



PROGRAM REVIEW 2017

University of Peradeniya

Faculty of Arts

Cluster - 1

**Programme Review Report
of
BA Honours Degree Programmes in
Classical Languages and Cultures**

BA (Hons) Degree in Arabic Studies

BA (Hons) Degree in Buddhist Studies

BA (Hons) Degree in Greek & Roman Studies

BA (Hons) Degree in Islamic Studies

BA (Hons) Degree in Pali Studies

BA (Hons) Degree in Sanskrit

Faculty of Arts,
University of Peradeniya

Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council
University Grants Commission

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SECTION 1: Brief Introduction to the Programmes

1.1 The University

Founded in 1942 while Sri Lanka was still a colony of the British Empire, the University of Peradeniya enjoyed a reputation as a historic institution of higher learning in the country. Its salubrious surroundings and heritage buildings add character to the University and contribute to a very conducive environment for academic pursuits. It remains as the country's largest residential university in Sri Lanka. The University has eight faculties which cover most of the major disciplines of study. Presently it caters to over 10,000 undergraduates. It also accommodates three institutes of postgraduate studies and also awards external degrees in several disciplines. The spacious extent of the university allows for further expansion for necessary buildings.

1.2 The Faculty of Arts

The Faculty of Arts dates back to the founding of the University and remains as the largest of its faculties. It is presently made up of 17 Departments of study and conducts 22 study programmes including 21 BA (Honours) Degree programmes. These honours study programmes conform with the Level 6 of the Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework (SLQF)

1.3 Organizational Structure

All academic and administrative activities of the Faculty of Arts are governed under the Dean of the Faculty. Academic activities are organized in the Faculty under 17 Departments covering several fields of study and the English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU). Each academic Department and unit has a Head appointed by the Vice-Chancellor. The Heads of Departments/ Unit report directly to the Dean of the Faculty.

1.4 Cluster 1- Classical Languages and Cultures

The Cluster 1 is made up of Honours Degree study programmes in classical languages and civilizations-oriented subjects. Several of these subjects, namely, Greek and Roman studies, formerly known as western classics, Pali studies and Sanskrit studies date back to the very inception of the University itself. Arabic studies soon followed (in 1945) and Buddhist studies were introduced in 1952. Islamic Studies was established in 1969. Apart from its historical connection with the University itself, this Cluster is also unique in reflecting the Sri Lankan society in being multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi lingual. Buddhist Studies programme also attracts many foreign students from the South Asian region. Thus, these programmes are also taught in Sinhala and English media and they have a great potential to attract more foreign students to the Faculty.

1.5 Departments and Study Programmes

Six BA (Hons) Degree programme are offered by three Departments are as follows:

1. Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies
 - a) B.A.(Hons) in Buddhist Studies
 - b) B.A.(Hons) in Pali Studies
2. Department of Classical Languages
 - c) B.A.(Hons) in Sanskrit
 - d) B.A.(Hons) in Greek and Roman Studies
3. Department of Arabic and Islamic Civilization
 - e) B.A.(Hons) in Arabic Studies
 - f) B.A.(Hons) in Islamic Studies

1.6 Staff Profile

The academic staff of Cluster 1 consists of 21 members on the permanent staff including 3 professors and 12 PhD holders.

Department	Sr. Professor	Professor/ Associate Professor	Sr. Lecturer	Lecturer/ Prob. Lecturer	Total
Arabic and Islamic Civilization	-	-	6	1	7
Classical Languages	-	-	3	3	6
Pali and Buddhist Studies	-	3	4	1	8

The chart given above provides a breakdown of the academic staff and their qualifications in the relevant Departments of Cluster 1. In addition to this all Departments also obtain the services of academic staff on visiting basis as well as employ academic staff on a temporary basis owing to a lack of carder positions for permanent staff.

1.7 Student Intake

The BA Honours Degree programmes in Cluster 1 are of four-year duration and are conducted under a semester-based credit unit system over eight semesters. Undergraduates are admitted to the BA Honours Degree programmes at the beginning of the second academic year. These degree programs allow undergraduates to specialize in a chosen field of study and at the same time acquire satisfactory knowledge in a limited number of additional fields of study. Specialization in a field of study requires a certain level of full-time commitment to a particular discipline, thus, it allows a student to pursue an in-depth knowledge of their chosen field of study.

Admission to an honours degree program depends on the resources available in a Department. In order to be admitted to an honours degree program, an undergraduate must meet the general rules

and regulations specified by the Faculty as well as the special admission requirements imposed by each Department

The Table below shows the number of students graduated from the honours degree programmes included in Cluster 1 in 2012/2013, 2013/2014, 2014/2015, and 2015/2016 general convocation and the number of student enrolled in the final year programme in 2016/2017 academic year.

Study Programme	2012/13 General Convocation	2013/2014 General Convocation	2014/2015 General Convocation	2015/2016 General Convocation	2016/2017 Academic Year (final year programme)
BA (Hons) Arabic Studies	4	3	-	6	-
BA (Hons) Buddhist Studies	3	6	14	18	14
BA (Hons) Greek & Roman Studies	-	2	-	5	7
BA (Hons) Islamic Studies	3	3	2	5	6
BA (Hons) Pali Studies	3	6	12	12	8
BA (Hons) Sanskrit	3	2	3	4	9

The above table indicates that this Cluster caters to a relatively small number of students in the Faculty. It must be noted here that many of these students are admitted through a special window called 'special intake' to the University and not through the general intake. However, the 'special intake' also comes through the University Grants Commission and based on the rules and regulations formulated by the Commission. It must also be noted that the majority of the students enrolled for Honours degrees in Pali, Sanskrit and Buddhist Philosophy are of the Buddhist Clergy. The students in the Sanskrit Honours degree programme are exclusively of the Buddhist clergy.

1.8 Student Support Services and Infrastructure

1.8.1 Learning Resource System

1.8.1.1 English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU)

The ELTU of the University of Peradeniya is committed to teaching English as a second language to undergraduates and it conducts training to improve the English language proficiency of undergraduates of all the faculties in the University. In each faculty, the students are graded according to their proficiency in English language by holding an examination at the point of entry and are grouped accordingly for further period of learning of the language, depending on the requirement imposed by respective faculties. Apart from teaching English as a second language to undergraduates, the ELTU also conducts classes in English for new entrants of the Faculty for 10 weeks which is a compulsory requirement for every student.

1.8.1.2 Faculty Computer Center

The Computer Center is established for the undergraduates of the Faculty of Arts to enhance the knowledge and skills of the students of the Faculty in information and communication technology. This is a common service unit which is supervised by the Faculty. Though the facility is well equipped, the usage by the students of the Faculty is very low.

1.8.1.3 Library

The Main Library of the University is situated in proximity to the Faculty of Arts and it is now considered as the library that caters mainly to the Arts Faculty. It is reputed to have one of the best collection of books and journals among university libraries. The mission of the library is to provide easy access to the library and information services in an efficient, effective and useful manner to support teaching, learning and research activities of the intellectual community by making resource materials available, and by assisting users to be acquainted with skills in locating information deemed necessary in the modern information age. For this purpose, the library has several digital facilities for the use of students; online catalogues and e-learning resources are just a couple of these.

1.8.1.4 Career Guidance Unit

Career Guidance has been recognized as an important part of the university education. Career Guidance Unit (CGU) helps undergraduates to develop their socio-emotional skills and abilities of self-assessment, information seeking and decision making required for coping with the needs of complex world of work & to develop lifelong learning skills. Success in career guidance depends on providing up to date information on training and employment opportunities and having a good awareness of the available opportunities in local and international employment markets. With the above aspirations in focus, this unit has attempted to hold several workshops and career fairs for the benefit of the students.

1.8.1.5 Physical Education and Sports Center

The Physical Education Division and Sports Center (PESC) provide an opportunity to students to take part in different recreational and sports activities and to develop personalities and qualities of team work through such participation. University also has a swimming pool of international standards. The Center is managed by a director and instructors.

1.8.2 Infrastructure and Other Facilities

1.8.2.1 Medical Centre

The university has a Medical Centre with a Chief Medical Officer in charge and several others assisting.

1.8.2.2 Residential Facilities

The University of Peradeniya is the largest residential University in Sri Lanka and provides residential facilities to a majority of the students. In recent times several halls of residences have been added to the original numbers and the University hopes to provide all their students with residential facilities in the near future.

1.8.2.3 Student Welfare

The Student Welfare Division is an active body which handles many issues relevant to the well-being of students. Hostel facilities, canteens, ‘Mahapola’ and other scholarships, bursaries, transport season tickets and other such facilities are looked into by this division. At the same time, it also supervises students’ unions, student associations and student elections.

1.8.2.4 Student Counselling Center

The Faculty has several academic student counselors to assist the students. University previously had a very well-functioning Student Counselling Unit which is now defunct although the need for such a unit is acutely felt.

1.9 Constraints Faced by the Faculty

Several vital gaps and constraints faced by the Faculty have been identified both by the SER writers and the review team. These issues will not only affect the quality of the programmes delivered but also the long-term sustainability of the same. The concerns highlighted by the academic and nonacademic members of the staff during the meetings are also taken into consideration in identifying constraints.

Faculty caters to a very large student population and available physical resources are inadequate to cater to the present student population. Faculty’s heritage buildings need renovations and refurbishment. Further, building space limitation appears to limit expansion of Departments.

Serious issues regarding ICT platform impede adoption of both computer-aided techniques and tools in delivery of study programmes. Lecture rooms are not fitted with required audio-visual equipment to support multimedia applications. There is a necessity to urgently upgrade these, by now considered basic, facilities for the effective delivery of knowledge and acquiring of knowledge.

Even though the SER mentions that the student issues are effectively handled through Departmental Grievances Boards, this was found to be inadequate as highlighted by a section of the affected students who brought this to the notice of the review team. Therefore, the re-establishment of the Student Counselling Unit with trained staff is very urgently needed.

Students who are admitted under the 'special intake' and additional intake are notified by the University Grants Commission (UGC) much later than the regular intake, and hence by the time the student on special and additional intakes enter the University, the orientation programme that includes the compulsory English course and Foundation English Course for new entrants, has already been completed. This needs to be redressed at the level of the UGC.

Serious shortage of staff at all levels directly affects the proper functioning all three Departments and the delivery of honours study programmes.

SECTION 2: Review Team's Observations on the Self-Evaluation Report

The initiative for the preparation of the Self-evaluation Report (SER) was taken by the Dean of the Faculty of Arts in consultation with the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) of the Faculty. Through several meetings and consultations at levels of the Faculty Board, the Heads of Department Meetings and IQAC meetings, it was decided to request each Department to prepare their own SERs. Teams of academics were appointed as writers of each department and were delegated with the task of the actual writing of the SER. Through a delegation of duties to academic, administrative and non-academic staff of each department, the SERs at the level of each department had been prepared. Finally, a single member of the academic staff was given the responsibility of compiling the final SERs for the 6 BA Honours degree programmes under review.

The SER of six BA Honours Degree Programme included in Cluster 1 had several flaws. Several standards were missing in some criteria and evidence documents cited in the SER were not listed in appropriate columns featuring evidence of compliance. Further, some files cited in SER were not made available for scrutiny during the site-visit. The profile of the academic staff of the three Departments catering for six-degree programmes was incomplete, and not photocopied correctly. Moreover, in some instances, the evidences cited did not match with the evidences requested. It was indeed a very strenuous exercise that the four reviewers had to go through in scrutinizing 6 SERs with many gaps and inconsistencies. On several occasions the computer application assistant who were assisting the reviewers had to run to their relevant departments and fetch the evidence requested. The members of the academic staff who were present were very helpful and they also realized the several shortfalls in their compilations. As the present review is the first programme review that the University of Peradeniya has experienced, this perhaps may be a good learning experience for the academic staff.

SECTION 3: A Brief Description of the Review Process

3.1 Pre-Site Visit Evaluation

The programme review process of state universities commenced with several training workshops organized for reviewers by the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council (QAAC) of the UGC. The programme reviewers were trained on the aims and the objectives of quality assurance process and rationale behind the Programme Review (PR) Manual. Similarly, the academic members from relevant faculties were trained in a separate workshop on SER writing.

The SER of 6 study programmes under review, prepared by of three Departments of the Faculty of Arts was initially submitted to the QAAC of the UGC, fulfilling the given deadline for submission. The SER was forwarded to the individual members of the review team well before the site visit that allowed sufficient time for them to read it before the site visit. Reviewers were assigned 5 weeks for the desk evaluation. Members of the panel conducted the desk-evaluation independently and the individual desk evaluations reports were sent to QAAC. This was followed by a meeting of the review team to discuss the outcomes of the desk evaluation, organized by the QAAC on 23rd of August, 2017 at the UGC. Review team noted that high degree of compatibility among the individual desk evaluations and agreed on the further clarifications needed be sought as evidences during the site visit. Before leaving for the site visit, a schedule prepared for 3-day review session was circulated among members of the review team and necessary changes in the schedule were made in consultation with Dean of the Faculty and QAAC. Review team had a brief meeting after arriving at the hotel to discuss the review process before commencing the review. The chairperson of the review team was required to submit the QAAC a brief report on the key findings within 2 weeks and final review report within 6 weeks from the last date of site visit.

3.2 Site Visit Schedule

The review consisted of scrutiny of documentary evidences for claims made for each standard of respective criteria, meetings with persons involved directly and indirectly with the study programmes under review, visits to each Department of study, all Centres and Units cited in the SER in particular, observations of the facilities provided for students and staff, environment within the Faculty in general and the departments in particular, and the final wrap up meeting with the higher management.

The Review team met and had discussion with the following persons during the site visit:

- Deputy Vice Chancellor
- Dean of the Faculty of Arts
- Director of IQAU
- Register and the Bursar

- Heads of the Departments offering the study programmes under review
- Academic staff of the three Departments
- Coordinator of IQAC of the Faculty
- Directors of the Centres, Heads of Units and Acting Librarian
- Administrative Staff and other non -academic staff members serving the three Departments
- Student Counsellors and Academic Support Staff of the Faculty
- Students of the study programmes under the review

3.3 Meetings with Key Stakeholders

The review team had very interactive and productive discussions with all relevant stakeholders. The formal meetings with top management of the university including the Deputy Vice Chancellor (the Vice Chancellor was on overseas leave) and the Dean of the Faculty provided an overview of the legacy of the University and its academic and allied practices spanning over six decades. The Dean introduced the key features of the Faculty and its study programmes. The session with the Heads of Departments started with a detailed presentation in which the process of SER preparation and claims for each criterion were elaborated. Heads of Department further explained the administrative and academic processes and practices relevant to the study programmes under review. Academic staff described their contributions, and their views in terms of strengths and weaknesses of the study programmes. Students representing the programmes under review expressed their views on study programmes and student life, and highlighted the areas of their satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Students rarely showed much enthusiasm or any excitement about their future prospects with the study programmes and the qualifications that they would accrue. Academic support and administrative staff explained their contributions in teaching and academic administration. They highlighted the need of opportunities for training on professional development.

3.4 Observation of Documentary Evidences and Facilities

The documentary evidences relating the claims in the SER were made available to the review team at the IQAC office of the Faculty. Documents were labelled and filed, and arranged according standards of respective criteria and six study programmes. Review team scrutinized documents presented as evidences for each claim and cross checked the information with what was mentioned as examples provided in the PR Manual. The adjustments were made to the marks given during the desk evaluation conducted previously, as and where necessary. Any issues arising from this exercise was noted for further discussion at the end of each day.

In addition to the above, the review team also visited the following places:

- IQAU and IQAC offices
- ICT Centre and Faculty Computer Laboratory
- University library
- Lecture halls
- Departments serving the six study programmes under the review

- Staff Development Centre (SDC)
- Career Guidance Unit (CGU)
- The Department of Physical Education and Gymnasium
- The Student Welfare Centre of Faculty
- Special Needs Resource Center (SNRU)

3.5 Observation of Processes and Final Remarks

The direct observation of classroom teaching was not made because the academic sessions of the semester were concluded and the students were on study leave. However, the discussions during the meetings with academic staff and students were used to gain some insight into the teaching and learning approach adopted and the degree of student participation in active learning.

The review team had its meetings at the end of the first and second day to summarize the review activities, discuss issues, if any and to plan for the following day. On the third day the team had the wrap up meeting with the Dean of the Faculty, Heads of the Departments and academic staff. In this meeting, key findings were presented and discussed.

In general, the Faculty was prepared for the visit of the review team and all the arrangements made by the University and the Faculty to facilitate the review process were satisfactory. The hospitality extended by the members of three Departments of Study to the review team was well appreciated.

SECTION 4: Overview of the Faculty's Approach to Quality and Standards

The Faculty of Arts in general takes to certain extent the measures to assure and maintain quality of its operations by adhering to the University approved administrative and financial regulations. Furthermore, the Faculty has its internal mechanisms for decision making via the Faculty Board. The student representatives are invited to the Faculty Board meeting to discuss the student matters. Academic departments also conduct periodic meetings at their level. Faculty has established its IQAC in accordance with the Internal Quality Assurance Manual (2013) of the UGC and the IQA circular of 2015. However, the activities and efforts taken by the IQAC do not appear to be sufficient to internalize quality culture within the Faculty. The review team felt that the Faculty has the capacity to further improve its quality and standards of its operations provided they adopt the proper policy and strategy, strategy-specific activities, and implement those activity plans in a systematic manner.

The Academic departments appear to obtain some feedback from students and relevant parties. However, such feedback does not appear to be systematically analyzed and used for continuous improvement of the quality and standards of their academic programmes. It is imperative that all the Department must have sufficient number of competent academic and non-academic staff and physical resources in order to enhance and maintain quality and standards of all programmes. Further, it is felt that the existing staff must also be motivated to engage in continuous professional development activities and be provided with further training on quality enhancement and assurance mechanism and procedures.

SECTION 5: Judgment on the Eight Criteria of Programme Review

The following sections provide an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of each criterion and recommendations for enhancement of quality of the study programmes under review.

5.1 Criterion 1: Programme Management

Strengths

- The University has a clear organizational structure that supports the management of study programmes in all its Faculties. Even though operational procedures relating to financial and administrative matters were not available in document form, it was evident that the Faculty of Arts adopts procedures common to the University and complies with the general regulations and standards set by the University.
- The Faculty prepares a Student Handbook which is distributed to all students at the time of registration and orientation programme. The Student Handbook provides the necessary information on academic programmes and courses, student facilities, as well as rules & regulations governing academic programmes and student life. The Faculty/ Department websites are informative although some Departments need to update their contents. The Handbook is also available on the Faculty website.
- An orientation programme is conducted each year for the new entrants to help the students to become familiar with academic programmes and courses, as well as the physical surroundings of the Faculty/ University.
- Academic calendar is defined at the beginning of the academic year and usually the study programmes are run on schedule.
- The Faculty of Arts has established the IQAC in 2016, which functions under a Coordinator appointed by the Faculty. The IQAC liaises with the IQAU of the University and reports its activities to the Faculty Board and Senate.
- The office of the Dean handles student registration and maintains student records, including examination results. An academic transcript is issued to students at the end of the academic year.

Weaknesses

- University Action Plan does not have any proposals to adopt new trends in education.
- Student participation at Faculty Board meetings is not regular and they are invited only if there are issues to be resolved.

Recommendations

- Develop Manual of Standard Operational Procedures/ Management Guide to improve governance and circulate among academics and administrators to ensure compliance.
- Document the duties and work-norms of all categories of staff for effective functioning.
- Invite student representation at the meetings of the Faculty Board on a regular basis.

5.2 Criterion 2: Human and Physical Resources

Strengths

- Senior academic staff in the three Departments are well qualified and experienced.
- Induction training programme conducted by the SDC is a compulsory requirement for all permanent academic staff on probation to be confirmed in their respective positions.
- The language laboratory is well equipped with audio and video facilities to support interactive learning of English Language.

Weaknesses

- Academic staff strength in all three Departments was not high (6-8 permanent members). However, the staff/ student ratio was reasonable because the student numbers were also generally low (below 20) in the Honours Degree Programmes of the Cluster.
- Lack of opportunities for continuous professional development for both academic and support staff.
- Physical space was a major constraint faced by all the study programmes. Lack of adequate lecture halls was identified as a constraint to implement Outcome Based Education and Student-Centered Learning (OBE-SCL) approach.

Recommendations

- Recruit more staff by filling vacancies or obtaining more carder positions.
- Request the SDC to conduct training programmes and workshops on OBE - SCL approach so as to promote adoption multi-mode delivery methods and student-centered teaching and learning in programme delivery.
- Expedite the construction of the proposed new 7-storey building to overcome acute shortage of physical space.

5.3 Criterion 3: Programme Design and Development

Strength

- Curriculum revisions appear to be undertaken in regular cycles. The last revision has taken place in 2010 and all Honours Degree Programmes were designed based on a course unit system with credit ratings. Presently, a new revision is underway with the full adoption of SLQF guidelines developed in 2015, and all Degree Programmes comply with the basic requirements for Honours Degrees at Level VI.
- The process of curriculum approval is formalized. The programme and course curricula developed by academic Departments are submitted through the Faculty Board to the Academic Programme Development Committee of discussion and then to the Senate for approval.
- Student feedback is obtained on courses in some study programmes.

Weaknesses

- Full adoption of SLQF has been delayed till 2016.
- There is no Curriculum Development Committee at Faculty Level to facilitate discussion on matters relating to the academic programmes.
- There was no evidence of Department level meetings being held on a regular basis and proper record of minutes.
- Some departments take student feedback, but the questions have not been designed to obtain responses on appropriateness of the course contents and effectiveness of delivery. Further, there is no evidence to suggest that stakeholder views have been incorporated into the curricula.

Recommendations

- Establish a Curriculum Development Committee at Faculty level with members from individual academic Departments to engage in development, revisions and implementation of approved curricula with reporting to the Faculty Board on regular basis.
- Hold regular meetings at Department level to discuss academic matters and maintain proper records of minutes of such meetings.
- Consult stakeholders including present and / past students as well as potential employers and use their feedback to improve the quality and relevance of academic programmes.
- Include direct and unambiguous questions on the relevance of course content, effectiveness of course delivery and student expectations in student feedback forms.

5.4 Criterion 4: Course Module Design and Development

Strengths

- In all six Honours Degree programmes, the programme content is organized into course units, with a minimum total of 120 credits which is the requirement for a Degree at SLQF Level VI.
- The course specifications are developed using appropriate format and by adhering to proper guidelines, and include aims, intended learning outcomes (ILOs), course content, assessment methods and recommended readings.
- For some degree programmes, course ILOs have been mapped to align with programme outcomes .

Weaknesses

- Course design and development process does not involve outside experts.
- Some programmes have failed to adopt basic OBE-SCL concepts and principles; course contents are not aligned with course ILOs, and course ILOs are not internally aligned with the programmes outcomes.

Recommendations

- Consult outside experts (subject experts from other Higher Educational Institutes, moderators & external examiners) and obtain their input during course design and development process.
- Adopt OBE-SCL concept and principles in formulating programme and course curricula.

5.5 Criterion 5: Teaching and Learning

Strengths

- Teaching and learning strategies are in close alignment with the vision and mission of the University and Faculty.
- Students can engage in self-directed learning through assignments, group projects and research.
- Multi-media facilities are sometimes used in teaching.
- Teachers encourage students to relate theory and practice appropriate to their programmes, contribute to creative work and discovery of knowledge and to publish their work in journals and conferences.
- Differently-abled students are provided with special facilities.
- Peer review is done; but this is only limited to junior staff and it is done by the senior staff without any involvement of outside reviewers.

Weaknesses

- Learning Management System (LMS) is not operational and not used for teaching/ learning.
- Innovative practices, OBE and SCL methods are minimally used in teaching.
- There is no recognition of teaching excellence.
- Though peer review and student feedback are obtained in some courses, the feedback has not been analyzed and used properly to make improvements in the study programmes or to address student concerns..

Recommendations

- Improve ICT resources and use them effectively in programme delivery.
- Improve internet connectivity and set up LMS for teaching and learning.
- Practice OBE- SCL approach and strategies in course delivery.
- Analyze peer reviews and student feedback reports to improve course content, teaching and learning methods.
- Initiate teaching excellence awards to reward teachers who practice good pedagogy.

5.6 Criterion 6: Learning Environment, Student Support and Progression

Strengths

- The Faculty offers all incoming students a very informative orientation programme which provides information on rules and regulations of the University and its Faculties.

- Active academic/ social interaction between staff and students is promoted by the Faculty.
- Students are taken on field trips which allow them to interact with society and take up responsibilities.
- Hostel facilities are available for a majority of students on campus and monitoring committees for hostels and canteens have been appointed.
- Student counselling service is operative, including some trained psychological counselors, to assist the needy students.
- The University Health Center headed by the Chief Medical Officer provides OPD and in-patient treatment. Public Health Inspectors act to prevent spread of infectious diseases.

Weaknesses

- On campus Wi-Fi facility is weak and students tend to use their own resources for educational purposes.
- The effectiveness of the student counselling service is weak and needs further strengthening.
- Awareness of Gender Equality and Equity (GEE) aspects is limited to a handful of staff and therefore redress cannot be expected.

Recommendations

- Strengthen the student counselling and academic mentoring systems to maintain regular contact with student and address the student issues (academic /psychological) in speedy manner.
- Awareness on Gender Equality and Equity (GEE) should be broadened among students and staff.

5.7 Criterion 7: Student Assessments and Awards

Strengths

- Students are assessed using the given criteria which are communicated to students at the time of enrollment via Student Handbook and procedures are adhered by the staff.
- Appropriate arrangements are made available by the Faculty regarding examination requirements for students with disabilities, wherever relevant.
- Graduation requirements are ensured in the degree certification process and the transcript accurately reflects the stages of progression and student attainments. A complete transcript indicating the courses followed, grades obtained and the aggregate GPA and class is made available to all students at graduation.
- Course evaluation method is provided in the course specifications.

Weaknesses

- There is no evidence of employing external examiners in assessments.
- There is no evidence as regard to training provided conducted by the SDC on examinations and assessments methods.

Recommendations

- Make evaluation by a second examiner (external examiner) a mandatory requirement in assessment of all examinations.
- Provide the examiners a detailed marking scheme or model answers for question papers as a guide for assessment.

5.8 Criterion 8: Innovative and Healthy Practices

Strengths

- Faculty has established coordinating and facilitating mechanisms for fostering research and cultural activities.
- Faculty has established and operationalized strong links with various national and international institutes.

Based on the scoring system given in the PR Manual, the review team's judgment of the overall level of attainment of quality under each criterion by the cluster of study programmes is given in Table 5.1.

Each standard was evaluated based on evidence provided and a score was assigned from 0 – 3 (0= inadequate, 1= barely adequate, 2= adequate, 3= good). Raw criterion-wise score was estimated based on the scoring system given in the PR manual. The raw score of each criterion was converted to the actual criterion-wise score using the formula given in Chapter 3 of the PR Manual. The sum of actual criterion-wise scores was taken as the overall score of the six Degree Programmes.

Table 5.1 The scores obtained by the cluster for the eight criteria

Number	Criterion	Weightage	Weighted Minimum Score	Raw Score	Actual Score
1	Programme Management	150	75	54	100
2	Human & Physical Resources	100	50	16	44
3	Programme Design & Development	150	75	41	85
4	Course/ Module Design & Development	150	75	40	105
5	Teaching & Learning	150	75	40	105
6	Learning Environment, Student Support & Progression	100	50	42	58
7	Student Assessments & Awards	150	75	38	112
8	Innovative & Healthy Practices	50	25	25	30
Total on a thousand scale					639
Percentage score					63.9%

As shown in the above Table, the overall score obtained by six Honours Degree Programmes is 63.9 %. Since the Dean/ Faculty of Arts had requested individual scores for different study programmes, each Degree Programme was evaluated separately, using the same procedure as mentioned above. Review team's judgment of the level of attainment of quality by the individual Honours Degree Programmes in the eight criteria is given in Table 5.2.

The review team had no authority to evaluate criteria and standards that were not provided in the SER submitted to the UGC. As such, the team had to give zero marks to Criteria 7 & 8 of the Honours Degree Programme in Buddhist Studies and for Criterion 2 of the Honours Degree Programme in Islamic Studies as these criteria had been unwittingly missed out in the SER. Therefore, those two-degree programmes have received lower scores compared to those of other four-degree programmes, and this perhaps may have pulled down the overall score of the Cluster of six study programmes.

Table 5.2 Scores obtained by the six Honours Degree Programmes under evaluation

Criterion	Raw score						Actual criterion-wise score					
	ARB	BST	GRS	ISC	PST	SKT	ARB	BST	GRS	ISC	PST	SKT
Programme Management	54	55	54	54	55	54	100	102	100	100	102	100
Human and Physical Resources	16	18	18	00*	17	17	44	50	50	00*	47	47
Programme Design and Development	43	43	43	42	43	43	90	90	90	88	90	90
Course Module Design and Development	40	41	40	40	40	40	105	108	105	105	105	105
Teaching and Learning	36	42	44	31	40	37	95	111	116	82	105	97
Learning Environment, Student Support and Progression	43	46	40	43	45	31	60	64	56	60	63	43
Student Assessment and Awards	39	00*	42	39	45	44	115	00*	124	115	132	129
Innovative and Healthy Practices	21	00*	30	20	29	33	25	00*	36	24	35	39
Total on a 1000 scale							634	525	677	574	679	650
%							63.4	52.5	67.7	57.4	67.9	65.0
Final Grade							C	D	C	D	C	C

* Criteria which were not included in the SER

SECTION 6: Grading of Overall Performance of the Programme

The review team's assessment of the level of accomplishment of quality by the six Honours Degree Programmes in the Faculty of Arts is given in Table 6.1. The evaluation was based on the assessment method given in the PR Manual.

Table 6.1 Grading of overall performance of the study programmes

The overall score of the Study Programmes	Actual Criteria-wise Score	Grade	Performance Descriptor	Interpretation of Descriptor
≥ 60%	More than the minimum weighted score for seven of the eight criteria.	C	Satisfactory	Minimum level of accomplishment of quality expected of a programme of study; requires improvement in several aspects.

The overall score obtained by the cluster of Study Programmes is 63.9% with seven out of eight criteria securing scores higher than the respective weighted minimum scores. Accordingly, six honours degree programmes collectively receives the Grade of 'C' which is interpreted as *"minimum level of accomplishment of quality expected of a programme; requires improvement in several aspects"*.

SECTION 7: Commendations and Recommendations

7.1 Programme Management

The management of the study programmes by the Faculty of Arts was efficient and commendable. Faculty has an organizational structure and basic resources sufficient to conduct and complete the academic programmes on schedule. Faculty has clear policies and guidelines on course registration, selection to degree programmes, examinations and student discipline which help to stream-line the management process. Faculty produces a Student Handbook for students annually which is a useful source of information on the degree programmes and support services available to the students.

The initiation of curriculum reforms and adoption of SLQF guidelines by the Faculty are a major step forward. In this effort, the Faculty has been guided by the IQAC with the fullest support of the Dean of the Faculty and the Director of the IQAU of the University.

7.2 Human and Physical Resources

The study programmes were served by well qualified senior academic staff, with the experience to provide necessary scholarly knowledge and leadership for improving the quality of academic programmes. However, the staff strength in all three Departments was limited. It is recommended that more carder is requested by individual Departments and positions vacant are filled on a priority basis.

Although the non-academic support staff was eager to perform their duties, they, particularly the technical officers did not have much opportunity for further training or improvement of their competencies, particularly in computer applications. It is recommended that they are encouraged to attend training programmes offered by the SDC to enhance their skills.

Physical space was a major constraint faced by all the study programmes. Teaching space including lecture halls and seminar rooms were inadequate and desk and office space were extremely limited. Except in the case of very senior staff, sometimes a single room was shared by 4 or 5 staff members. Lack of personal space would be very conducive for undisturbed academic pursuits.

It is recommended that the Faculty pushes forward with its plans to construct the proposed new building with minimum delays.

The University has a very well-equipped Information Technology Center (ITC) with several computer laboratories and a large number of computers. Further, the Faculty also offers computer facilities within the faculty premises. However, students in the study

programmes complained that they did not have sufficient access to computer resources within the Faculty. It is recommended that the students are encouraged to make use of the available computer facilities for their work-based assignments.

Use of modern technology to facilitate teaching and learning was very limited and it is highly recommended that the study programmes keep pace with new digital developments, particularly the use of on-line educational resources. In all academic Departments and Degree Programmes, the level of practice of OBE-SCL methods is rather inadequate. It is recommended that these methods be utilized much more effectively in order to produce a graduate who could fit in easily to the modern-day work environment.

7.3 Programme Design and Development

It is commendable that the most recent curriculum revisions of the Degree Programmes have considered SLQF guidelines of 2015 and all BA Honours study programmes comply with the attributes specified for Level VI of SLQF. It is also encouraging to note that recently some attempts have been made to obtain stakeholder views (mainly from past students) on the study programmes. It is recommended that a wider section of stakeholders, including potential employers, are consulted and their suggestions are considered for improving the quality and relevance of the curricula.

Inclusion of Foundation Courses in the curriculum at Level I, that aim to impart basic skills in Basic Mathematics, Logic, Writing Skills, Law and Ethics and ICT skills needs to be commended. However, according to students, some of the courses (Mathematics, Logic and ICT) are pitched at a level that is too difficult for them to grasp, particularly for those students who have had no adequate prior exposure to these subjects. Some students were concerned that their poor performance in Foundation Courses seriously affected their GPA. Students also seemed to lack confidence in the evaluation process as the examiners marking the papers apparently were inexperienced junior or temporary staff although the courses were conducted by permanent academic staff. Therefore, it is recommended that in designing these courses the degree of difficulty the students may face is taken into account and methods of assessment re-visited and where possible appropriate action taken so that students without prior-exposure to these subjects would not be unduly placed at a disadvantage.

It appears that the six-degree programmes reviewed have not considered incorporating suitable internships training component which is now considered as desirable component in undergraduate training in any field of studies. It is conceivable, that for some Degree Programmes (eg. Pali and Sanskrit) may consider internships as irrelevant to the training imparted. Nonetheless, it is recommended that the Faculty Curriculum Development Committee together with the Internship Committee examine the feasibility of incorporating such training opportunities for students in study programmes where such training would be applicable and appropriate.

7.4 Course Module Design and Development

The content of study programmes has been organized into credit-based course units and each course unit is designed according to a standard format (C1 form) which includes the course aim, course content, ILOs, assessment methods and reference material. However, the details on volume of learning (i.e. the number of hours of lectures/ practicals/ assignments) in a course unit and its credit value were not given in the Student Handbook. It is recommended that this information is provided in the Handbook which would be useful for students in selecting courses.

7.5 Teaching and Learning

Academic staff members undergo the 6-week induction training programme conducted by the SDC which is compulsory for all permanent members. Besides this compulsory training, SDC does not appear to conduct of continuing professional development (CPD) programmes, particularly on modern teaching and learning and assessment procedures, in regular manner for academic & academic support staff. Continuing professional development programmes have become particularly important in the light of recent developments and advancements taking place in the higher education field. For example, the world-wide trend is to embrace concepts and principles of outcome-based education and student-centered learning (OBE-SCL) approach in designing and delivery of academic programmes. Therefore, it is imperative that the academic staff must have the sufficient exposure to such modern tools and techniques so as promote the adoption of such tools and techniques into programme design and delivery.

Students are given the option to follow the degree programmes either in Sinhala or English medium and some programmes in Tamil. However, students in the Sanskrit programme informed that those who had enrolled in the English medium had to switch back to Sinhala medium in Level III due to shortage of staff. This is a serious short-coming, particularly because foreign students are also in the programme. Similarly, while the students in the Greek & Roman Studies programme are given the choice to offer Greek or Roman languages, this option had been stifled in a particular year and all students had been forced to take up Greek. The students complained that as a result, they suffered mentally and ended up with failed grades which have now affected their GPA. It is strongly recommended that such ad-hoc changes are not affected in the middle of a study programme, and if it is necessary to make such deviations only after giving prior notification to students.

Use of IT facilities in teaching and learning appeared to be minimal and this is primarily because of inadequacies of IT network, hardware and support services. Internet connectivity is not satisfactory with frequent breakdowns in the network. The Learning Management System is not running at present. Student/ staff usage of these facilities could be encouraged more if dedicated staff, particularly IT instructors were available on hand to tackle issues that arise during their use. As a result, at present, the academic staff has resorted to settle down with very conventional teaching approach – teacher -centered delivery using the chalkboard.

Peer review and student feedback are obtained in many courses but merely as a formality. Feedback needs to be used properly to make improvements in the study programmes and also to address student concerns.

7.6 Learning Environment, Student Support and Progression

The three academic Departments conducting the study programmes are housed in a lovely historic building. However, learning space was extremely limited and basic facilities such as toilets were inadequate for the use by a large student numbers that the Faculty is catering to. It is recommended that the space limitations are addressed on a priority basis.

Although Wi-Fi points had been established within the Faculty, internet connectivity was slow. It is recommended to take steps to provide fast and reliable internet access to students.

The main library is an extremely valuable resource that catered to the needs of the Arts Faculty students. However, students in all the study programmes indicated that in their disciplines very few new books have been acquired to the library and the old collections did not have sufficient number of copies. Some students enrolled in the Greek & Roman Studies programme went to the extent to inform that the lecturers provided their personal copies of text books due to lack of books in the library. On the other hand, it was very encouraging to see links to Open Educational Resources (OER) provided on the Website of Department of Classical Languages. Yet there was little evidence of students using OER. Therefore, it is recommended to motivate students and guide them to take advantage of such freely available on-line resources.

It is commendable that the ELTU conducts courses from Level I to III for students to improve their English Language skills. At present 18 credits (non-GPA) have to be taken and completed successfully by all students in the Faculty. However, students felt that these courses were not designed to support those who were very weak in English (to illustrate this point, the students mentioned that some had difficulty comprehending information given in the Handbook which is printed in English). Therefore, it is recommended that the ELTU consider implementing some mechanism (i.e. extra coaching sessions) for students with low competencies.

The Student Welfare Center of the Faculty of Arts, conducts programmes that assist students to make academic and career decisions. However, the larger entity, the CGU of the University, and its activities seem to have very little impact on the students in the Degree Programmes. It is useful if students are encouraged to participate in CGU activities also.

There is a well-established Special Needs Resources Center (SNRU) to support differently-abled students. SNRU provided a reader service and special computers which catered to students with visual impairment very well. The Faculty must also ensure that buildings are provided with disability access.

Student safety has received adequate consideration by the authorities. The University security officers, functioning under the chief security officer provides round the clock on-campus security to students, and a private security company, with staff strength of 51, provides security to

buildings. The Deputy Proctor and the Marshall appointed to the Faculty are tasked with student discipline. However, students complained that there was no action taken or action was delayed against those who have committed offences such as ragging. Therefore, it is recommended that action against students who are found guilty is expedited.

Student counseling service provided to the students in the Faculty of Arts consists of 19 Senior Student Counselors. However, students felt that it was difficult to access the services of the student counselors and the Counseling office in an emergency. During the site-inspection it was noted that although a Student Counseling Center had existed alongside the CGU in the past, there was no location dedicated for this purpose at present. In general, students had no confidence in the counseling service and were reluctant to seek help. Therefore, it is recommended to identify an appropriate venue for student counseling activities and enhance accessibility of counselors so that students are encouraged to seek assistance. It is also important to make student know that confidentiality will be maintained.

7.7 Student Assessment and Awards

A combination of assessment strategies such as assignments, presentations and end of semester examinations are used in many of the Degree Programmes and weightage given to different components of assessment are specified clearly. It is also to be appreciated that the students are informed via the Students Handbook of the types of examination offences and academic misconduct.

It is commendable that the examinations are conducted according to set time schedules and are centrally handled by the Office of the Dean. While a “Student Grievance Committee” has been set up in the Faculty to look into complaints or request on examination matters, a serious drawback in the assessments is the lack of second examiners or external examiners. The reliability of assessment strategies can be improved considerably and disputes in marking could be resolved if second examiners are appointed and detailed marking schemes are provided. Therefore, the adoption of the practice of second-marking is strongly recommended.

Results are released within the stipulated time (usually within 3 months of holding examinations). Students can obtain a complete transcript giving the qualification, GPA, and grades achieved in each course module at the end of the final examination (and even semester-wise).

7.8 Criterion 8: Innovative and Healthy Practices

Overseas scholarships for undergraduates have been offered in collaboration with few foreign Universities and credit transfer through such programmes is allowed. This is a great opportunity for students to broaden their outlook and become sensitive global citizens. However, some students had doubts about the selection procedure, particularly with regard to Global Korea Scholarship programme. This may have been due to misinformation or being unaware of the selection criteria. Therefore, it is recommended that the eligibility and selection criteria are clearly stated and students are made aware of these when they apply for such study abroad opportunities.

Students have the opportunity to present their research findings in the annual Undergraduate Research Congress. There is also the International Pali Conference hosted annually by the University and conducted for the third time this year. This gives the students the opportunity to participate and obtain international exposure.

SECTION 8: Summary

The six Honours Degree Programmes considered in this review are conducted by three academic departments, namely the Departments of Arabic & Islamic Civilization, Classical Languages and Pali & Buddhist Studies of the Faculty of Arts. The three Departments have a good reputation in their respective fields, having existed from the inception of the University.

The University of Peradeniya has a proud history and a record of being one of the best Universities in Sri Lanka. While this has been so in the past, it is important that the Faculty strives to regain and maintain such status in the future by showing a strong commitment towards internalizing best practices recommended by the PR Manual to achieve and maintain high academic standards. In this regard the Faculty is fortunate to have a Dean who is committed to make improvements in all aspects of the Faculty including the quality and relevance of all study programmes. Faculty has already established its Quality Assurance Cell which is supported by the Internal Quality Assurance Unit of the University. However, the Faculty needs to make significant improvements in many aspects, particularly its human and physical resources and the competencies of academic staff in application of OBE-SCL concepts and principles in study programme design, development and delivery. While it may be argued that the Degree Programmes reviewed primarily deal with religions, and ancient languages and culture, and therefore they are best taught in the traditional ways, it must be stressed that the modern Universities have made significant transformation in their programme design and development, and teaching and learning approaches by embracing the modern educational technologies, and ICT-based tools and applications. Even though some advances have taken place in the development of the honours degree programmes, the programme delivery is still primarily relied on conventional tools and teacher-centered delivery methods. Therefore, it is to the advantage of these study programmes to address these shortcomings and make determined efforts to make the programmes more attractive to the present-day student population.

Looking at the data from the past 5 years it appears that the student enrollment in the six Honours Degree Programmes reviewed is generally low with the exception of Pali and Buddhist Studies where students are mainly of the Buddhist clergy. Faculty overcomes this problem by resorting to “special intake” of students for these less popular subject/streams of studies. While this may help in the short term, it is necessary to identify mid- and long-term strategies to make the study programmes more attractive and relevant in today’s context and sustainable. These specific study programmes have no threats from private higher educational institutes that have come up in the recent past as they do not offer programmes of this nature. Perhaps, the main threat to some of the study programmes is the student perception that they have limited job opportunities after they graduate. Thus, the responsibility lies with the respective academic Departments and the Faculty of Arts to change these negative perceptions by modernizing academic programmes while retaining the traditional flavours.

The six honours study programmes reviewed received overall score of 63.9% with seven out of eight criteria securing scores higher than the respective weighted minimum scores. Accordingly,

six honours degree programmes collectively receives the Grade of ‘C’ which is interpreted as “*minimum level of accomplishment of quality expected of a programme; requires improvement in several aspects*”. While congratulating the respective academic Departments and the Faculty on this marginal achievement, they are encouraged to strive for further improvement in order to achieve excellence.

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