

SUBJECT REVIEW REPORT

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY



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

29th to 31st December 2008

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1. SUBJECT REVIEW PROCESS

This report presents the findings of the subject review conducted at the department of Sociology, University of Ruhuna during 29^h to 31st of December 2009 under the guidance of Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council of the University Grants Commission Sri Lanka. According to the guidelines given by the QAA Council, the subject review process is expected to meet the objective of understanding the contribution of a particular department in producing high quality and employable graduates through the undergraduate and post graduate programmes offered by the department reviewed while gratifying the national level demands made on university education. The review was carried out by a three member review team based on the self evaluation report presented by the department of Sociology at the University of Ruhuna recognizing its contribution in satisfying the above mentioned objectives with reference to the aims and outcomes presented by the department while identifying possible lapses which may hinder gaps and suggesting ways to redress if any such lapses exist.

The review process began with the routine discussion the review team had with Prof. Colin N.Peirirs, the QA specialist of the Quality Assurance and accreditation Council of the University Grants Commission of Sri Lanka, discussing the procedures of the review process which helped the reviewers to recall and prepare for the protocols of the process. This was followed by a brief meeting the review team and the QA Specialist had with the Vice Chancellor of the University of Ruhuna, Deputy Vice Chancellor, and the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Head of the Department of Sociology.

The team had a discussion with the Head of the Department of Sociology, Dr. Ranaweera Banda in order to finalize the agenda in a manner that would effectively facilitate the review process followed by a presentation made by the Head of the Department based on the self evaluation report. The review team had a lengthy discussion with the head and the staff clarifying the issues related to the presentation and the report.

The review team with the assistance given by the members of the staff of the department was able to observe facilities related to the department including lecture halls, computer units, the library, office facilities and offices of the lecturers (list of the facilities observed is given in Annexure B). In addition, the review team also attended two lectures conducted by two members of the department, Mr. Hemantha Kumara and Ms. Gayathri Wijesundara. The team also observed the presentations made by students on their research findings.

Discussions were held with two groups of students; one with the general degree students of all three years offering sociology as a subject and the other with the special degree students of third and fourth years. A meeting was held with the members of the non-academic staff including the clerk, trainee and the office assistant.

A variety of documents were pursued by the review team (A list is provided as Annexure D). A meeting was held with the Diploma students which provided useful insights into the existing Diploma programmes in the department. However, the review team did not have an opportunity to meet the post graduate students, therefore. The student perspective about the post graduate programmes in the department is lacking in the report.

The review team presented their findings of the three day review to the head and the staff of the department of Sociology and their feed back also was obtained as the last item on the

agenda of the three day review. This provided space for the review team and the members of the staff to agree on and make clarifications on the issues raised at the presentation by the review team.

2. BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY AND THE DEPARTMENT

The University of Ruhuna was established by a Special Presidential Decree on 1st September 1978, as the Ruhuna University College, fulfilling a long cherished desire of the people of Southern Sri Lanka. Initially it constituted with four faculties, namely, Agriculture, Arts, Medicine and Science. The Faculties of Agriculture and Science were located in the premises of Technical College at Meddawatte, Matara, whereas the Faculty of Arts was located in the premises of Teachers' Training College at Eliyakanda, Matara. These three faculties were initially affiliated to the Universities of Peradeniya, Kelaniya and Colombo respectively. The Faculty of Medicine was affiliated to the University of Colombo and the first batch of students who enrolled for the M.B.B.S. Degree was sent to the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo. This affiliation was continued until the Ruhuna University College was upgraded to a fully-fledged University on 1st February 1984. A Faculty of Engineering was established in Hapugala, Galle in the year 2000. In 2003, the Faculty of Management and Finance was established initially with two departments of study. At the outset, the study programmes in Business Administration had been offered by the Department of Business Administration within the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. The most recent addition to the list of faculties in the University of Ruhuna is the Faculty of Fisheries & Marine Sciences & Technology which was set up in the year 2005. Thus the University presently comprises of seven faculties.

Faculties of Science, Management & Finance, Fisheries & Marine Sciences & Technology and Humanities & Social Sciences are located in the main campus premises at Wellamadama, Matara and Faculties of Agriculture and Medicine are located in Kamburupitiya, and Karapitiya, Galle, respectively. The central administration unit of the University is also located at the University Complex, which is situated in a scenic site at Wellamadama with an extent of about 72 acres. It is bordered by the sea and paddy fields and is in close proximity to Dondra, the Southern tip of Sri Lanka.

The University offers basic degree programmes in their respective disciplines and also offers postgraduate degrees of M.A., M.B.A., M.Sc., M.Phil. and Ph.D. In addition, Diploma and Certificate Courses are conducted in various disciplines.

A total of 272 students were enrolled for the bachelors' degree programmes during the first Academic Year (1978/79) and at the commencement of the 2006/07 Academic Year it had been increased to 6752 for all faculties. For the purpose of centralizing and promoting postgraduate studies in all faculties, an independent body of Postgraduate Studies was established in June 2003. Moreover, in order to develop distance education programmes, the university was able to establish an External Examinations Division in 1997 at Kamburupitiya and it was shifted later to the main university complex.

The University of Ruhuna is now a well-established fully fledged university. It is indeed making an outstanding contribution to the national and regional development of the country. The members of its academic staff serve as consultants and advisors to a wide spectrum of national bodies and professional associations.

In terms of its future prospects, the university is now in the process of developing and upgrading short-term and long-term programmes of teaching and research. The curriculum revisions to suit national needs have been concluded in par with wide range of national and international universities, introducing the semester system with course units based on course credits. The effort proves that University of Ruhuna is deeply committed to the development of quality academic programmes in the best interest of the human resource development of Sri Lanka

Vision and Mission of the University

Vision:

“To be an internationally respected, outstanding 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 internationally accredited outstanding graduates who are innovative, analytical, articulate, balanced and adaptable, with lifelong 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 faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences is one of the few faculties that has been within the University of Ruhuna from its origin when it functioned as a university college affiliated to the University of Colombo. Since 1984, from the time the University College became a full pledged university the faculty of Humanities and Social Science has begun to operate as an independent body with six fully developed departments that offers bachelors, Masters and Doctoral degrees.

The faculty has extended its academic and skill development activities by establishing a computer centre, a cultural centre and a centre for modern languages. Under the IRQUE project the faculty has planned two additional programmes in Information Technology and English Language Proficiency catering to the skill development of the student population of the faculty.

Vision and Mission of the Faculty

Vision

The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences be a centre of academic and scientific excellence nationally and internationally.

Mission

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

The department of Sociology has been able to attract the largest number of students among the six academic departments in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. The

department has 12 permanent members at present in the academic staff and 3 temporary lecturers.

The department activities are carried out following the guidelines of the cooperate plan. Although the department has not been able to meet the targets set by the cooperate plan in terms of post graduate training of the academic staff, obtaining five PhDs, 5 lecturers who have received training at the MA/MPhil level have been an asset to the department.

During the relatively short history of the department since its establishment, the department has been able to make the subject of sociology a popular subject which is in high demand. The department offers courses for undergraduates in general and special level degree programmes. The department also offers two diplomas for graduates and non-graduates, in Community Development and in Psychological Counseling which provides the necessary training for many who have been employed in areas that requires such training. The department also makes a significant contribution to the external degree programme in the university. Sociology offers six course units for external degree programme and the numbers registered in the external degree programmes are considerably high, which demonstrate the demand for such programmes. Being a university located quite far away from Colombo, such programmes cater to a larger community who seek opportunities to advance and upgrade their knowledge and qualifications in sociology related subject areas.

Three postgraduate degree programmes are also offered by the department; M.A., MPhil and PhD in Sociology. The student numbers registered in these programmes at the moment are considerably low, yet the department provides an opportunity for those who wish to improve their knowledge and qualifications in the field of sociology. No one so far has completed a PhD in the department, yet 2 are registered in the programme while 4 have completed the MPhil programme and one has completed the MA programme.

The academic members of the department have involved in a large number of research activities and also have contributed to a large number of publications. The department also has contributed to the national level needs in various ways. Once the department goal of post graduate training of its members has achieved, the department can have positive hopes for a better future.

Vision and Mission of the Department

Vision

“To become internationally reputed academic centre that is devoted to produce academics who are committed to rigorous scholarship, critical view on society, sound moral values and social responsibility.”

Mission

“To produce highly competent and outstanding graduates who are capable of and devoted to contribute the academic advancement and social development.”

3. AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

3.1. Aims

Sociology explores the changing nature of human action and the organization and structure of society, its major institutions, values and patterns of human association. Sociology allows us to interrogate common-sense assumptions about the social world, to challenge ideas about what is 'natural', and to better understand social relations, values and action. What is expected from students choosing sociology is to engage themselves with the complexity of society, learning about the social, cultural, economic and political processes that shape human experience and through which humans shape the social world. Therefore any given aims of a department of sociology and its learning outcomes need to reflect these expectations.

The main aim of the department is to “be an internationally reputed center of excellence in sociology.”

3.2 Learning Outcomes

Intended learning outcomes of the department are:

1. The department of sociology is in the process of building contacts with public, corporate, and NGO sector to share knowledge for mutual benefits. This will enable the students and also the staff to involve in research, training and dissemination of knowledge in the form of conducting workshops, publishing research findings etc. Similarly, this will open an avenue to the students to find internships during or at the end of their academic programmes.
2. More emphasis will be paid by the Department of Sociology to involve in community work as part of its curricular. The expected outcome of this exercise is primarily to enhance practical experience of undergraduates. It is intended to introduce a course on Social Work based on the experiences gained from community work.

4. FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW TEAM

Findings of the review team are presented here under the 8 categories given in the guidelines for subject reviews.

4.1. Curriculum Design, Content and Review

The department offer courses for B.A. General degree and special degree in Sociology as well as M.A, Mphil and PhD programmes in Sociology. The department also offers two diploma courses which accommodate both graduates and non graduates from a variety of disciplines, namely, Diploma in Community Development and Diploma in Psychological Counseling.

Total number of course offered by the department for the special degree students is 24 out of which two are foundation level courses taught in the First Year and another 6 course are common for both special and general degree students. However, the only difference

between the special and the general degree programmes with regard to the curricular is that every semester students following the special degree programme are supposed to take one additional compulsory course unit and one optional unit than what is followed by the general degree students apart from the 6 course units the former offer in the fourth year. Due to the unavailability of more than one optional course unit, the optional unit also practically has become a compulsory unit.

Students do not seem to have provided with the choice of selecting courses they prefer to follow which affect the very idea of the course unit system which is to provide the students a larger flexibility in deciding the course units they want to follow. This also may hinder their prospects in the employment market.

Majority of the course units are conventionally accepted units for undergraduate level sociology students which of course is essential in laying the foundation in sociology, yet, students do not have access to newly developed study areas and more pragmatic course units within the discipline which better equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary for employment as well as critical thought.

Nevertheless, the course content seems to be fairly up to date and comprehensive. This feature however, is not reflected in the bibliographies provided along with the course outlines. Most of the recommended readings seem to be fairly outdated, some from 1960s and even before. Although the review team accepts the fact that sociological classics and other well acclaimed secondary sources can never be considered outdated, bulk of the secondary readings need to be comprised of more contemporary sources.

The review team also would like to suggest reconsidering some of the course titles adopted by the department. For example, the course title 'Criminology' is a vast area of study with a number of sub fields. One course unit under this title would be too broad and need to be more focused. On the other hand, 'Democracy, Mass Media and Justice' are three different broad areas of study which in the department has been used as the title for a single course unit. At times, this focus can also be too narrow. An example, for this situation is reflected in the course unit Social Aspects of Child Labour. 'Women and Society' is a course unit that does not seem to have a clear focus due to its limitless nature. It would also be worthwhile considering the suitability of the title 'Project Planning and Organization of Workshops' as a title for an academic course unit, even though the team does not deny the importance of the theme in the present day context. Course titles need to be justifiable for the level of study, the time frame within which the course is being taught as well as what is acceptable within the global discursive practices of academic sociology.

Dissertation component of the department which is a mandatory element for the final year special degree students also need to be commented on. This is a process running through two semesters where students need to be guided carefully. The department does not seem to have clear guidelines on the dissertation process nor has the department produced a formal document in this regard. The department also does not seem to organize special lectures (not as regular courses but as a series of lectures tailor-made to each batch) to address the specific issues related to dissertations such as proposal writing, dissertation writing and analysis, referencing etc. The department has made it a requirement for the students to get their dissertation topics approved and the research proposals to be accepted by the department. Yet, less attention is given to one of the most critical aspects of a dissertation,

the literature review. There is no process to evaluate or approve the literature component which would be the foundation of the entire study.

Students seem to begin the research process even prior to the finalizing of the research proposal. There is no normative time limitation provided for the data collection process, data analysis and report writing. The second semester of the third year is dedicated to all of these aspects which certainly do not provide adequate time for the students to reasonably complete any of these segments. The department needs to provide clear and proper guidelines on the whole research process, perhaps beginning the whole process early and formalizing the process.

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

4. 2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment Method

The department offers courses for both general and special degrees and at the undergraduate, diploma and postgraduate levels. The external degree program also constitutes a major teaching responsibility undertaken by the members of academic staff.

The department offers 24 course units shared by the 12 permanent members and the temporary staff. As it appears, the teaching load of the staff is quite low, less than two course units per year. Team teaching is an interesting feature where one course unit is taught by a number of members. This breaks the possible monotony of the course when taught by a single teacher and also facilitates different view points to come in. From the students' point of view, lectures are clear and well prepared. This fact was substantiated by the lectures observed. Lecturers possess good presentation skills and demonstrate the ability to maintain the attention of large numbers of students throughout the lectures. Handouts are cyclostyled and distributed. However, too many individuals teaching one course could confuse the students with too many approaches and also further reduces the individual workload of academic staff.

However, the external degree related work seems to consume much of the time of the academic staff that could be utilized for internal teaching and academic research activities. Although teaching for the external degree is limited to few weekends, evaluating scripts is highly time-consuming as each lecturer would receive about 1500 scripts per year.

Examination procedures follow the accepted guidelines, papers are moderated, and second marking is usually done. However, there is no procedure adopted for language scrutiny to assure the language standards of the examinations. In most instances, questions asked seem to be too general and usually do not refer to the prescribed texts. On the other hand, most questions also do not seem to offer students opportunities to demonstrate their analytical abilities.

Three hour examination papers are offered for examinations expecting the students answer 5 questions out of eight for the general degree and 4 out of eight for the special degree. If the department gives enough credit for the continuous assessment component, this system of examination needs to be restructured providing more value for continuous assessment rather than relying heavily on final examinations.

The language seems to be a major barrier for the students to engage in a deep learning process during their years of study in the university. Although the students show an obvious keenness in learning English, the teaching or examination procedures do not seem to take this factor into consideration. None of the courses are taught in English, and often handouts also are prepared in Sinhala only. Yet, most teachers provide the technical terms in English.

This lethargic attitude towards English language is reflected in academic activities of the students. There is a high demand for vernacular publications among the students and they hardly read even the essential readings in English.

The students have completed seemingly interesting dissertations despite these shortcomings. However, bibliographies are highly limited and do not refer to even the most relevant and essential readings, books or journals available on the themes selected. This could be a result of the difficulties they have in reading in English. Technical inaccuracy in providing references seems to be a common deficiency among many students.

The staff has a large number of publications to their credit which is commendable. However, the tendency of the department on the whole is to write basic texts, and this has moved away the staff from concentrating on writing ethnographies or other extensive field-work based academic writings. The same weakness with regard to bibliographies and referencing seen in student dissertations could also be identified in staff publications as well. Bibliographies in many publications were not well organized or were incomplete which the review team regarded could mislead students who might read these texts and could in turn be reflected in their work as well.

The staff members also have been involved in a large number of research projects over the years. This could contribute to enhance the knowledge of the teachers on contemporary social situations and issues that would be highly beneficial in teaching.

Despite the department's access to modern teaching equipment, teaching methods adopted by the lecturers seem to be rather conventional. The inadequacy of equipment available to be used simultaneously in different lectures could be a major reason for this situation. The department has three class rooms used for special degree courses and faculty lecture halls are used for larger groups. Class room environment does not provide a pleasant environment for learning. The rooms are crowded with furniture, and distract the communication between teachers and students. The auditorium used for majority of lectures does not provide a proper learning environment. Students do not have facilities to take down notes, nor are they able to listen to the lecturer if they had to sit at the further end of the hall. Often the auditorium cannot accommodate the full group of students, forcing many of them to sit on the floor or are compelled to miss the lectures.

Lecturers come to the classes prepared for teaching the selected topics. Yet, the lectures seemingly rely heavily on individual knowledge rather than theoretical knowledge. No readings are provided in the handouts. The library is in a poor condition as far as the subject material is concerned. There was absolutely no provision of subject-related journals in the library and no classics and recent text books were available. Inadequacy of new library material in the field of sociology does not accommodate the student interest in in-depth reading while diverting their interest towards a few books available in Sinhala. There are no adequate numbers of copies even of the available books in the library. The members of the academic staff expressed that the complicated system of cataloguing, lack of online

access to the library and 'secretive' nature of how the library related information is maintained make it difficult not only for the students but also for the staff to make much use of the library.

Less emphasis on continuous assessments also inhibit self learning ability of the students that is significantly necessary at the university level. CAs in the form of presentations, assignments or mid semester examinations are not common to all course units. Continuous assessments are given only 20% of marks. Final examinations are given the major emphasis in evaluation which diminishes the importance of continuance assessments. Three credits per course unit is the accepted practice. The dissertation is given 4 credits. However, the standard practice is to allocate 6 credits for the dissertation due to the workload involved therein. Students do not receive their continuous assessments back often preventing the opportunity for leaning from the feed back. No discussion classes are held even for those lectures that have large numbers of students preventing close interaction between the teachers and the students.

The calculation of GPA in the special degree programme does not follow the standard norm of 120 credits at the completion of the programme, instead 132 credits are expected for a 4 year degree. When the course units offered are limited, it is a question whether this high level credit requirement have any significant meaning except overburdening the students.

It is important to mention about the learning outcomes adopted by the department. The learning outcomes are not clear nor are they designed with a clear objective for achievement. This lack of clarity in learning outcomes could be reflected in the targets of both teaching and learning; therefore, the department needs to reformulate some tangible learning outcomes to reflect the vision and mission of the department.

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

4. 3 Quality of Students including Student Progress and Achievements

The staff of the department was of the view that the completion rate is good with regard to courses in sociology. Yet, the 10% dropout rate as shown in the given statistics is a considerable rate of dropouts and need to pay attention to. The students seem to be enthusiastic about learning and achievement yet, many students have lost their interest in quality learning due to problems they face during the university. Majority of the students come from rather rural backgrounds and apart from the financial housing and other difficulties the students face they do not have an attractive learning environment in the university. Students also were concerned about their apparent isolation from the overall academic environment in the rest of the country. They expressed their desire to get more opportunities to be involved in outside academic activities and links. Nevertheless, some students showed a high level of academic interest as demonstrated in the discussions held with the students.

The students showed a good level of competence in the subjects they addressed during their presentations. Also the presentations observed confirmed that the students have cultivated good presentation skills over the years and they are taking an attempt to combine the theories they learned with their field findings which showed that their learning has helped to cultivate a sociological insight within them as expected from the learning outcomes.

However, the breakdown of results or answer scripts was not available for the perusal of the review team.

Perhaps due to the less emphasis on the theoretical component in research, dissertations seem to lack the theoretical rigor in addressing and analyzing the issues concerned. Lack of adequate knowledge on the subject resulted by less access to or unawareness of the relevant literature seem to be a major hindrance for their achievement, especially when the quality of dissertations are concerned. Encouraging the students to learn English by giving handouts in English, providing English summaries of the lectures, encouraging making presentations in English and using English classes to discuss the subject matter whenever possible could be useful ways in gradually preparing them to be familiar with and use the literature available in English. Since much of the very important sociological texts are not available in vernacular languages, this is a highly needed step forward in improving the quality of undergraduate education.

It would be good if a proper filing system has been adopted in the department. In order to maintain transparency, mid and end of semester examination papers together with marking schemes, student results, and minutes of department meetings with important departmental level decisions need to be maintained providing easy access.

The students were concerned about lack of opportunity to gain practical knowledge. Although field training is a well established component in the department, there are no other opportunities provided to involve in practical level activities in relation the subject areas they study. Students also suggested that it would help them in receiving employment if a job placement scheme could be introduced that is already in place in some other departments in the university. No information was available on student employment status

It is necessary to mention here that the students had a high regard for their teachers and they felt that the teachers are available for them to discuss both academic and private concerns. The availability of teachers and their high involvement with the students have helped the students to overcome some of the difficulties they face due to structural problems that affect their education.

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

4.4. Extent and use of Student Feedback

The department does not have made it a regular practice to obtain student feed back at the end of semesters, nor have they followed formal procedures in this regard. Some academics however, have continued the practice of obtaining student feed back over the years, yet, no analysis has been done with regard to the information obtained. Therefore, the teachers have not been able to get a clear idea about the students' perceptions about the quality of teaching as presented in those student feed back forms.

There are informal methods adopted in the department to get the student feedback. Close relations the teachers maintain with the students help the teachers to receive some sort of a feed back from the students on their teaching related activities. During the teaching sessions, teachers follow the usual practice of asking the students whether they understood the subject matter presented. Various meeting held with the students such as meetings of the

Students' Sociological Association, although irregular, provided such opportunity for teachers to receive feedback on their teaching

However, the distance between teachers and students in many large classes prevent a close interaction between the teacher and the student. In such occasions, students give their comments and questions to the lecturer in the form of small written notes. Since most of the lectures are common for both general and special degree students, the classes are usually large and no apparent interaction take place between the students and the teachers. Rather small class rooms that are crowded with furniture and equipments were not conducive for such interaction.

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

4. 5 Postgraduate Studies

The department offers three post graduate programmes, M.A, M.Phil and PhD. None of these are taught courses in the department and once the students get registered for these they are supposed to work under the guidance of the appointed supervisor. Supervisors are appointed taking their specialties on the subject concern into consideration.

The department has planned to introduce a new postgraduate programme in Social Work, a Masters Degree (MSW). Even though Social Work is a highly needed subject area in the current socio political situation in the country and it is a worthwhile effort to consider the possibilities of establishing this programme, it would be a huge challenge to introduce such a programme without a single academic in the department who is qualified in the field. It would be important to consider the nature of the subject area which makes it a unique discipline despite the close associations it has with the fields of sociology and psychology.

The department has only two PhDs at the moment although there is a PhD programme in the department, which also need to be considered. It would be appropriate to have a manageable number of students in this programme within a range of topics that can be handled by the available qualified staff. The visiting staff seems to be fulfilling this inadequacy, yet in the absence of a taught programme support of the visiting staff in running the postgraduate programmes could be highly limited.

The review team did not have an opportunity to meet the postgraduate students. However, the team had a fairly lengthy discussion with the diploma students. As was expressed by the latter, the inadequate attention paid to learning in English also seemed to be hampering the level of subject knowledge of the postgraduate students.

Unavailability of current literature in the library related to the subjects involved could seriously jeopardize the achievements of the postgraduate students, especially in a situation where they are engaged in self studies.

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

4. 6 Peer Observations

The department does not have a regular and formal system of peer evaluation. Yet, there are formal systems in place to moderate the question papers and for second marking which gives an opportunity to peer evaluate the examination procedures.

Some of the teachers in the department very informally have adopted the practice of inviting a colleague to sit in their classes and comment on their teaching and subject matter taught. However, this is a rare practice and would be beneficial for the department to consider improving on this aspect.

Team teaching carried out in the department also provides an opportunity for peer reviews if it has been properly organized. However, at the moment this opportunity is not been utilized by the department.

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

4. 7 Skills Development

Field research program is the main skill development activity carried out in the department. It is an opportunity for the students to develop their skills in the application of research methods and techniques they learn in the classroom, working together with fellow students and interact with the members of the community in different environments.

Dissertation writing and assignments cater to improve their cognitive abilities and writing skills. This facilitates the students to learn how to organize the subject matter and field findings combining them with their own contemplations and interpretations.

Class room presentations help the students to improve their presentation skills although it is not a regular activity adopted in all course units. During the presentations observed students demonstrated high level presentation skills.

Other than the above mentioned, this is an area where the department has not provided much opportunities for improvement. There was no opening provided to develop the analytical skills of the students either in the examinations or in writing assignments and the dissertation. The written documents observed were merely descriptive and did not include analytical comprehension that is imperative to be developed among the students of sociology.

The department has not taken any significant steps to develop English and IT skills among the students which has become essential to meet the present demands of the employment market. There is a dire need in the department to include ways to promote IT skills and English proficiency within the curricular of the department. The course units related activities do not require students to use computers on a regular basis, nor are the students familiar with web based learning.

Even though most of the subject related readings are in English, the majority of students restrict themselves to the use the few available sources in Sinhala. Despite the efforts taken by some teachers in the department to persuade the students to get into the habit of reading in English, there are no adequate measures taken to make it an essential component in the

department. This prevents the students from aspiring to acquire deeper knowledge on the issues and themes concerned while inhibiting their personal development in meeting the demands of a present day university graduate. Incorporating the ways to upgrade IT & English skills into the curriculum while providing necessary infra structural facilities for this purpose would ensure the high quality learning as well as the skills necessary to compete in the in the world outside.

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

4.8. Academic Guidance and Counseling

There is no formal procedure followed in the department to ensure the students receive necessary academic guidance and counseling. However, this is an aspect the department demonstrated its strengths in.

According to the students almost all the academic members of the department are friendly and can be accessed easily facilitating the close rapport between the students and the staff. This provides an opportunity for the students to informally meet the lecturers to discuss their problems.

Lecturers very often involve in academic guidance and counseling in an informal setting on a daily basis. Conflict study centre of the faculty has a student counseling centre which receives the service of a trained counselor. There are several visiting lectures who are qualified in the field of counseling involved in the Diploma programme in counseling who are much helpful in an informal setting in the student matters. Yet, considering the numbers seeking help which is according to the professional counselor at least 4-7 cases a day this is an area that needs to be expanded. In addressing this issue, many of the members of the academic staff provide the necessary guidance for the students in study related matters and also in personal matters within their capacity to handle and refer to the professional counselor only the students who are in need of professional help. Some form of professional training would be important for the members of staff when the service provided by them in this regard is concerned.

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

5. CONCLUSIONS

The following overall judgments were assigned to the 8 aspects reviewed in the Department of Sociology of the University of Ruhuna, considering the information presented in the Self Evaluation Report and during the review process. Certain structural limitations faced by the department at the time of the review including the inadequate physical space and large student numbers were taken into consideration in arriving these judgements by the review team.

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

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- It may be necessary to look into the existing credit limit for general degree and GPA calculating systems in order to synchronize the programme with the nationally accepted standards.
- More optional course units need to be introduced to avoid all course units offered by the department becoming mandatory.
- A curriculum revision would be important in the department not only in deciding on which new course units to be introduced but also to revise the existing curriculum.
- It would be beneficial to reconsider dissertation component including the credit system adopted here.
- Examination procedures need to be reformulated giving more value for continuous assessments. Exams can be used to train the students in more analytical thinking.
- Introducing a mandatory continuous assessment system would be highly beneficial for the students. A variety of assessment methods could be used without overburdening the teachers in the department.
- It would be highly necessary to devise a method within the department perhaps with the help of the English Language Teaching Unit to retain and utilize the interest of the students to learn English. When the students realize that it does not become an essential part of learning, they tend to lose both the interest and the confidence.
- The encouragement given by the staff in using more relevant and current literature while emphasizing the necessity to be theoretically sound in their academic work would be highly beneficial in maintaining the quality of the degree and also for the future academic development of the students.
- Student feed back procedures need to be formalized considering the future benefits that the department may receive through this process. Use of a properly designed form including the issues such as course content, factual accuracy, clarity and modes of delivery would make the feed back worthwhile for the department and the lecturer concerned.
- It would be necessary to consider the existing human resources in the department and the possibility of improving in introducing new postgraduate programmes and expanding the existing ones.

- Peer observation aspect need to be strengthened which can be done with the existing human resources in the department without much effort. Established guidelines could be adopted in this regard without falling into unwanted problems.
- Academic guidance and counseling aspects could be strengthened in linking the existing resources with the external resources such as what is available in the carrier guidance unit. Guidance in the area of employment could help to address the unemployment issue which is a high concern among the students.
- Identification of necessary skills in the job market and strengthening the skill development aspect would be a highly necessary area to be improved. Including the identified skills in the teaching and learning process may enhance the teachers' concern on this particular aspect and the students' interest in achieving those skills.
- Concern on a proper filing system would enable the smooth functioning of the department.

7. ANNEXES

Annex 1. AGENDA FOR THE REVIEW VISIT -

29th December, 2008

8.30 – 9.00 a.m.	Meeting of the Review Panel with QAA Council Representatives
9.00 -10.00 a.m.	Meeting with the Vice Chancellor, Dean, Head of the Department
10.00- 10.30 a.m.	Discussion on the agenda for agreement (with tea)
10.30 – 11.30 a.m.	Department presentation on the Self Evaluation Report
11.30 - 12.30 a.m.	Discussion
12.30 – 13.30 p.m.	Lunch
13.30 – 14.30 p.m.	Observing Department Facilities
14.30 – 15.30 p.m.	Meeting with the academic staff of the department (with tea)
15.30 – 16.30 p.m.	Meeting with the undergraduate students
16.30 – 17.30 p.m.	Reviewer's meeting

30th December, 2008

9.00 -11.00 a.m.	Observing teaching and meeting with non-academic staff
11.00- 12.30 a.m.	Observing documents (with tea)
10.30 – 11.30 a.m.	Meeting with diploma students
11.30 - 12.30 a.m.	Meeting with student counselors
12.30 – 13.30 p.m.	Lunch
13.30 – 14.30 p.m.	Observing Documents
14.30 – 15.30 p.m.	Observing documents (with tea)
15.30 – 16.30 p.m.	Meeting with the undergraduate students
16.30 – 17.30 p.m.	Reviewer's meeting

31st December, 2008

9.00 -10.00 a.m.	Observing student presentations
10.00- 10.30 a.m.	Observing the library and other facilities (with tea)
10.30 – 11.00 a.m.	Observing teaching
11.00 – 11.30 a.m.	Reviewers Private Discussion
11.30 - 12.30 a.m.	Meeting with the staff for reporting
12.30 – 13.30 p.m.	Lunch
13.30 – 14.30 p.m.	Report Writing

Annex 2. LIST OF FACILITIES OBSERVED

1. Office of the Department
2. Lecturers' Rooms
3. Lecture Halls
4. Computer Unit
5. English Language Training Unit
6. Library

Annex 3. LIST OF AVAILABLE RESOURCES (MATERIAL) IN THE DEPARTMENT

Telephone

- 1 Computer for Secretaries
 - 1 Computer for the Head of the department
 - 1 Multi media projector
 - 3 Photo Copy Machines
 - 2 OHPs
 - 1 Scanner
 - 1 TV set
 - 3 Internet connections
 - 14 Computers and 3 Printers for staff use (A PC for each permanent staff member)
- Adequate stationary available for hand outs and documentation

Annex 4. LIST OF DOCUMENTS OBSERVED

- Hand Book of the Faculty of Social Sciences
- Course Outlines
- Handouts
- Past Examination Papers (End of Semester)
- Mid Semester Examination Papers
- Attendance Sheets
- Mark Sheets
- Dissertations
- Student evaluation forms
- Visiting Staff Records
- Faculty Board Minutes
- Senate Minutes
- Academic staff Publications