

SUBJECT REVIEW REPORT

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS



**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF RUHUNA**

22nd to 24th October 2008

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CONTENTS

	Page
1. Subject Review Process	2
2. Brief History of the University, Faculty and the Department	3
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	9
4.3. Quality of Students including Student Progress and Achievements	11
4.4. Extent and Use of Student Feedback, Qualitative and Quantitative	11
4.5. Postgraduate Studies	12
4.6. Peer Observation	13
4.7. Skills Development	14
4.8. Academic Guidance and Counseling	15
5. Conclusions	16
6. Recommendations	19
7. Annexes	21

1. SUBJECT REVIEW PROCESS

Subject review process evaluates the quality of education within a specific subject or discipline. It is focused on the student learning experience and on student achievement. It is designed to evaluate the quality of both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. However, the responsibility for quality and standards lies within the institution itself, since it alone has the power to control and to change existing practices.

Review process was conducted according to the guidelines given in the quality assurance handbook for Sri Lankan universities, published by the CVCD and University Grants Commission in July 2002. The Department of Economics (DoE), Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (H&SS), University of Ruhuna (UR) submitted a self evaluation report (SER) consisting of eleven sections, namely: Introduction; Aims, learning outcomes and programme details; Students, staff and facilities; Curriculum design, content and review; Teaching, learning and assessment methods; The quality of students, student progress and achievements; Extent of student feedback: quantitative and qualitative; Postgraduate studies; Peer observation; Skills development; and Academic guidance and counseling. The quality of education was reviewed according to the aims and learning outcomes given in the (SER).

The following eight aspects of education were reviewed at the subject level:

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

The review team visited the department from 22nd - 24th August, 2008. The agenda of the three day visit is attached (see annex 1).

The evaluation of eight aspects was based on:

Meetings held with the Vice Chancellor, Dean, Head of Department, academic staff including the senior professor, non-academic staff, Librarian of the university, current and former counselors of the Department, undergraduates representing third and fourth years, some postgraduate students representing different postgraduate programmes, computer analyst of the department computer center, and supportive staff in the Department; Observation of physical facilities of the Department, Department's computer center, Class rooms, University and Departmental libraries, etc.; Observation of teaching classes of undergraduates and students' presentations; and Reviewing available documents at the Department.

Each of the eight aspects was judged as good / satisfactory / unsatisfactory, based on strengths, good practices and weaknesses in each.

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

The idea of establishing a university in the South has been mooted from the days of the National Council of Higher Education (1966 – 1972). Effective steps for the establishment of a university institution, however, were taken only in 1977 with the coming into power of a new government. In October 1977, a committee was appointed by the Minister of Education to look into the feasibility of establishing a campus of the former University of Sri Lanka in the South. This committee was headed by late Prof. M.B. Ariyapala, and consisted of leading senior academics of the country. The committee was expected to make recommendations on the suitable sitting of the proposed university campus, and on the faculties and courses of study to be established and other related matters.

The report of the committee dated January 4th, 1978 proposed the establishment of a university campus consisting of five faculties, viz. Arts, Agriculture, Medicine, Science and Engineering under the former University of Sri Lanka. Based on this report, proposals were made to the Cabinet of Ministers regarding the establishment of a campus in the South. These proposals laid down that the main centre of the university should be established in Matara, along with the Faculties of Arts and Science. The Faculty of agriculture was to be established in the Mapalana farm, Kamburupitiya, with additional land from the adjoining Ratalankawa Estate. The Faculty of Medicine was to be established in Galle in conjunction with the new Galle teaching hospital being built in Karapitiya, Galle. The recommendation of the committee regarding the establishment of a Faculty of Engineering was left to be implemented at a later stage, due to the acute shortage of engineering teachers experienced by the already established Faculties of Engineering of Sri Lanka.

On the 27th of August 1978, the Ruhuna Campus of the former University of Sri Lanka, with the four faculties referred to was ceremonially declared open by the Prime Minister of the time, Mr. J.R. Jayawardene fulfilling a long cherished desire of the people of the South to have a university in the region. Meanwhile, the structure of higher education was being reviewed, and the government decided to replace the former single University of Sri Lanka with six campuses with a system of independent universities, university colleges, campuses and institutions. Accordingly, under the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978, the status Ruhuna campus was converted to that of a University College. This meant that the four faculties of the Ruhuna University College came to be affiliated to corresponding faculties of older universities. Thus, the Faculties of Arts and Medicine were affiliated to the corresponding faculties of the University of Colombo, while Agriculture was affiliated to the Faculty of Agriculture of the University of Peradeniya, and the Faculty of Science, University of Kelaniya.

The Ruhuna University College was elevated to fulfill university status as from 1st February 1984 and its first Vice Chancellor was Prof. G.P. Samarawickrema. The Ven. Pandit Paravahera Pannananda, B.A. (London), Hon. D. Litt. (Sri J'Pura) was appointed as Chancellor of the new university on the 12th February 1984.

Following its beginning in 1978 with four faculties, Agriculture, Arts, Medicine and Science, with about 40 academics, 50 non-academics and 275 students, the University of Ruhuna has made great strides in the past thirty years in the academic, research and outreach spheres, achieving enviable growth in academic stature and intellectual and infrastructure resources. Presently, it has seven faculties including Engineering and Management and Finance with a total of about 450 academics, 8, 000 non-academics and about 5, 000 students and has

hitherto produced nearly 10, 000 graduates. The latest addition to the faculties of the university is the establishment of the Faculty of Fisheries and Marine Science and Technology.

As outlined in the University Corporate Plan (2002-2006) the Vision, Mission, and Goals of the university are as follows:

Vision: “.....vision is to be an outstanding internationally respected academic centre of excellence which proudly affirms its Sri Lankan identity and which is committed to rigorous scholarship, academic freedom, sound moral values and social responsibility”.

Mission: “In pursuit of its vision the University of Ruhuna will strive to produce outstanding internationally accredited graduates who are innovative, analytical, articulate, balanced and adaptable, with life-long of learning, and to strive through quality teaching, research and community service, to contribute to the advancement of scholarship and the enrichment of the educational, cultural, economic, and natural environments of the society we serve”.

The intended objectives in order to achieve the university’s mission are:

To create a student-centred teaching and learning environment that will encourage students to reach their full potential, and that will produce graduates of distinction, committed to lifelong learning, integrity and professionalism, capable of being responsive leaders and communicators in their fields;

To conduct original scholarship and basic and applied research, and produce creative works of international excellence for its quality and impact on both academic and user communities;

To promote and enhance partnerships with the community and respond to the cultural, economic, social and technological needs of the country and particularly of the Southern Region;

To create an environment in which staff and students can achieve their full potential; and

To be fully accountable for the effective management of public and private resources bestowed upon the institution.

Amongst its goals, the University has given the priority to create a student-centred teaching and learning environment that will encourage students to achieve their full potential. To reach this goal, the University has formulated several important objectives and strategies.

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences was founded with the establishment of the Ruhuna University Collage affiliated to the University of Colombo. On obtaining a fully-fledged university status, the H&SS started operating as an independent body. Now it is a well-established faculty offering Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral Degrees in a wide spectrum of disciplines of diverse character.

The H&SS is located on the Main Campus of the University of Ruhuna along with the Administrative Complex and the Faculties of Science, Management & Finance, Fisheries Marine Sciences & Technology.

Vision

“The vision of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences is to be a centre of academic and scientific excellence of national and international accreditation”

Mission is

To develop honest, adaptable and productive citizens;
To articulate and promote interaction with society at large, with the view to contributing towards the development of the nation; and
To institute mechanisms for partnership programmes developed with the aim of improving resources

The H&SS is the largest faculty of the university having approximately an undergraduate student body of 3000 and an annual intake of over 500 students every year. The faculty offers over 400 course modules in 12 diversified disciplines per annum through the six departments operating under its aegis.

The H&SS has instituted a computer centre to enhance the students’ skills in information and communication technology as focused on the potential needs of the job market. Moreover, it has launched two special programmes to advance the information technology skills and English language proficiency of the undergraduates under the IRQUE (Improving Relevance and Quality of Undergraduate Education) project funded by the World Bank. A Cultural Centre has been established to carry out all types of cultural activities. A Centre for Modern Languages is established to make sure that the students have opportunities to improve their language abilities well beyond their mother tongue.

The H&SS is composed of six departments as follows:

- Department of Economics
- Department of History
- Department of Geography
- Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies
- Department of Sinhala
- Department of Sociology

The students are also assisted in their studies and extracurricular activities by the following units:

- English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU)
- Computer Centre
- Resource Centre for Modern Languages
- Cultural Centre
- Centre for Conflict Studies
- Course Unit Coordinating Office

The Department of Economics

The **Vision** of the DoE is;

“to become a centre of excellence in Economics, Social Statistics and Political Science in the region that is recognized for excellence in instruction, research, and service.”

The **Mission** of the DoE is;

To provide curricula that produce competent human resources with knowledge, skills, and attitudes crucial in working in today's high-tech industrial environment and to promote research in order to create and disseminate new knowledge, develop high quality teaching, and to serve society actively.

The DoE offers both general and special degree undergraduate programmes in three disciplines namely, Economics, Political Science and Social Statistics.

Bachelor of Arts (General) degree programme
Bachelor of Arts (special) degree programme in Economics
Bachelor of Arts (special) degree programme in Political Science
Bachelor of Arts (special) degree programme in Social Statistics

In addition, the department offers two postgraduate degree programmes namely, Postgraduate Diploma in Social Statistics, and Master in Economics. Moreover the Department offers M.Phil. and Ph.D. degrees by research. These programmes are offered by the department corresponding to the university goals as well as the goals of the department.

There are approximately 150 students enrolled in Special Degree Programmes in Economics, Social Statistics and Political Science and about 500 students in General Degree Programme. Department has some 24 staff members including senior professor and a professor.

Under IRQUE project sponsored by the World Bank the department has improved physical and human resources providing more conducive environment for teaching and learning. Department Library, Department Computer Unit, Student Recreation Centre are some of the development projects funded by IRQUE.

3. AIMS AND THE LEARNING OUTCOMES

3.1 Aims

The sole objective of delivering above both General and Special Degree programmes is to cater graduates to the society plus economy with high theoretical knowledge, significant research capabilities to work in an interdisciplinary setting.

The Economics Degree Programme is designed to improve understanding of important economic problems and to provide the tools needed for critical analysis of these problems and dealing with them in practice. The programme is also intended to make students' knowledge of the nature of economic science and of the directions in which economic theory is moving. The DoE conducts undergraduate programmes suit the needs of students with a variety of interests and assists those who want to become professional economists.

The Degree Programme in Social Statistics is aimed to train students as Statisticians who can analyze social problems on quantitative bases, and make significant decisions that are very essential for the development of the society as well as the economy. The students who follow the Social Statistics degree programme is trained to use more advanced computer application software for data analysis and real world problem-solving purposes.

The Special Degree in Political Science is designed to intimate the students with the theories of different political ideologies and put them into practice. Further, students are trained in new directions of Political Science and acquainted with the current issues of the world politics.

3.2. Learning Outcomes

After successfully completing any one of programmes conducted by the department, students should be able to:

Acquire knowledge of economic theory, theories and concepts in statistics and political theory of the state;

Apply learnt theory, method and techniques in problem solving to strength the decision making process and thereby well being of civilians;

Build up models, estimate them through primary or secondary data and make interpretations in well organized manner;

Develop a range of personal and transferable skills such as critical thinking and decision making, and work within a multi disciplinary environment;

Direct to the continual process of learning in their life time; and

Undertake more valuable fruitful research on behalf of the development of the country as well as the organizations they are working for.

The department offers three Bachelor of Arts special degree programmes leading to BA in Economics, BA in Social Statistics and BA in Political science. Apart from these, department is making a huge contribution to the general degree programme by offering three separate disciplines.

Time duration for the special degree programme is 8 semester (four academics years) while general degree programme requires 6 semester to compete the degree.

The students who seek to specialize in Economics, Social Statistics and Political Science, are selected on the basis of their performance at the 1000 level course unit examination at the end of the first year.

Special Degree Programmes are designed to guide them in to in-depth study of the respective disciplines. The other students study these three subjects as part of their General Degree Programmes.

1000 level up to 4000 levels are offered for special degree programmes and 4000 level courses are banned for the general degree program.

Students have the complete democracy when selecting optional course units within the faculty of H&SS.

Degree program wise student registration details are given in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Degree programme and student registration in the department of Economics in 2008

Programme	Duration	Current student number		
		Economics	Statistics	Pol. Science
B.A. General Degree	3 years	90	53	251
Special Degree	4 years	33	28	66
Fist year	-	168	70	360

4. FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW TEAM

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

4.1. Curriculum Design, Content and Review

The Department of Economics is currently offering courses for five different groups of undergraduate students: *first year students, general degree students following Economics/Social Statistics/ Political Science as a subject and the three special degree programmes in Economics, Social Statistics and Political Science.* Table below summarises the course units offered by the DoE.

	First Year (1000 level)	General (2000 to 3000 level)	Special (2000 to 4000 level)	Total
Economics	02	11	30	43
Social Statistics	02	07	25	34
Political Science	02	14	26	42
Total	06	32	81	119

It was observed that combined classes are conducted for General and Special students for certain courses. Apart from the courses listed in table above, staff members are also supervising dissertations of special degree students at their fourth year.

The review team observed that the last curriculum revision had been in year 2001, seven years ago with the introduction of semester system at the DoE. However, most of the staff reported that they have amended, revised and updated the curriculum of their course units over time.

A comprehensive curriculum revision is now in progress. Revised curricula are already available for perusal. Annexure 2 gives the new structure of the curricula of Social Statistics Programme.

In designing the new curricula, it is noticed that the department has consulted various stakeholders such as business community, subject experts outside university and teaching staff etc. The DoE has conducted a survey of job market performance of the graduates from the DoE at Ruhuna University in last five years. Findings of this survey on job market requirements and required quality improvements are also incorporated into the new courses proposed to be implemented in near future. Continuation of this survey and analysis of findings would help future revision of courses.

Our observations show that all the teachers are required to prepare a course outline with a list of references before commencement of teaching. This is called C1 form. Review team had the opportunity to examine them. All the members are with the impression that the C1 forms of most of the courses are up to date. Most students are aware of the content of courses they follow. However, it would be more beneficial, if they are guided as to how to improve their knowledge.

The review team is of the opinion that the content of the courses offered are adequately covered for the requirements of a degree programme of this nature. The team also has noted that a significant effort has been made by the staff members of the department to ensure high quality graduates in the overall programme. The students follow some course units in English medium. To support students learning, several supplementary courses such as English, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and basic mathematics are being offered by the DoE and the Faculty. However, the review team views that course outlines of advanced course module should be improved by linking overall learning outcomes of the degree programme and assessment methods.

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

4.2. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods

Teaching and Learning

Traditional classroom teaching is the commonly practiced teaching method in the DoE. However, the process of lecturing is not limited to that. As indicated by students as well as staff members, interactive teaching methods are now becoming popular. This was evidenced by the review team during the observation of teaching sessions. It is observed that in certain classes, teachers encourage students to participate in classroom discussions. When starting to discuss a particular, students are given a chance to express their views and understandings of the topic. The teacher develops the lecture on what students said in the class. That seems to be very effective participating method of teaching. Students are given opportunity to make presentations at the very beginning of the class. Randomly selected student is asked to summarise the lesson in previous class and to comment on it. Group discussions and two-way discussions are common features of many classes we could observe. However, this was depended on the lecturer as well as the nature of the course unit.

The department is currently moving to a *student centred* teaching learning method from a *teacher centred* method. The department of economics now is strong with many teaching learning facilities. White boards, Multimedia, microphones and OHP facilities are available in many lecture-rooms maintained under the DoE. The review team observed that the facilities are being used by the majority teachers. Handouts and reading materials are provided in advance or at least at the beginning of the session. All the students have unlimited access to internet facilities in the computer center of the department. The department has a separate library with some collection of 2000 books and reputed Journals. Department library is only for references and at a time about 25 students can use the library. The main library has about 5000 books in Economics and a collection of CD ROMs which is the largest subject in the section. Students seem to prefer books in Sinhala medium despite the largest collection is in English. They should be guided and encouraged to use more English and updated versions, the recommended text books and journals.

The department uses a common format for the C1 form which is given to students at the first day of each course unit. The C1 form provides week by week breakdown of the curriculum

The department of economics has provided personal computers for all staff members with the internet connection. No restrictions for surfing internet for staff as well as students. Hence, this a mammoth chance to learning and teaching. Computer lab comprises with 35 desktop computers for students' use. Current state of the software availability at the department computer lab is fairly satisfactory. All the software required for social researchers are available. Students can learn word processing (MS Word), data tabulations and graphs (Excel), presentations (Power point) and advanced statistical analysis (SPSS, Minitab, Eviews etc.) from this lab. However, most of the software are not up dated. Currently, all the software available in the DoE computer lab are open source software and the software received through the staff members those who have trained abroad.

The supportive staff consists of two trained technical officers, a clerk and an office assistant. They are also happy with the prevailing environment in the department and support the academic administration of the department.

The lectures are conducted by the senior academic staff of the department and visiting lecturers. However, extra attention is provided as and when necessary for students by temporary staff members under the guidance of the lecturer-in-charge. The Department has well qualified and experienced teaching staff including a senior professor and a professor. Lecturers use examples and metaphors to explain theories. The team is pleased with the friendly teaching and learning environment maintained in class rooms. The teaching and learning environment is conducive. The review team observed that the students are highly motivated and enthusiastic. Both academic and non-academic staff displayed a high level of commitment.

Assessment methods

The assessment system of the DoE follows a common format which is compatible with the assessment system of the faculty. According to the existing evaluation method, students are evaluated at two levels: a final exam and continues assessments. Present system allocates 80 percent for the final exam and 20 percent for continues assessments.

Final exam is a formal examination of three hours length. Final exams are conducted by the exams branch of the university in a fixed time period. Continues assessments are done by the teachers with their own arrangements with students. There is no unique form for continues assessments. Continuous assessments are included class room tests, laboratory practices, quizzes; take home assignments and viva/ multimedia presentations etc Only few staff members use open book exams.

All question papers are moderated by an expertise while the special degree answer scripts are evaluated by two examiners to enhance the quality and transferability. However, preparation of a marking scheme is not in practice. The review team is of the view that preparation of a marking scheme along with model answers should be encouraged. So that marking of answer scripts will be more consistent. Students also could benefit in the long run. Final year dissertations are marked by two examiners excluding the supervisor. A Common format is given to all examiners to maintain the consistency among evaluators.

If a student is unable to submit an assignment, their final results are suspended. Both summative and formative assessment methods are being used.

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

4.3 Quality of Students including Student Progress and Achievements

There are no prerequisites for a first year student to select 1000 level courses in economics and political science. Anyhow, at least a B pass in Mathematics in G.C.E.(O/L) examination is compulsory for students those who wish to join Social Statistics study programme. Main criteria for selection into special degree programme is the results at 1000 level course units followed in the first year. Cutoff marks for selection to special degree programmes vary year by year depending on the average performance of applicants for special degree programme at 1000 level course units and number of applicants. Only the best performers at 1000 level course units are permitted to follow special degree programme. Therefore, in general, number of special degree students under Department of Economics is low. The SER reported that in year 2006 only 46 students completed the degree under special degree programme in Economics department and this was further dropped to 28 in year 2007. These together with 63 and 60 general degree students in the two years respectively indicates that the total number of students passed out from the DoE in year 2006 and 2007 were limited to 107 and 88¹. The maximum student number is 25 for special degree programmes. In some years this was dropped to very low levels like, 4 or 5 students². The review team is of view that this has to be rectified in coming years.

Overall results show that around 37 percent received second class upper divisions while the 20 percent of the students receive second class lower division passes. No first classes are recorded in the history of the department. Inter university comparisons would help DoE to identify possible reasons why it has failed to produce 1st class passes. According to the results of the general degree programme 5 percent of student population in economics and political science received second class upper division pass while around 10 percent and 14 percent received second class lower division in the discipline of economics and political science respectively in 2005. Although the awards are limited it does not reflect the lower quality of the students as there is no dropouts and waiting time for the job is low.

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

4.4. Extent and use of Student Feedback

The SER indicates that there was no formal method of obtaining students' feedback on teaching and learning. Students' feedback was taken by individual teachers on an *add-hoc* manner. This was the situation up to year 2008. Now, the feedback mechanism is formalized.

¹ These numbers indicate only the number of students completing the degree in each year. In addition to that there are first, second and third year students receiving direct benefits from the DoE.

² It is also observed that number of students coming to follow economics and social statistics in the first year is very low. This year (2008) number of B.A.general degree students following these two subjects is 90 and 53 respectively. The largest student group is from Political Science. However, it is pathetic that the number of staff members in Political Science stream is low as 4 teachers. Couple of teachers of this group is now in abroad on study leave.

At the department level structured teaching / course evaluations at the course unit / subject level are conducted by all staff members. The team observed that the evaluation forms are given to the students at the end of the semester and this information is collected by the course coordinator or students are advised to submit to the department. However, it seems that the student feedback data has not been analysed yet. Therefore, the evaluation team cannot comment on it. However, it is recommended that timely analysis of students feedback and reporting them to the relevant teachers discussion on the student responses and use them must be given priority.

In addition to that students also provide feedback at an informal level to the head of the department and to individual staff members These are usually dealt with at the individual member level. Team is of the view that frequent and formal discussions with wider participation would be encouraged.

Monthly faculty board meeting is another forum where students grievances are heard. Student representatives are elected to participate in the faculty board meetings which is chaired by the Dean of the faculty and seated all faculty members. Students' issues are a regular part of the agenda of each meeting.

In relation to the extent and use of student feedback the judgment of the team is SATISFACTORY.

4.5. Postgraduate Studies

Postgraduate opportunities are available at the department of economics in disciplines of Economics and Business Statistics. The DoE recruits MA/MPhil/PhD research students in economics annually. Applications are invited throughout the year. Students are registered at the postgraduate unit, university of Ruhuna. The university and the higher degrees committee have the guidelines for completion of these degree programmes. The completion time for MA and MPhil degrees is generally two years and four years for PhD students. Majority of the postgraduate students are either with first class or second class for their bachelor's degree. Research students are assigned a supervisor(s) after the approval of the proposal. In general, supervisors are from the department but for specific cases supervisors may be appointed from other universities or research institutes.

In addition to the MA/MPhil/Ph.D programmes at university level, the Department of Economics also offers one postgraduate diploma. This is called, *Postgraduate Diploma in Business Statistics*. This programme was initiated in -1997. Recruitment was done through entrance examination and an interview. At present, candidates are selected only on interview results. First the applicants are shortlisted and then the interview. The diploma is based on course work and a dissertation. DoE recruits diploma candidates annually and they are required to complete the degree within one and half years. On average 15 students per year are recruited. Students enter with first degrees in many diverse disciplines such as Economics, Physics, Mathematics and Commerce etc. A supervisor is appointed amongst the academic staff after the approval of the research proposal. At a time, maximum number of supervisees allocated to one supervisor is four.³

³ Regarding the completion rate of the Diploma programme, current coordinator informed that almost all the candidates complete the course up to the final examination. However, only few candidates submit the dissertation in time. Therefore, the DoE has decided to replace the dissertation with a research method course from next academic year onwards.

In addition, online postgraduate link programme with ADGER, Norway is available for staff members. With NOMA scholarship funds some staff members from DoE benefitted from this programme.

The academic staff members are involved in inter-institutional teaching as well. Most of the lectures are affiliated to various associations and professional bodies such as Sri Lanka Economics Association.

An adequate number of qualified academic staff members are available at the department for the supervision. Current staff includes a senior professor, a professor and 16 senior lectures with research experience. Most of the staff members have contributed to research publications in local and international journals, paper presentations at international conferences, textbooks and other reading materials for local readership.

Some academic staff members are now in postgraduate training (Masters and PhD degrees) in abroad. Completion of their degree will gain supervisory strength to the department.

Department library maintains a good collection of textbooks and other reading materials which helpful for research students. Computer laboratory of the department is extremely useful for the postgraduate students. Current state of the computer lab is already described in section 4.2.1 of this report and therefore will not repeat it here.

Some of academic members are funded under the IRQUE project to complete their Master and PhD degrees. A faculty research centre is ready to establish under IRQUE grants and aims at giving research opportunities and financial assistance for faculty members and research students as well.

The Department of Economics is planning to start an MA degree program in economics which is based on course work.

In relation to the postgraduate studies the judgment of the team is GOOD.

4.6. Peer Observations

There was no formal peer observation on teaching and learning until 2008. The department commenced peer observations in an informal level and it goes three years back. Sharing of information regarding teaching methods, student assessment, class participations etc., took place informally. This was happened in two forms: (1) conducting informal meetings to converse teaching learning and assessment methods they used, (2) Inviting evaluators to sit in the rear of the lecture and fill up evaluation forms at the end of the lecture.

This process was formalized in 2008 making compatible with the accepted procedures in the university system. Apart from peer observation of teaching, academic staff members have the opportunity of monitoring standards of courses by moderating exam question papers and evaluating answer scripts in two stages called first marking and second marking. The later, however is limited to final examinations of special degree programmes under newly introduced course unit system.

Apparently, peer observation is practiced to some extent in an informal way with mutual understanding. However, lack of a formal mechanism for peer observation and lack of follow

up actions were noted by the review team. The review team is in view that establishing a formal mechanism for peer observation would further help to enhance the quality of teaching.

In relation to peer observations the judgment of the review team is SATISFACTORY.

4.7. Skills Development

The skill development is achieved (1) through the inclusion of separate compulsory modules in academic degree programmes (e.g. training in research methods, computer awareness etc.), and (2) through the incorporation of these skills in teaching, learning and assessment process.

The department provides facilities for both special degree and general degree students to acquire basic computer literacy with the help of computer unit in the department as well as the faculty computer unit. Special degree students are trained on analytical computer software for real world problem solving. According the revision of curriculum new course units are entirely taught with the help of most suitable computer software for data analysis.

Proper channels are not available to enhance the English proficiency in the departmental level while it provides through the English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU) of the university through compulsory English course units. Because the ELTU guidance is not sufficient, the department has included *English for communication and Business writing* through the curriculum revision already done under IRQUE project. Further, students are encouraged to do their tutorials and class room presentations in English while selected course units conduct in both Sinhala and English media.

The personal and other skill development activities are carried out by the Career Guidance Unit of the university. Relevant workshops, seminars etc. are organised by this unit for the benefit of undergraduates. Many young academicians used to include multimedia / viva voice presentations in particular course units as assignments and it helps to develop and enhance personal and communicative skills among students.

An independent dissertation is a compulsory part of the academic programmes for final year students who follow special degrees. This component trains students on skills of scientific methodology of research. The final year research component is encouraged by giving some incentives under the IRQUE project and it is required to publish the findings in a refereed journals. Now some academic members are practicing this activity. Further, this enhances research skills not only for students but also for staff members.

The department organises a field trip once a year for final year special degree students. Students generally undertake field surveys with the help of academic members in this field trip. Consequently a report is prepared by using the survey results. Apart from that, students undertake field surveys for their final year independent dissertations. This helps students to enhance (a) questionnaire designing (b) practicing data collection methods (c) enumeration skills (d) data entry and processing (e) data analysis, interpretation and presentation of results.

Interpersonal skills such as communication skills, team work skills are imparted on students through group activities. In group activities members are given the opportunity to solve problems through brainstorming, discussing, learning and receiving and giving constructive

feedback on self and peer as a group. Presentation/ communication skills are imparted on students by necessitating them to do presentations.

In self-directed learning skills, students are trained to determine what needs to be learnt, identification of learning resources and seeking information, critiquing learning resources and applying the synthesised knowledge to the problem at hand. The final year research could be given as a lucid example for this.

Subject specific society in the department helps to improve their skills by organizing different activities such as publishing a magazine, guest lecturers, field trips etc. During the discussions held with the students as well as teaching sessions observed by the review team, the students were found to be quite confident and demonstrated good communication skills.

In relation to the skills development the judgment of the team is GOOD.

4.8. Academic Guidance and Counseling

Academic guidance and counseling operate formally and informally at department, faculty and University levels.

At university level, formally designated student counselors who are available for both academic and personal guidance and counseling are appointed. Considerable number of staff members from the department is appointed for this purpose each year. The career guidance for undergraduates has been recognised as a matter of policy by the University of Ruhuna. The career guidance unit was set up in March 2000 to provide career guidance services to the undergraduates. Since then the unit has implemented various programmes to make the undergraduates aware of the employment opportunities available, the quality expected by the employers and acquire the skills and the knowledge necessary for responding to the labour market needs.

At faculty level Students' handbook provides information on the various degree programmes, entry requirements, Course structures, Examination regulations etc. A course unit office (COU) provides information on academic programmes and its registration. In addition, the Dean and Head of Department give an introduction to the system, general information about the degree programmes, entry requirements, information on course structures and options etc. in the orientation programme organized for new entrants. Orientation programme organised by the student unions is an alternative informative procedure for new comers and is supported by the faculty staff members.

Department wise students are informed by the courses, its structure and much other valuable information with regard to the academic courses monitored by the department by course coordinators. Students are informed by the courses, its structure and much other valuable information with regard to the academic courses monitored by the department by department course unit coordinators. Senior students of the department of economics are organised an inauguration session in each year for the new comers to the department as special degree students. All new comers to the department are advised at this meeting with respect to academic programmes, direction to career opportunities, and regulations at the department as well as class rooms. At the beginning of the semester information of the objectives of the courses, week by week coverage of topics and relevant reference materials are given to students via the C1 form. Academic staff are also encouraged to announce due dates for

assignments well in advance to help students to plane their semester workload. A dissertation seminar is organised at the beginning of the academic year to offer student guidance on topic selection, writing of research proposal, data collection and analysis, preparation of bibliography etc. Students are required to meet their allocated supervisors on a regular basis. Students are advised on how to prepare their dissertations regularly throughout the year. Students are encouraged to meet with head of the department and / or individual staff members at an informal level for academic guidance. All staff members generally make themselves available to students for this purpose. Course lecturer can consult out side of the class room for any type of problem students are facing in their lives.

The review team realized that the student-staff relationship is satisfactory.

In relation to academic guidance and counseling the judgment of the team is GOOD.

Based on the observations made during the visit by the Review Team and as per the facts discussed above the judgments given to those eight aspects under review are as follows:

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

The overall judgment is suspended

5. CONCLUSIONS

1. Curriculum Design, Content and Review

Strengths/Good Practices

- The DoE follows a systematic procedure in curricula design.
- New curricular is developed and validity of the courses included in Economics, Social Statistics and Political Science specialization seems very pertinent to the present requirement of the country.
- Department consulted different kind of stakeholders including other university academic experts in curricular formation.
- Credit system, GPA and Semester system were adopted.
- The total four year curriculum carries a weight of 120 credits.

- Independent Research Report is available for the undergraduates to follow in the final year which encourages the undergraduates to apply the theoretical knowledge to the real world.
- The C1 form provides week by week breakdown of the curriculum.
- Some programmes are conducted in English Medium.

Weaknesses

- No elective and/or auxiliary courses are available for the undergraduates to select.
- Intended Learning Outcomes of courses are not explicit in line with the overall learning outcome

2. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods

Strengths/Good Practices

- Rich with qualified and experienced staff
- Good learning environment is maintained as Inter-relationship between students and teachers are very high.
- Aims at student centered teaching.
- Modern teaching methods are used. Multi media, handouts, white board, OHP, etc.
- Balanced assessment method is used. 80% for end semester examination and 20% for continues assessments.
- Practice of second marking and moderation with other university academics
- 80% of attendance are maintained.
- The students' attitudes towards the service delivered by academic and non academic staff in the department are very positive.
- Students are facilitated with Field Visits and Independent Research Report
- Maintaining a good departmental library
- Maintaining a departmental computer lab
- All the staff members are facilitated with a personal computer and a separate room

Weaknesses

- In-adequate commitment among some lecturers to acquire higher academic credentials.
- Modern teaching equipments are not properly used.
- E-learning system is not in practice.
- Availability of open source software
- No marking schemes are supplied for the second examiner

3. Quality of Students, including Student Progress and Achievement

Strengths/Good Practices

- High quality students are assured by the selection criteria for special degree programmes.
- The opportunity of getting jobs just after completion of the degree programme.
- The degree of employability of the graduates seems high.
- Expression of ideas by undergraduates are very positive
- Failure rate is very low or nil and more than 40% of students are getting awards
- Subject union is functioning well

Weaknesses

- No first classes obtained by students
- Student-staff ratio is below the norm

4. Extent and Use of Student Feedback

Strengths/Good Practices

- A questionnaire is developed to evaluate the teacher.
- The Head and some the staff members practices an open door policy and rapport developed between undergraduates and lecturers in the department
- The undergraduates do participate in the faculty meetings and their voice is given due consideration.

Weaknesses

- Students Evaluation sheets are not analysed therein feedback could not be incorporated.
- Students are not aware of some important steps taken by the Department, i.e. syllabus revision
- Students who follow political science special programme seem frustrated.

5. Postgraduate Studies

Strengths/Good Practices

- Several Post Graduate programmes are conducted.
- IRQUE project funded by the World Bank gives post graduate study opportunities for staff members
- A postgraduate link programme is established
- A senior professor, professor and senior lecturers who have developed a research culture with number of publications are a strength of the department
- The senior members of the academic staff have had the opportunity to perform duties as teaching and coordinating the postgraduate programmes

Weaknesses

- One year post graduate programme prevents some applicants to get promotions. i.e. University Lecturers.

6. Peer Observation

Strengths/Good Practices

- Moderation and second marking system are in practice.
- Departmental meetings are regularly held.

Weaknesses

- No formal peer observation system.
- Limited ground for sharing views of staff members.

7. Skills Development

Strengths/Good Practices

- IT and Computer learning facilities are adequate.
- Some courses are conducted in English Medium so that students can manage circumstances.
- Presentation skills are improved by individual and group presentations.
- Community related services make opportunities to improve, organize and develop leadership skills among undergraduates.
- Students subject union paves way to disseminate their knowledge.

Weaknesses

- ELTD courses seems not effective

8. Academic Guidance and Counseling

Strengths/Good Practices

- Orientation program conducted by the university for fresh students gives familiar environment in the University.
- Making available the undergraduates, at the beginning of the Programme, a copy of the Faculty Prospectus which contains the details of the degree programmes conducted by the faculty.
- Head functioning as student's academic counselor.
- A student counseling programme is available in the university in which two members of the Department perform duties as student counselors.

Weaknesses

- Lack of formal training for staff on the student counseling and guidance.
- No personal counseling or mentoring system

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made by the Review Team for further improvement of the programme being offered by the Department of Economies as the Review Team felt that they will be useful:

- Detailed syllabuses are prepared with learning outcomes. The course outlines in the module should be improved by including learning outcomes for each course, contents, reading list under each topic; and learning outcome of each course are prepared in line with the overall learning outcome of the degree programme.
- Introduce a number of elective and or auxiliary courses to enable the undergraduates to have a wider choice
- Marking schemes can be provided to second examiners
- To improve the employability of the graduates of the department, it is advisable to incorporate practical training as a compulsory credit course unit
- Political Science degree programme is with largest number of students and smallest staff. Therefore, it is observed that political science students and staff as well have the impression that they are over burdened with work load. Absence of sufficient number of experienced teachers has created a unsatisfactory situation among political science

students. Therefore, as a interim measure it is advisable that senior staff members of Economics can conduct special seminar type classes for political science students such that political science student do not feel that they are marginalized. In addition to an interim solution, review team also believes that a permanent solution to expand the teaching capacity of political science stream should take place in the long run. The Political Science degree programme can be further developed if it comes under an independent department.

- Licensed and updated computer software be used
- Incorporate feed back from the undergraduates in teaching as well as a formal peer observation method would help increasing the productivity of the department.
- The staff in the DoE be given a formal training on Academic Guidance & Counselling.
- A senior member can be assigned for academic counseling in the department.
- In curricular revision students should be informed.
- It will be very useful if course manuals can be developed for all the courses
- It is important to establish alumni association for the department to get views and support to develop the department.
- Try to maintain student- staff ratio at least the level of norm

7. ANNEXES

Annex 1. AGENDA FOR THE REVIEW VISIT

Day 1: 22/10/08

08.30 – 09.00	Private meeting of the Review Team with Prof. Colin Peiris, Quality Assurance Specialist
09.00 – 09.30	Meeting with the Vice Chancellor, Chairman/ Quality Assurance Unit, Dean/ HSS and Head of Department
09.30 – 10.00	Review team discusses the agenda for the visit with HOD
10.00 – 10.30	Tea & Meeting with Department staff
10.30 – 11.30	Dept. Presentation on the Self – Evaluation Report
11.30 – 12.30	Discussion
12.30 – 13.00	Observe Documents
13.00 – 14.00	Lunch
14.00 – 15.00	Meeting with undergraduates (Special Degree Students)
15.00 – 16.00	Meeting with Economics Society
16.00 – 17.00	Meeting with General Students
17.00 – 17.30	Meeting of Reviewers

Day 2: 23/10/08

08.00 – 09.00	Observing Teaching – Lecture (ECN 1101 Basic Microeconomics – Lecture Theatre LT1)
09.00 – 10.00	Observing Teaching – Lecture (ECN 4102 Advanced Economics Theory – Room ED1)
10.00 – 11.00	Observing Teaching – Lecture (POS 4104 – Room ED1)
11.00 – 11.30	Observing Teaching – Lecture (POS 3102 – Lecture Theatre LT4)
11.30 – 12.30	Meeting with Department Academic Staff
12.30 – 13.30	Lunch
13.30 – 14.00	Meeting with Dept. Non- Academic Staff
14.00 – 14.30	Observing Teaching – Lecture (STS 4101 – ED3)
14.30 – 15.30	Observing Documents
15.30 – 16.30	Observing Facilities
16.30 – 17.00	Meeting of Reviewers

Day 3: 24/10/08

08.30 – 09.30	Meeting with Counselors & Academic Advisers
09.30 – 10.00	Meeting with postgraduate students
10.00 – 11.00	Observing Student Presentations
11.00 – 12.00	Meeting with Head & Staff for Reporting
12.00 – 13.00	Lunch
13.00 – 17.00	Report – Writing