the Assessment of students, including details of Appeals Procedures
- 2.5 Samples of students work
- 2.6 Summary of marking sheets
- 2.7 Marking criteria and marking Schemes
- 2.8 Model answers
- 2.9 Any other numerical information or statistics that enable the reviewers to look in detail at assessment trends
- 2.10 Guidelines for external examiners
- 2.11 External examiners' reports (For the last three years, together with a departmental response on action taken in respect of their comments and recommendations)
- 2.12 Details of marking conventions (procedures use to moderate marks, whether marks make notes on scripts)
- 2.13 Teaching, learning and assessment strategy
- 2.14 Details of any program/ course monitoring arrangements (internal or external) that have affected teaching, learning and assessment in the department

3. Quality of students, including student progress and achievement

- 3.1 Details of student entry qualifications (Range and number of students from various categories and from different backgrounds)
- 3.2 Statistics such as the ratio of applications to places available (If relevant)
- 3.3 Summary of the admissions process, drawing on the progression statistics
- 3.4 Any additional statistics that give details of student progression through the program, including drop-out rates, pass/ fail rates etc.
- 3.5 Details of students achievement, including number of degrees and numbers of classes awarded, any prizes awarded etc. (Figures of last three years are sufficient)
- 3.6 External examiners' reports (For last three years together with a departmental response on action taken in respect of their comments and recommendations))
- 3.7 Details of graduate destinations/ employment

4. Extent of student feedback, qualitative and quantitative

- 4.1 Copies of all questionnaires used to obtain student feedback and details of how they are used
- 4.2 Any analyses of questionnaires (qualitative and quantitative)
- 4.3 Details of membership and terms of reference of student-staff liaison committees
- 4.4 Notes of student-staff-liaison committees
- 4.5 Notes of any student forums used to gather feedback
- 4.6 Actual examples of student feedback
- 4.7 Case study/studies (Tracking issues raised by students and the action taken by the department to address them. The case study could include extracts from minutes of meetings, examples of student questionnaires, e mails etc.)

5. Postgraduate studies

- 5.1 Statement of Departmental policy for supporting postgraduate studies (reference to University or National policy, such as a code of practice)
- 5.2 Summary of postgraduate student number (for the past three years)
- 5.3 Analysis of funding sources for postgraduate students
- 5.4 Summary of the facilities available to support postgraduate students
- 5.5 Evaluation of completion rates
- 5.6 Description on postgraduate supervision
- 5.7 Details of research Methods training those students are required to attend (including training materials, names of students attending and dates of the training etc.)

6. Peer Observation

- 6.1 Description of the Department's procedures for peer observation (requirement for all staff, permanent, temporary, visiting) is there different requirements for different kinds of staff?
- 6.2 Copy of the relevant University policy document that specifies the University's strategy for peer observation
- 6.3 Details of how peer observation is used in the department to review teaching practice and improve performance
- 6.4 Samples of any evaluation sheets used by observation in the peer observation process
- 6.5 A list of staff participated in the peer observation system
- 6.6 Minutes of Departmental; meetings where the peer observation process has been discussed (accompanied by details of any specific action indentified and carried out)

7. Skill development

- 7.1 A summary of the department's strategy for skill development (is it embedded in the curriculum, or do students take special skills' modules such as IT, communication etc.?)
- 7.2 A detailed list of the skills the department aims to develop in students (building on less detailed information provided in the SER)
- 7.3 Evidence that employer views have been taken into account in skills development (Letters and replies, notes of meetings where employers visit the department, or minutes of meetings of industrial advisory groups that include employers)
- 7.4 Details of specific modules in which students acquire key or personal skills (including teaching and learning methods, students' tasks and how students are assessed on their acquisition of skills)

- 7.5 Case study tracking the department's introduction of skills development over several years (showing increasing emphasis on independent student learning)
- 7.6 Handouts or other materials provided to students that show you are raising their awareness of the skills they are gaining, in addition to subject knowledge and understanding

8. Academic Guidance and Counseling

- 8.1 Summary of the way in which academic guidance is provided to students by academic staff in the department- the overall strategy
- 8.2 Details of the relationship between academic and pastoral guidance
- 8.3 Evidence that shows the department monitors whether or not academic guidance and support is working effectively (through student questionnaires, annual reports by members of academic staff designated to monitor the system)
- 8.4 Details of training provided for staff who is involving in academic guidance and counseling (Should be specific and include training materials, names of staff attending and dates on which the training took place)
- 8.5 Evidence of student opinion of the academic guidance and counseling they receive (questionnaires, notes from student feedback forums etc.)
- 8.6 Details of any links between the department and University support services (e.g. attendance of staff at University support services meetings)
- 8.7 Case studies of how good academic guidance has been provide for students who were having academic problems (Advising students about changing course, enabling them to have additional teaching or help with English language skills)