

SUBJECT REVIEW REPORT

**DEPARTMENT OF
ECONOMICS AND STATISTICS**



**FACULTY OF ARTS
UNIVERSITY OF PERADENIYA**

12th to 14th August 2008

Review Team :

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CONTENTS

	Page
1. Subject Review Process	2
2. Brief History of the University, Faculty and the Department	4
3. Aims and Learning Outcomes	6
3.1. Aims	6
3.2. Learning Outcomes	7
4. Findings of the Review Team	8
4.1. Curriculum Design, Content and Review	8
4.2. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods	10
4.3. Quality of Students including Student Progress and Achievements	12
4.4. Extent and Use of Student Feedback, Qualitative and Quantitative	13
4.5. Postgraduate Studies	13
4.6. Peer Observation	14
4.7. Skills Development	15
4.8. Academic Guidance and Counseling	15
5. Conclusions	16
6. Recommendations	18
7. Annexes	14

Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council, established in 2005 under the University Grants Commission/ Ministry of Education with financial support from the IRQUE (Improvement of Relevance and Quality of Undergraduate Education) project, is to ensure quality, continuous development and efficient performance of Sri Lankan higher education institutions, and to gain the confidence of the community in their graduates in accordance with internationally recognized evaluation mechanisms. University accountability for quality and standards is a key factor in promoting and safeguarding public confidence in Sri Lankan higher education. There are four main components of a quality assurance programme:

- É Institutional Review
- É Subject Review
- É Subject Benchmarking and
- É Credit and Qualification Framework

Being a key component in the national quality assurance system for Sri Lanka, the Subject Review evaluates the quality of education within a department of study, in contrast to the Institutional Review which focuses on the powers and responsibilities which universities hold for quality and standards. Subject review is carried out in relation to the subject aims and objectives set by each program of study pertaining to both undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes.

The subject review examines the wide range of influences that shape the learning experiences and achievements of students. It covers the full breadth of teaching and learning activities, including direct observation of classroom, tutorial classes, laboratory situations, the curriculum, staff and staff development, the application of resources (library, IT, equipment) and student support and guidance. This range of activities is captured within a core set of eight aspects of provision. The aspects of provision are:

- É Curriculum design, content and review
- É Teaching, learning and assessment methods
- É Quality of students
- É The extent and use of student feedback
- É Postgraduate studies
- É Peer observation
- É Skills development and
- É Academic guidance and counseling

The review method has two main processes, internal and external evaluations. Internal evaluation is the self- assessment in the subject, based on the program's own aims and objectives, and set out in the structure provided by the core set of aspects of provision.

The external evaluation comprises a three-day review visit carried out by a team of reviewers. The purpose of the review visit is to review, consider and test the evidence provided by the study program in the light of the aims and intended student learning outcomes. Reviewers do not use any externally set standards against which the programmes are judged. There are three options open to the review team in making the overall judgment concerning the quality of provision in the department of study concerned:

In all cases, the overall judgment will be supported by the evidence contained in the report. In addition to the overall judgment, review teams will provide a separate judgment of each subject review aspect. The review team will summarize its findings on each aspect, emphasizing strengths, good practices and weaknesses. At the end of each aspect, they will use one of three judgments:

- É Good
- É Satisfactory
- É Unsatisfactory

In judgments of ‘good’ or ‘satisfactory’ the review team will wish to highlight strengths and good practice relating to the aspect concerned; in the ‘unsatisfactory’ category there are likely to be fewer examples of strengths or good practice. The key elements of the process followed by the Review Team in conducting this subject review and shared with the two departments included an emphasis on the voluntary nature of this exercise as well as the fact that it is undertaken by peers. While the assessment is broadly based on the self-evaluation of the respective academic departments, the success of the review depends on the findings and process being validated and owned by the members of these departments. Hence, a detailed debriefing and feedback session was held at the end of the two-and-a-half day review, where doubts were clarified and the preliminary findings were shared and informally validated.

Prof. Colin N. Peris, Quality Assurance Specialist of the QAAC by a letter dated 22nd July 2008 notified that the following team has been appointed to perform the Subject Review of the Department of Economics, University of Peradeniya from 12th to 14th August 2008:

Prof. D. Atapattu, Department of Economics, University of Ruhuna
Prof. H.M. Bandara, Department of Economics, University of Kelaniya and
Dr. S.M.M. Ismail, South Eastern University of Sri Lanka.

The Review Team visited the Department of Economics of the University of Peradeniya during the period 12th to 14th August 2008 and initiated the peer review process. The purpose of the visit was to search for evidences and observe those pertaining to the aims and the intended learning outcomes as stated in the SER of the department and evaluate them according to the set guidelines. At 8.30 a.m. on the 12th August, the Review Team met the Quality Assurance Specialist, Prof. Colin N. Peiris at the University of Peradeniya to be further familiarized with the Subject Review process. At 9.00 a.m. on the 12th August the Team met Prof. H. Abeygunawardena, the Vice Chancellor, Prof. A. Wickramasinghe, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Prof. K T. Silva, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Prof. Walgama, Director of Internal Quality Assurance Unit, Dr. Anoma Abeyratne, the Head of the Department of Economics and Dr. Ranil Abeysekera, Senior Lecturer in Economics. The Vice Chancellor briefed the review team of the activities of the university in general and current trends in undergraduate and postgraduate teaching in the university.

The agenda for the review process was discussed and finalized with the Head of the Department. Dr. Ranil Abeysekera made a presentation on the self evaluation report,

nesses of the department, clarifying certain points and information included in the report. The other members of were also present at this meeting. The open and frank discussion that followed was extremely helpful for the evaluation exercise.

Data were gathered additionally by meeting with the non-academic staff, undergraduate and postgraduate students, and observing lectures, practical classes and student presentations. The Review Team also went through relevant documents (see annex 2), inspected facilities provided by the department including lecture theatres, computer laboratory, staff rooms, department library and main library and the equipment available for teaching, research and other activities.

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

The University of Peradeniya had its origin in 1942 when the University of Ceylon was founded by the amalgamation of the Ceylon Medical College (estd.1870) and the Ceylon University College (estd.1921).The seat of this university which was in Colombo shifted to Peradeniya in 1952. During 1972-78 when a single university was in operation, the university at Peradeniya became the Peradeniya Campus of the University of Ceylon. Under the Universities Act of 1978, the Peradeniya Campus was converted to an autonomous university under the name and style, University of Peradeniya.

The University has eight Faculties as follows:

- Faculty of Agriculture
- Faculty of Arts
- Faculty of Dental Sciences
- faculty of Engineering
- Faculty of Medicine
- Faculty of Science
- Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science
- Faculty of Allied Health Sciences

The following post-graduate institutes are also affiliated to the University of Peradeniya:

- Post Graduate Institute of Agriculture
- Post Graduate Institute of Science

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

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

This was followed by the addition of several other academic disciplines to the faculty: Law and Arabic in 1945; Sociology, Education and Modern Languages in 1949 (French and

years as subsidiary subjects); Archaeology in 1959; and Studies, established respectively in 2001 and 2002.

A sub-department of English for the teaching of English as a second language was set up after the Swabasha (i-e non-English medium) student entered the university. In addition, French is also offered as a subject to student following the General Degree Programme.

The Department of Economics and Statistics is one of the most popular departments in the Faculty of Arts. In any given academic year, courses offered by the Department are taken by over 1000 undergraduate students. Around 60 students follow the postgraduate level programmes of the Department.

The Department of Economics was among the departments transferred from Colombo to Peradeniya in 1952 at the inception of the faculty of Arts of what was then the University of Ceylon, Peradeniya Campus. This was set up as the first fully-fledged Department of Economics in the country. In 1962 a Commerce degree (B.Com.) programme was introduced in addition to Economics. Political Science was one of the fields offered for the Special Degree in Arts under the purview of the Department. H.A. de S Gunasekara served as the first Sri Lankan Professor of Economics. During the fifty years of its existence of Department has produced a large number of graduates and academia, in both Sri Lanka and overseas.

Students:

GENERAL & SPECIAL DEGREE STUDENTS IN ECONOMICS – 2006/07

Year of Study	Sinhala Medium	Tamil Medium	English Medium	Total
1 st Year (100 level only)	144	25	75	244
2 nd Year General Degree ¹	72	10	03	85
3 rd year General Degree ¹	84	14	07	105
2 nd Year Special Degree	60	08	09	77
3 rd year Special Degree	65	12	09	86
4 th year Special Degree ²	87	03	06	96
Total Student number offering Economics	512	72	109	693

¹ May include students for whom Economics is not a main discipline

² Represents last group of students under the previous (prior to CUS) system

Academic Staff:

The total strength of the permanent academic staff is 24. This includes one Associate Professor, 10 Grade-I Senior Lecturers, 8 Grade-II Senior lecturers and 5 Lecturers.

... floor of the New Arts Building (NAB), which is also occupied by the Departments of Political Science, Management, Sociology and Philosophy & Psychology. As a result, both classroom and office space have to be shared with these Departments.

Currently, there are 16 classrooms, 13 of which are in the NAB and the balance in the adjoining Kannangara Building (KB). These rooms are shared with the above (and other) Departments. Three of the rooms can accommodate 200-300 students, and use is made of these for large classes, such as those courses common to both special and general degree students. The Hettiarchchi Building or Arts Theatre (AT), which is located in the main Arts block and has a seating capacity of 550, is used for teaching the 100 level (Sinhala medium) economics courses.

Equipment:

Overhead Projector	01
Multimedia Projector	01
Desktop Computers	15
Laser Printers	04
Photocopier	01

3. AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

3.1. Aims

The Department of Economics & Statistics, in line with the University's mission desires to produce graduates who can think critically and are willing to engage themselves in issues that confront society at large. Deriving from this general objective are the more specific ones of enabling its graduates to possess a sound knowledge of economic theory, familiarity with the tools of their trade, an awareness of the applications of theory, and an ability to work within a multidisciplinary framework.

In this context, the department aims to provide

- (i) degree programs that offer a high quality learning experience in an environment of internationally recognized policy-oriented research;
- (ii) a range of challenging learning opportunities within the course unit structure of the Faculty, enabling students to develop their academic interests and potential;
- (iii) encouragement to students to develop a knowledge base, cognitive abilities and transferable skills that will permit them to contribute effectively to a range of careers;
- (iv) opportunities for students to develop the skills and enthusiasm required for lifelong learning;
- (v) a friendly, responsive and supportive Departmental environment that is conducive to enthusiastic learning, high standards and good completion rates;
- (vi) a stimulating opportunity for students from other Departments and Faculties to Study economics at a level appropriate to their needs;

s courses to other Faculties wishing to offer them in

their career development;

(ix) departmental committee structures for the effective organization of teaching, Learning and assessment, both at the undergraduate and the postgraduate level.

3.2 Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of any one of our programs, students should have subject knowledge

- (i) gained a knowledge of economic theory, based on programs that provide initial Basic frameworks followed by progressively increasing depth of study;
- (ii) gained a knowledge and understanding of the application of theory to particular Fields within economics;
- (iii) gained a knowledge and understanding of Sri Lanka's economic development since 1948, and of current development issues confronting the economy; Intellectual /analytical abilities
- (iv) learnt to interpret the results of economics research; Personal, transferable skills
- (v) developed a range of personal and transferable skills (e.g., critical ability, independence of thought, ability to think and work within a multi-disciplinary framework, written communication);
- (vi) developed their ability for critical, self-directed learning; On successful completion of the following specific programs, students should have obtained knowledge and understanding in (or familiarity with),
- (vii) for the special degree programme ó

Subject knowledge

- an economics core (micro and macroeconomics, mathematical economics, statistics, introductory econometrics, history of economic thought, international economics, research methods in economics, the Sri Lankan economy)
- constituents of one or more fields of concentration (e.g., traditional areas like international trade/finance, economics of the public sector, new areas such as gender economics, economics of conflict and ones that fall in between, such as environmental and resource economics)
- other optional areas of study (e.g., more advanced econometrics, special topics in microeconomics)

Intellectual/analytical abilities

- the application of economic theory to research
- data handling and interpretation, teamwork, basic database/statistical software
- technical and intellectual skills necessary for the acquisition and analysis of data, and had direct experience of research, including questionnaire surveys.

Subject knowledge

- an economics core (micro and macroeconomics, the Sri Lankan economy)
- optional areas of study (e.g., history of economic thought, international economics, economic history, economics of conflict)

This program offers a learning experience that is intended to enable students to

- (ix) build upon their academic qualifications and potential at entry by progressively developing knowledge, skills and understanding;
- (x) read for the degree in any one of the following languages: Sinhala, English, Tamil
- (xi) improve their English reading ability by encouraging them to access material written in English;
- (xii) obtain a level of quantitative skills higher than that of a typical Sri Lankan Arts graduate, and thereby master recent developments in economic theory and applications;
- (xiii) study in fields in which they have the most interest or ability by offering a choice Of units within a flexible academic framework, so allowing students to broaden as well as deepen their educational experience;
- (xiv) be provided with clear details of course objectives, content, academic requirements and assessment methods;
- (xv) receive fair and appropriate assessment for grading, and feedback on individual progress;
- (xvi) undertake a final year independent dissertation (for special degree students only) under supervision of Department staff;
- (xvii) have a manageable workload within University guidelines. Additionally, the Department strives to ensure that
- (xviii) 100 level course units provide learning experiences that are appropriate, accessible, interesting and beneficial to students, both with and without a G.C.E. Advanced Level background in Economics; there are 200 level course units accessible to students with no economics background from other Departments;
- (xix) 300 level optional courses and all 400 level courses are sufficiently varied to cater to different student interests and strengths;
- (xx) when students choose a prescribed number of course units from outside economics, no restrictions are placed; so that such selection reflects student preferences which in turn derive from their personal goals, strengths, abilities and limitations;
- (xxi) overall, we provide an environment that promotes a high quality learning experience.

4. FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW TEAM

4.1 Curriculum Design, Content and Review

The review of the course content of the curriculum revealed that the subject contents of the course modules offered for the Special Arts Degree as well as the General Arts Degree are sufficient and appropriate for the respective programmes. The curriculum has been designed

curriculum framework in conformity with accepted international Bachelor of Arts Special Degree programme requires three academic years and 90 credits in three academic years for the

General Degree.

The curriculum is designed with the intention that Special Degree students (a) have a thorough grounding in economic theory, (b) are familiar with the tools of the trade, (c) have some exposure to the variety of fields within the subject and (d) are able to apply their knowledge and skills to the practical problems of the Sri Lankan economy.

In the General Degree program, students are expected to have a sound knowledge of economic theory and some ability in applying them in practice, as part of a multidisciplinary training (received by following courses in a number of disciplines).

The Special Degree programme is designed to ensure that students achieve the following: (a) develop basic competence in economic theory in the first year, (b) go deeper into economic theory and develop tools of economic analysis in the second year, (c) use economic theory and tools in the different field areas, explore economic theory in further depth, and pick up research methodology skills in the third year, and (d) explore optional fields while engaging in original dissertation research in the fourth year.

The inter-disciplinary nature of the curriculum is clearly evident in the Special Degree Programme, as 42 credit hours out of 120, need to be obtained from the courses offered by the other departments. The General Degree program, of course, requires the completion of 90 credit hours of which 24 should be within one department/discipline.

The opportunity provided to students to select course units from other departments and study programs in the faculty contributes to broaden the horizon of knowledge of students, and improve on the multidisciplinary nature and interdepartmental harmony of the faculty.

The curricula of the economics degree program have undergone two major reviews in the past ten years, both within the context of a faculty-wide process.

In the 1998/99 academic year the whole program was totally restructured through the introduction of a new syllabus. This revision enabled the department to offer a wider range of courses including several optional subjects. It also saw results of second year examinations being counted for the award of classes for the first time.

With the introduction of the course-unit system in 2000/01, the curriculum was modified again to fit into the new structure. Student performance in terms of a Grade Point Average (GPA) - from the first year onwards - are now considered when awarding a degree.

Both reviews examined the structure of economics degree programs in well-recognized universities overseas when designing the new curricula. This is reflected in the range of courses that are currently offered, and the importance given to particular courses (specifically Economic Theory and Econometrics) within the programme.

In the review process, potential employer feedback on the curriculum has been obtained at an informal level.

to subject content in individual course units has been in form of C1 form. Individual courses, while bound by an efficient flexibility to allow inclusion of updated material.

Recent research studies can be and are included as supplementary reading material. The C1 form issued to students at the beginning of the semester allows for this flexibility.

Furthermore, recent trends in economic thinking have been incorporated into the course structure through the introduction of optional courses such as Gender Economics and Economics of Conflicts.

Although the curriculum of degree programmes are more flexible and multidisciplinary, its emphasis on theoretical knowledge is too heavy and the focus on practical knowledge and training is very limited. In terms of employability of graduates, a balanced curriculum combining theoretical knowledge with practical training would be more relevant and efficient.

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

4.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods

The Department of Economics offers two undergraduate programs in Economics: the Special Degree and the General Degree programmes. Teaching is carried out on a well designed curriculum by a highly qualified (9 Ph.D.s) academic staff.

Courses are taught with a combination of lectures, discussion (tutorial) classes, seminars and individual consultations. Although lectures form the basis of all the courses taught by the department, they vary in type from a traditional lecture delivery to more interactive types of teaching, with a range of opportunities for students to actively participate. Most of the lectures were conducted according to a carefully prepared format. The review team observed that the lecturers were successful in attracting the attention of almost all students in the class. The team appreciates the techniques of teaching adopted by some lecturers such as constant interaction with students.

Tutorial classes provide an opportunity for students to clarify matters and develop close interaction with the lecturer (Tutor). Tutorial classes also enhance their presentation skills.

The review team observed some of the lectures conducted by the internal staff. The pace at which lectures were conducted was good. Lecture rooms are well ventilated and fitted with ceiling fans and seating arrangements are also satisfactory.

In the delivery of lectures white board and handouts were the sole teaching aids used in the class room. It should be mentioned, however, that the use of an overhead projector to show transparencies or multimedia projector would have certainly increased the effectiveness of the lectures. The department is constrained by the non availability of basic teaching aids such as multimedia projectors and laptop computers. The department currently has only one multimedia projector and a one overhead projector. The full benefit of the competent staff cannot be fully realized owing to the lack of such facilities.

students at the beginning of each course. It includes the reading material, and methods of assessment. This has it clarifies the lecturer's expectations with regard to learning outcomes, the methods of achieving them, and testing students' success in achieving these outcomes and communicates these clearly to the student as well. Some course outlines include guidelines for assignments, as well as stipulating deadlines for assignments, facilitating time management by students.

Courses are conducted in English, Sinhala and Tamil media in the first year. Thereafter general degree students can follow their courses in the medium they prefer. For Economics special degree students while the medium of instruction is English, the discussion classes are conducted in Sinhala and Tamil media. However students are assessed in the language of their choice. Reading material is often in English, in order to keep up with latest developments in the field.

The department utilizes a combination of different assessment methods for the courses. Examinations (midterms and finals) and quizzes require students to perform under time limitation and without support material and are therefore a useful assessment of subject-based knowledge absorption and analytical skill development. All courses have a final examination (raw marks are not revealed to students) and some courses have a mid-term examination (grades are returned to students, together with feedback, though not the raw marks, and cohort results are summarized, so that students can judge their performance relative to their peer group).

Assignments refer to work that students conduct outside the classroom with a longer time horizon and with access to support material and resources. Assignments vary from exercises based directly on material taught in the course (used in the more quantitative courses) to analytical essays to research reports requiring the collation and interpretation of data. Assignments take the forms of both individual and group-based. Group-based assignments are useful in inculcating the ability to work within a team environment, an ability that will hold students in good stead when they enter the labour force.

The Review Team appreciates the assessment process adopted by the department for the undergraduate dissertation. In order to maintain impartiality, and to avoid examiner-related variability in marking, a common format is used to guide marking. This format is given to students at the beginning of the process, so that they are aware of how they will be assessed.

The Review Team is concerned of the absence of second marking of answer scripts particularly of the Special Degree Examination. The assessment of answers without a comprehensive marking scheme may lead to examiner-related variations. It may be possible to confirm whether marking is free from such biases by obtaining an assessment from a second examiner (need not be an external examiner) for a randomly selected sample of scripts marked by the first examiner.

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

Student Progress and Achievements

students are very keen to follow a Special Degree programme in Economics. Students are selected for the Special Degree programme through a carefully designed screening process. Selection to the Special Degree program is based on first year performance. Demand for Economics is high among students, with the Department typically receiving over 150 applications. During the past few years, 50-75 places have been allotted annually. Entry qualifications have a minimum set by the Faculty. Departmental standards, however, are higher, and are set annually based on the number of applications relative to a target.

The criteria that have generally been followed give priority to performance in 100 level economics (GPA calculated for ECN 101 & 102), with Mathematics and English coming next in that order. Since the introduction of the CUS, most applicants for the special degree have possessed a 100 level Economics GPA of 4.0 (equivalent to an "A" grade). Success in placement then depends on their Mathematics and English performances.

The Advanced Level z-score of students admitted into Economics programme has improved over the years. It is also important to observe that the mean z-score of Economics students is higher than the mean value for the all students in the Arts Faculty as shown in the Table below:

Advanced Level z-score Distribution of Students

Category	2002		2004		2005	
	All Arts Students	Economics Students	All Arts Students	Economics Students	All Arts Students	Economics Students
No. of students	654	42	694	68	642	52
Mean Z Score	1.4826	1.5873	1.6286	1.6921	1.6569	1.6813
Std. Deviation	0.2147	0.1504	0.2240	0.1666	0.1557	0.1406
Minimum	0.3406	1.2539	0.7720	0.4203	1.3408	1.4170
Maximum	2.0992	1.8939	2.3864	2.1200	2.5671	2.1485

Analysis of GPA data clearly shows that the performance level of Economics graduates is excellent. More than 90% of graduates have obtained honours passes during the period 2003-2006. The number of graduates obtaining ordinary passes are very small. Over the past nine years the proportion of final year special degree students earning an honors degree has increased from less than 40% to around 88%. In 2005/06, about 27% earned first classes, 47% upper second classes and 14% a lower second classes.

Another good indicator of the quality of students is the type of employment opportunities that the Economics graduates receive. Through informal communications, the Department has found out that several of their graduates have been employed in the prestigious institutions in both private and public sectors, such as Institute of Policy Studies, Lanka Market research Bureau, Central Bank of Sri Lanka.

Number of students in the Economics Special Degree programme have participated in conferences at national and international levels. South Asian Economics Students Meet (SAESM) is one such important conference for which students have participated in 2006, 2007 and 2008.



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the quality of students, student progress and
OD”.

4.4 Extent and Use of Student Feedback

The Department pays sufficient attention to student feedback on its teaching and other activities. In order to receive student feedback formal as well as informal methods are employed. Starting from 2006/2007 second semester the formal teacher/course evaluation Has been implemented in the Economics Department. Structured teaching/course evaluations at the course-unit/subject level conducted by all staff members. The evaluation forms are given to the students in the last class and this information is collected by the staff members assigned by the department (other than the instructor who conducted the course). Once this information is collected the information is analyzed to obtain the overall performance of an instructor compared to the average performance of all instructors in the department. Students' responses are passed on to individual lecturers by the Head of the Department to enable them to improve their performance.

When the medium of instruction was changed from Sinhala to English, the Department obtained student feedback to a greater extent in a more formal manner.

Apart from the formal feedback system, qualitative methods are also adopted to obtain student feedback. In the classrooms, lecturer-in charge of the course module contact students to obtain responses on various issues.

Students provide feedback at an informal level to the Head of Department and individual staff members on an on-going basis. These are usually dealt with at the individual staff member level. This is probably the most widely used form of student feedback. It is important to state that the Department has responded positively to these informal communications. For example, For example, mid-term examination dates and deadlines for submission of assignments were postponed in response to student requests. Similarly, the relative weights in assessment criteria for some courses were altered after consideration of students' viewpoint.

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

4.5 Postgraduate Studies

Department of Economics conducts four postgraduate programmes, viz. Diploma, MA, MPhil, and PhD. The number of students enrolled in the postgraduate programmes between 1994 and 2007 are given in the following table.

POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMS, 1994/95 – 2006/07

	Nil	MA	MPrelim / Diploma	Total
1994/1995	Nil	08	34	62
1995/1996	Nil	12	19	56
1996/1997	Nil	02	25	47
2000/2001	02	01	19	41
2001/2002	Nil	07	25	62
2002/2003	Nil	06	15	47
2003/2004	Nil	06	21	43
2005/2006	Nil	04	10	32
2006/2007	Nil	07	15	52

The success rate at the postgraduate programmes remain very low and the drop out rate is very high. Out of the total number of students who enrolled in the MA and MPhil programs from 1994 to 2001, only eight have completed the MPhil degree, while 13 have completed their MA. Only about 11 students have been able to successfully complete their Master's Preliminary program and join the MA degree program.

The commitment of Department teaching staff to the postgraduate programmes suffers due to lack of adequate incentives.

The Review Team noted that many members of the academic staff of the department are actively engaged in research projects funded by various national and international organizations.

As such, the review team is of the view that the Postgraduate and research activities in the Department of Economics can be judged as “SATISFACTORY”.

4.6 Peer Observation

It was revealed that there is no regular effective system of peer observation. Sharing of information concerning teaching methods, student assessment, class participation, etc. takes place informally among interested colleagues. This is particularly strong in courses which are co-taught (i.e., within a given medium of instruction), and therefore incorporate peer observation almost incidentally.

Close collaboration among lecturers teaching the same course across different media, is another source of peer review. In addition, members of the staff informally discuss the problems arising during academic activities among themselves. Such practices provide opportunities for the members of the academic staff to receive some feedback on their teaching and teaching material used in the class room.

It is the view of the Review Team that the peer observation of the department can be judged as “SATISFACTORY”.

The Review Team noted that the academic programme of the Department of Economics provides opportunities for students to gain subject-specific skills as well as generic skills. As far as subject specific skills are concerned students are exposed to well designed curriculum. It is the view of the department that most successful method of developing skills is through the embedding of skill development opportunities in its academic programmes, rather than being treated as a peripheral issue.

The development of personal transferable skills is achieved (a) through the inclusion of separate mandatory modules in the academic programme (e.g., training in research methods, computer awareness, English language) and (b) through the incorporation of these skills in the teaching, learning, and assessment methods in subject courses.

The Department intends all its students (i.e. both special degree and general degree students) to acquire (a) basic computer literacy, (b) basic writing skills, and (c) English language skills. Special degree students are expected to acquire these skills to a greater degree and also to acquire some research-related skills. In addition to the above skills, students also learn other transferable skills such as time management and work prioritization skills, analytical thinking skills and problem solving skills.

Independent research and report-writing skills are developed primarily in the undergraduate dissertation experience, as well as through assignments in specific courses. For example, in ECN 323 - Economic Development and ECN 309 ó Research Methods in Economics, among others, students have been given assignments that develop these skills.

The lack of facilities has become a major constraint in the skills development effort of the Department. Computer facilities are grossly inadequate for both teaching and research. The Department has only fifteen computers used by the administrative and teaching staff. Eight of these computers are located at the department computer lab. The final year students have limited access to the computer lab.

It is the view of the Review Team that the skills development of the department can be judged as “GOOD”.

4.8 Academic Guidance and Counseling

Academic guidance and counseling takes place, formally and informally, at both department and faculty levels. Although some forms of academic guidance and counseling have always been in place, the need for specific guidance became evident with the introduction of the Course Unit System in 2000/01.

At the Department-level the following forms of academic guidance are available:

- The designation of a formal Course Unit Coordinator
- Student meetings with Head of Department and academic staff
- Course-information given to students
- Dissertation Supervision
- Informal guidance and counseling at an individual level

the head of Department provides useful information conducted by the department, their entry requirements, and options etc. Special emphasis is laid on the entry requirements to the Special Degree programme. For example, students are advised that high grades in Mathematics and English in the first year are necessary for them to read for the Special Degree programme in Economics.

Three members of the Department serve in the capacity of formally designated Student Counselors who are available for both academic and personal guidance and counseling.

The Department is considering the introduction of a counseling system where a certain number of students will be allocated to each academic staff member who will serve as Counselor.

When students are in need of professional counseling and guidance, they are encouraged to meet University Counseling Service.

The Review Team is of the view academic guidance and counseling can be judged as 'GOOD.'

5. CONCLUSIONS

1. Curriculum Design, Content and Review

Strengths/Good Practices:

- (i) Curriculum has been well designed to provide a knowledge base, cognitive abilities and transferable skills
- (ii) Interdisciplinary approach is well evident
- (iii) New developments in the subject area can be easily brought into teaching due to in-built flexibility in the curriculum, i.e. Special Topics.
- (iv) Very effective review process exists

Weaknesses:

- (i) Heavy bias towards theoretical knowledge and less focus on practical knowledge and training

2. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods

Strengths/Good Practices:

- (i) Teaching process has been well planned on the basis of updated C1 form
- (ii) Medium of instruction has been smoothly transformed from Sinhala and Tamil to English for the Special Degree Programme
- (iii) Academic staff with 9 Ph.Ds
- (iv) Tutorial and discussion classes provide more conducive learning environment
- (v) Adoption of comprehensive guidelines in assessing undergraduate dissertation
- (vi) Releasing of course grades before the final examination results are officially confirmed.

Weaknesses:

- (i) Absence of second marking in the Special Degree programme may lead to examiner-related variations in assessment

ment is very limited
Student Progress and Achievements

Strengths/Good Practices:

- (i) z-score of Economics students has improved over the years
- (ii) More than 90% of students graduate with honours degrees
- (iii) Students with high academic standards are selected for the Special Degree Programme
- (iv) Students participate in international seminars
- (v) Students read for the Special Degree in English medium

Weaknesses:

- (i) Department does not maintain an employment profile of its graduates

4. Extent and Use of Student Feedback

Strengths/Good Practices:

- (i) Student feedback is formally obtained using a structured questionnaire

5. Postgraduate Studies

Strengths/Good Practices:

- (i) The Department is committed to providing postgraduate training of very high quality
- (ii) Academic staff is heavily involved in research

Weaknesses:

- (i) Drop out rate is very high
- (ii) Postgraduate output is very low
- (iii) Undue delays in the implementation of the scheduled programmes
- (iv) Inadequate incentives have adversely affected the competitiveness of the programme as compared to those implemented by the PGIA

6. Peer Observation

Strengths/Good Practices:

- (i) When some courses are conducted in three media (English Sinhala and Tamil) the relevant lecturers discuss with each other about the course contents, teaching methods and recommended reading materials.

Weaknesses:

- (i) Observation of teaching of junior teachers by senior teachers is not practiced.
- (ii) Second marking of answer scripts is not practiced

7. Skills Development

Strengths/Good Practices:

- (i) Introduction of English as a medium of instruction for the Special Degree Programme
- (ii) Development of research skills and presentation skills has been integrated into the Curriculum

Weaknesses:

- (i) The emphasis placed on the development of practical training skills in the curriculum is inadequate
- (ii) IT literacy is not a compulsory component in the curriculum.

Department to promote IT skills are grossly inadequate
ling

Strengths/Good Practices:

- (i) Three senior academic staff members function as Student Counselors

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

Aspect	Judgment
Curriculum design, content and review	Good
Teaching learning and assessment methods	Good
Quality of students including student progress and achievements	Good
Extent and use of student feedback, qualitative and quantitative	Good
Postgraduate studies	Satisfactory
Peer observation	Satisfactory
Skills development	Good
Academic guidance and counseling	Good

The overall judgment is suspended

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings indicated above, the Review Team wishes to make the following specific recommendations:

- (i) The lack of physical facilities (i.e. office space for the staff, desktop and laptop computers, multimedia projectors) is a major constraint in maintaining a conducive learning environment. Attention should be drawn by the authorities to remove these deficiencies as earliest possible to avoid deterioration of the quality of study programmes.
- (ii) Introduction of internships as a part of the curriculum is recommended to develop practical skills of undergraduates.
- (iii) Second marking of at least a sample of answer scripts is recommended to avoid individual biases.
- (iv) Assessment of answer scripts should be based on a detailed marking scheme.
- (v) General Degree students are also interested in offering their courses in English medium. Department should use this opportunity to improve the quality of its General Degree Programme

ngthen the postgraduate programmes conducted by the given more autonomy in the administration of its attractive incentive structure for staff involved in postgraduate teaching is necessary to face challenges coming from other competitors especially from the PGIA.

(vii) Compilation of an employment profile of Economics graduates will be very useful in assessing the quality of graduates.

(viii) Explore the possibility of implementing a formal and effective mechanism for peer observation.

(ix) A formal training for the staff involved in academic counseling is very important.

Day 1: 12/08/08

08.30 ó 09.00	Private Meeting of Review Panel with QAA Council Representative
09.00 ó 09.30	Meeting with VC, Dean, Chairman/Internal QA Unit, HOD
09.30 ó 10.00	Review team discusses the agenda for the visit with HOD
10.00 ó 10.45	Tea & Meeting with Dept. staff
10.45 ó 11.30	Dept. Presentation on the Self-Evaluation Report
11.30 ó 12.30	Discussion
12.30 ó 13.30	Lunch
13.30 ó 14.00	Meeting with Economics Society Committee Members
14.00 ó 14.30	Meeting with Science Students (<i>Computation & Management B.Sc. degree program</i>)
14.30 ó 15.30	Meeting with Undergraduate (Economics Special Degree) Students ¹
15.30 ó 16.30	Observing Dept. and Faculty Facilities
16.30 ó 17.30	Brief Meeting of Reviewers

Day 2: 13/08/08

09.00 ó 09.30	Observing Teaching ó Lecture
09.30 ó 10.00	Observing Teaching ó Lecture
10.00 ó 10.30	Observing Practical class ó Econometrics Lab
10.30 ó 11.30	Observing Documents (working tea)
11.30 ó 12.30	Meeting with Dept. Non-Academic Staff
12.30 ó 13.30	Lunch
13.30 ó 14.30	Meeting with Undergraduate (General Degree) Students
14.30 ó 15.00	Observing Teaching ó Lecture
15.00 ó 15.30	Observing Teaching ó Lecture & Discussion class
15.30 ó 16.00	Observing Teaching ó Lecture & Discussion class
16.00 ó 16.30	Meeting with Postgraduate Students
16.30 ó 17.00	Meeting of Reviewers

Day 3: 14/08/08

09.00 ó 09.30	Meeting with Counselors & Academic Advisers
09.30 ó 10.00	Observing Teaching ó Lecture
10.00 ó 10.30	Observing Teaching ó Discussion
10.30 ó 11.00	ReviewersøPrivate Meeting (working tea)
11.00 ó 12.00	Meeting with Head & Staff for Reporting
12.00 ó 13.00	Lunch
13.00 ó 17.00	Report-Writing

¹ Includes three batches and three media



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TED

1. BA General and Special Degree Syllabus
2. Student Handbook
3. Undergraduate Dissertations
4. Examination Results
5. Z-score of students
6. Postgraduate Prospectus 2005
7. South Asian Economics Students Meet
8. Guidelines on Marking Dissertations
9. Guidelines on Writing Research and Presenting Research Papers
10. Higher Degree Regulations
11. Assignments Submitted by Students
12. Teacher Evaluation by Students
13. Five-Year Plan
14. Minutes of the Department Meetings
15. Course Handouts
16. Department Library Book List