

SUBJECT REVIEW REPORT

**DEPARTMENT OF
LANGUAGES AND CULTURAL STUDIES**



**FACULTY OF ARTS
UNIVERSITY OF SRI JAYEWARDENEPURA**

24th to 26th May 2010

Review Team :

Mr. Ariyaratne Kaluarachchi, University of Visual and Performing Arts
Dr. (Ms.) Niroshini Gunasekera, University of Kelaniya
Prof. Lakshman Seneviratne, University of Kelaniya
Dr. Sanath Wijesundara, University of Peradeniya

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1. SUBJECT REVIEW PROCESS

Accountability for quality and standards is an important feature required to promote and safeguard public confidence in Sri Lankan Higher Education.. Hence Universities must undertake the responsibility for maintaining quality and standards. To achieve these objectives, a process of subject review and institutional review was introduced by the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Directors together with the University Grants Commission.

The subject review process evaluates the quality of education within a specific discipline and is focused on evaluating the student learning experience, student achievement and the teaching-learning process. Key features of the subject review process include the critical analysis of the self evaluation report prepared by the academic department concerned, peer observation of teaching, observation of documents, observation of the facilities available, and gathering information on activities towards quality assurance through conducting discussions with students and staff and other possible stakeholders. Subject reviews assess how the teaching-learning process helps in the achievement of intended learning outcomes. A report on the subject review process will be prepared after the review incorporating the findings of the review. In the report, the strengths and good practices will be highlighted and the weaknesses will also be stated together with some recommendations. Each aspect will be given a judgment of good, satisfactory or unsatisfactory. The draft report will be then sent to the department concerned and the feedback will be obtained. If there is disagreement with any judgment, it would be resolved by the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council (QAAC) through discussion. The judgment will be submitted to the Standing Committee on Quality Assurance of the UGC for approval. After its approval, the report will be published in the QAAC website, www.qaacouncil.lk. The department has to improve the quality of the aspects that receive a judgment of unsatisfactory within 6 months of approving the judgments by the Standing Committee on Quality Assurance of the UGC.

Aspects of the subject review

In the subject review process, the evaluation was directed at the following eight aspects.

- (1) Curriculum Design, Content and Review
- (2) Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods
- (3) Quality of Students Including Student Progress and Achievements
- (4) Extent and Use of Student Feedback, Qualitative and Quantitative
- (5) Postgraduate Studies
- (6) Peer Observation
- (7) Skills Development
- (8) Academic Guidance and Counseling

The following review team was appointed by the QAAC of the University Grants Commission to conduct the subject review of the Department of Languages and Cultural Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Sri Jayewardenepura.

Mr. Ariyaratne Kaluarachchi/ University of Visual and Performing Arts

Dr. Niroshini Gunasekera/ University of Kelaniya

Prof. Lakshan Seneviratne/ University of Kelaniya

Dr. Sanath Wijesundara/ University of Peradeniya

2. BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY, FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT

The Department of Languages and Cultural Studies was established in 1972. However, Sanskrit was taught under the Faculty of Languages since the inception of the *Vidyodaya University* in 1959, formally known as the *Vidyodaya Pirivena* established in 1875. Therefore, the beginning of the Department can be considered as the year of the commencement of the University.

Later on, the languages taught under the Faculty of Languages were taken under the Faculty of Arts. Therefore, the Department of Languages is among one of the oldest departments of the Faculty.

Until 1973, Pali and Buddhist Studies came under the Department of Languages & Cultural Studies. However, English, which was under a sub department, was taken under the Department of Languages & Cultural Studies.

Until the inception of the Department of History and Archaeology in 1984, Archaeology came under the Department of Languages and Cultural Studies.

During the period of 1986-2000, certificate courses were introduced for Sanskrit, Hindi, Japanese, Russian and Tamil. However, with the introduction of the unit system, there were difficulties in maintaining these courses.

Apart from that, Linguistics was taught for the Special and General Degree programmes.

The Department offers degrees under two main subject streams: Languages and Aesthetic and Cultural Studies. Special and General Degrees are offered for Sanskrit, Hindi and only a General Degree is presently offered for French. This is the only department of the university to offer eastern and western languages.

The department provides opportunity to pursue Graduate studies. Post Graduate Degrees; Masters, Master of Philosophy and Doctoral Degrees and are offered for Sanskrit and Cultural Studies.

Apart from the permanent academic staff members, the services of a group of professionals in the field render their services to the success of the postgraduate programme.

Brief history of each subject

1. Sanskrit

Sanskrit dates back to the commencement of the department. It has been introduced as a subject in 1959. Number of students 2010- 32

2. Cultural Studies

Until 1992, there existed only the General and Special Degrees for Cultural Studies. In 1992, the programme title changed to Cultural and Aesthetic Studies. The new programme was initiated by Professor Ananda Gunasinghe and Professor Walter Marasinghe. Under this subject stream, dancing and Music were introduced as two sub streams. However, the study of culture became an integral component for all the students of this subject.

Number of students 2010- 108

3. Hindi

Since 2000, Hindi was taught only as a Certificate Course. Since the beginning of the unit system, it was upgraded to a Special Degree Course.

Number of students 2010- 26

4. French

French was introduced as a General Degree Programme in February 2002.

Number of students 2010- 14

3. AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Outcomes of language learning

Student gains the knowledge and competency by learning a language. In addition, the study of literature of different languages enables the learner to understand different cultures and differences and similarities in human relations. Learning of another language creates opportunities for the learner to communicate locally and internationally. It widens the horizon of the learner's vision.

Outcomes of Aesthetic Education

Student gains theoretical and practical knowledge of Music and Dancing. It provides him with a means of life and as well as opportunity to present various aesthetic creations to develop the level of appreciation among people.

4. FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW TEAM

4.1. Curriculum Design, Content and Review

- All four subjects reviewed - namely Sanskrit, Hindi, French and Aesthetic Studies - provide updated syllabi. The existing syllabi in the Department have been reviewed after 8 years which is a positive point.
- The syllabi content seems to be well-balanced and up-to-date.
- Syllabi revision has been done after a series of workshops to create an awareness of the uniformity among the subjects. Nevertheless, given the peculiar role of each subject playing both in academia and the society, it would be ideal, while keeping its contribution to the overall uniformity significant, if each subject is offered more flexibility to determine the design of its degree program with particular emphasis to the number of courses offered, mode of assessment, teaching methodology etc.
- Further, it would be more interesting if the revised syllabi be peer observed by external specialists of the discipline concerned.
- Substantial course on Spoken Sanskrit is worth being included in the syllabus. Students who learn Hindi and French also feel that the spoken components should be more facilitated. The review team thus agreed that more hours should be allocated for language practising to develop oral communication.
- But this has been difficult due to clashes in lectures. More written work seems to be practised than oral components as French needs learning of grammar to be able to speak the language correctly. By the time the students complete the grammar components, they come to the end of their study period without much practising communication skills.
- In Aesthetic studies, the proposed syllabus contains 28 units related to the main subject and the other 12 units should be chosen from other subjects offered by other departments. In the light of the discussions with current students and the faculty and given the possibility to minimize cutbacks of practical hours for aesthetics students and to avoid frequent timetable clashes, it is suggested that 32 units from the main subject be offered along with only 8 units outside the main discipline. This can be practised with regards to the languages in the department too.
- The revision of Sanskrit syllabus does not show drastic changes which is understandable. However, the courses such as Buddhist Sanskrit Literature of which the content seems to be unmanageable within a single unit may be split into more than one unit.

- It could be more productive for the students to have 2 hour practical lessons instead of 1 ½ hour lessons because students need some preparatory time before and after practical lessons.
- In Hindi, the study of three novels within one unit in the fourth year seemed far too heavy for the students to meet the objectives of that particular course.

4.2. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods

- Where language classes are concerned, since the Department does not have a large number of students, each class seems to contain a manageable number of students. This does not negate that a language class should not welcome many students.
- Regarding aesthetic studies, it was observed that the faculty attempt their best to impart practical knowledge to the students. Nonetheless, especially noted was that the accompanist(s) assisting teachers and students on dancing and music need to be employed more regularly.
- However, it was observed that in the Hindi language class observed, the student-teacher interaction was poor during the lecture as a result of which students seemed to become distracted.
- In French, students seemed to respond with less confidence in communication skills; a lack of understanding in the questions asked and a difficulty in formulating simple sentences were observed.
- On the contrary, the Sanskrit class observed was effectively taught where teacher-students interaction was commendably maintained, the students kept encouraged to ask questions for clarification, the organization and delivery of the lecture was excellent and the lecturer was very confident thereof.
- However in aesthetic studies, student performances bring out the effectiveness of teaching.
- In case of publications, more publications were seen for Sanskrit than for the other subjects.
- The study guides prepared by the faculty members for distribution among students were not present.
- However, in aesthetic studies, student performances bring out the effectiveness of teaching. The students emphasized that the repetition in yearly assignments on theory lessons create a lack of enthusiasm.
- The library facilities including audio-visual materials for the aesthetic studies seem to be unsatisfactory. Only few books appear to be available in a very limited space.
- In the case of Sanskrit, it has been observed that more reference material should be provided in Sinhala though a good number of English materials are available.
- Regarding all subjects in general, it could be advantageous for the students to get the results of their continuous assessments well in advance of the Examination at the end of each Unit. This practice may allow students to comprehend their own performance in that particular course before sitting the End Examination.
- In Hindi, the study of three novels within one semester in the fourth year seemed far too heavy to gain a proper knowledge.
- Second marking of the answer scripts by an external examiner in Special Degree Dissertations in particular may be put into practice which would provide room for rechecking the accuracy at first marking and safeguarding the transparency of the assessment process.

- Both the faculty and the students optimize in harmony, though limited, the IT facilities and multimedia applications currently available in the Department. This observation strongly asserts the good rapport between the faculty and the students.
- As was observed, the commitment of the faculty and the staff to maintain a high level of quality in teaching, research and the overall management of the Department appears to be conducive to smooth function of the university to an extent that the department may also be introduced as a role model.

4.3 Quality of Students including Student Progress and Achievements

- All subjects, especially along with their practical components, offered by the Department have a distinguished bearing on maintaining and enriching the creative face of the University and the society.
- The overall quality of the graduates of the Department is reportedly appreciable.
- As observed in two presentations made by two final year undergraduates in Sinhala and English, it could be noted that the students are quite confident in conducting independent research. Moreover, those presentations proved their skills at presenting the research findings by using modern audio-visual equipment.
- Aesthetic performances by the First and Second Year students in the classes observed display their talents and it was told that annual performances take place on university level. This paves way to performing talents of the young students.
- This Department plays a significant role in the whole university as the students of the aesthetic studies take part in artistic activities of the university.
- Employment records of the students from 1999-2004 (academic years) show that the majority of the graduates from this Department is employed.
- As also raised by the students, the review team would like to underline the necessity of improving the quality of the English language courses so as to open more prospects for students to pursue their higher studies and to make them more qualified for the current job market.

4.4. Extent and use of Student Feedback

- Student Feedback reports is a new aspect that has started recently in the Department. This should be continued on a regular basis.

4.5 Postgraduate Studies

- Postgraduate studies in all disciplines exist in the Department which is a positive point.
- The mode of communication between the Faculty of Postgraduate Studies and postgraduate students has to be regulated in a way that it will minimize any delay of students' registrations for the courses, establish and maintain effective interaction between students and their supervisors and make the students and other parties involved aware of the decisions made by the Faculty of Postgraduate Studies in terms of rules and regulations and changes thereto promptly. Then a noticeable increase of the ratio of students enrolling in the courses and duly completing their degree programs will consequently be observable.

4.6 Peer Observation

- Peer Observation has also recently been introduced (Academic year 2009/2010) in the Department. As it may largely contribute to the improvement in teaching & research, it is important that this be practised on a regular basis. A faculty teaching and doing research on languages may not be able to receive as rigorous peer observation as those working on other subjects, but the effectiveness of teaching and its reception by the students could be noticed by any staff academic staff member of the faculty.
- The commendable interaction among the faculty of the Department highly contributes to an academic environment congenial to the faculty, students and the staff.

4.7. Skills Development

- The five subjects offered by the department help the students develop their skills and make them more attractive to the current trends in the job market.
- The existing requirement of 80% attendance in lectures in order to allow students to sit the examinations, if more rigorously asked for, serves the students offering subjects with compulsory practical components.
- Best students of the Department are given the opportunity to work as tutors for a period of one year. This opportunity may considerably contribute to students' skills development.
- There are instances where the skills of some graduates in Hindi language have been recognized by some funding bodies enabling them to win scholarships for students' higher studies.
- Graduates of the Department are more likely to be employed in the sectors like academia and media.
- Students of this Department have won the Gold Medal for the best student of the Faculty six times in the recent past.
- A proposal to establish an award to the student obtaining the highest marks for Sanskrit which would also be an incentive for the students on Sanskrit has currently been submitted for senate approval.
- It would be more rewarding to allocate more practical hours for the courses on dancing and music as well as those on conversational skills of languages.
- On the ground that the aesthetic studies constitutes an integral part of the University and is inextricably fused with the recognition thereof, steps should be taken to uplift the physical facilities currently allocated for aesthetic studies. Particularly for dancing and music practices, due space should be provided in a proper environment in such a way that neither they are disturbed nor they disturb others. It is highly likely that a considerable improvement of such facilities may increase the opportunities for the students to develop their skills more broadly and effectively.
- It has been noted that the courses on conversational skills in Sanskrit which may make Sanskrit studies easier and more attractive can be encouraged and facilitated.

4.8 Academic Guidance and Counseling

- Student-teacher relationship is appreciably maintained within the Department.
- Notifications of the events such as cancellation of classes and Departmental meetings are conveyed by means of formal and informal ways including short mobile messages.
- Academic guidance to write up tutorials etc. and final year dissertations are adequately provided to students.

- The reference materials for French and Hindi are mostly provided by the staff members from their private collections.

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

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

5. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion it could be stated that the work done in the Department of Languages & Cultural Studies is highly appreciated. However, the following could be added to improve its quality:

- All the students of the Department should have access to syllabi for their respective subjects.
- Continuous Assessment results should be made available to students before the End Examination of each unit.
- A good rapport between teacher and students should more rigorously be maintained in language classes.
- Peer observation should continue on a regular basis.
- More multimedia reference materials supplementary to class work and research work including DVD, VCD and VHS cassettes should be supplied.
- Internet access should be made available for information retrieval and downloading necessary study supports etc.
- A systematic mechanism should be implemented to receive Students' feedback regularly and to make the faculty aware of the overall content of the feedback in order for them to enhance the quality of teaching and academic guidance etc.
- Monthly screening of films within the university premises may effectively contribute to popularise the languages offered by the Department.
- Certificate course in the languages by the Department could be introduced to popularise them.

1. Curriculum Design, Content and Review:

Strengths/Good Practices :

1. Curriculum being reviewed at regular intervals in order to meet the demands of the job market.

Weaknesses:

1. Lack of *coordination* between main subjects and optional modules in spite of the wide choice
2. Lack of certificate courses in languages.

2. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods

Strengths/Good Practices:

1. Continuous assessment system.
2. Every subject being practised with practical components to develop skills of the students.
3. Web-based research.
4. Independent research by students.
5. Students volunteering to choose this department to do aesthetic subjects because of the possibility to qualify themselves in different areas of study.

Weaknesses:

1. Not enough practical hours.
2. Continuous assessment marks not being given to the students before the end of the semester.
3. Lack of accompanists for aesthetic subjects.
4. Lack of a sufficient number of trained non academic staff members on clerical level which creates a discontent in the existing members.
5. Lack of academic staff in languages qualified in different fields.
6. Lack of IT facilities
7. Lack of reference material.

3. Quality of Students, Student Progress and Achievements

Strengths/Good Practices

1. The high demand for the course
2. Determination of students to complete the course successfully
3. Low level unemployment and high demand in job market
4. A very high rate of successful completion with the majority passing with high grades
5. Active participation of students in extracurricular activities within the Department and in the University.
6. Aspects to encourage students, such as scholarships and gold medals.

Weaknesses :

1. Lack of units in the university that give the students to improve their knowledge in English to suit the job market (Sanskrit and Aesthetic studies)

4. Extent and Use of Student Feedback

Strengths/Good Practices

1. Student feedback reports.
2. Very healthy Student- Teacher relationship.

Weaknesses:

1. Students not being provided with copies of syllabi despite their regular requests.

5. Postgraduate Studies

Strengths/Good Practices

1. Department already conducting PG Courses.
2. Appointment of MPhil Students as Temporary Staff members.

Weaknesses:

1. Lack of communication between students and the Post Graduate Institute.

Peer Observation:

Strengths/Good Practices:

1. Started recently

Weaknesses:

1. Intra Department Peer observation on quality and relevance of teaching is not in place

6. Skills Development

Strengths/Good Practices

1. Skills development is given due place in curriculum (communicative methods as per languages and practical hours for aesthetic studies)
2. Student participation in aesthetic performances in the university.
3. Sharing the talents of the department with the whole university.

Weaknesses:

1. Lack of sufficient number of practical hours to develop skills at a higher level.
2. Lack of classroom space for aesthetic study practices.
3. Lack of equipment to facilitate learning: musical instruments, IT material, audio-visual equipment.
4. Lack of accompanists.

8. Academic Guidance and Student Counselling

Strengths/Good Practices:

1. All members of Academic staff available for personal contact
2. Availability of student counsellors.

Weaknesses:

1. Students should be duly guided in the choice of main subjects and the subject combinations.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following could be recommended for the improvement of the overall quality of the Department:

1. The course unit system should offer more flexibility to the subjects with practical components, *viz.* music and dancing studies so that such subjects become less burdened to improve their quality.
2. As an integral part of the aesthetic studies, at least one accompanist for each subject, *viz.* a player who accompanies dancing students with drum(s) and a keyboard player for music students, employed on a permanent basis, will be assets to the Department. The availability of such accompanists in the Department may help make the process of teaching and learning more perfect and attractive.
3. Since it has been observed that the Department needs more instruments to be used in aesthetic studies and most of the instruments already available in the Department are out of order, it is important that they be either replaced with new ones or be repaired professionally as well as be purchased anew as necessary.
4. Proper maintenance of those instruments is highly needed. The review team thus strongly recommends that eligible personnel be employed for their maintenance. Further, there should be facilities and space for proper storing of those instruments. Changing rooms for the students/performers should be made available next to their practical classrooms.
5. The timetable of the courses for aesthetic students should be prepared in such a way that they will have enough time between practical and theory classes so as to enable them to get ready for each class by changing their practice costumes and so forth.
6. The suggestion by both the students and the faculty of the Department that the syllabi of all subjects of the department be revised to accommodate 32 units from the main subject and 8 units from any other subject is acceptable to the review team as well.
7. As regards the prescribed novels for students majoring in Hindi, recommendable is that students study two novels one for each semester in their final year only.
8. More practical hours for languages and aesthetic studies will be advantageous to further develop the skills of the students.
9. The university should take initiatives to offer English courses of enhanced quality to help students from all disciplines in their academic pursuits to improve their eligibility to be employed after graduation.
10. To prepare study-guides based on the specialised areas of the academic staff should be put into practice to improve the quality of teaching and provide students with better understanding of each course they offer.
11. The Department should be encouraged to offer open certificate courses on languages for the students of the university who are interested in language learning.
12. Considering the type of the courses offered, providing the Department with adequate number of modern equipment related to IT and Multimedia such as computers with Internet access, printing and scanning devices, digital still and video cameras, DVD/MP3 players, multimedia projectors, overhead projectors will be necessary.
13. It is recommended that measures should be taken to waive off the registration fee of the postgraduate students who are faculty members.
14. Arrangements should be made to increase the number of Special Intake students to all the subjects offered by the Department.
15. The review team recommends that, in line with the Departmental strength to offer Special Degree Programmes in all other subjects, a Special Degree Programme in

French be also commenced in addition to its General Degree Programme but with an adequate number of qualified staff members.

16. It is advisable that, in the case of French, the staff members be specialised in different fields of study to enrich the Degree Programme of the Department.
17. Up-to-date reference material encompassing audio-video materials for the aesthetic studies should be provided and more copies of the existing material should be made available. It is highly recommended that necessary reference material pertinent to other subjects too be duly provided.

7. ANNEXURES

Annex 1: AGENDA OF THE REVIEW VISIT

Day I

- The review team first met the Vice Chancellor of the University of Sri Jayawardhanapura after which a meeting was held with Prof. Collin Peiris (Director, Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council) who briefed the team as to how they should proceed.
- After this preliminary meeting between the review team and the Director QAA, the team then proceeded to the Department of Languages and Cultural Studies where they met the Head of the Department Dr. Saman Chandra Ranasinhe.
- The team was then enlightened on the self-evaluation report of the Department by the Head of the Department and a member of the academic staff of the Department with the aid of the multimedia presentation followed by a discussion between the review team and the staff.
- The facilities of the Department were then inspected by the Team.
- The Team met the academic staff and the undergraduates of the Department.

Day II

- The Review Team observed a number of lectures and practical classes.
- The Team observed the documents such as syllabi, teachers' guides, student feed-back reports etc.
- The Team met the Special Degree students, the Postgraduate students, the non-academic staff of the Department.
- Two Final year students of the Department presented two presentations based on their dissertations.

Day III

- The team observed the Publications of the Department.
- The Review Team briefed all staff members of the Department.

Annex 2. LIST OF PERSONS MET BY THE REVIEW TEAM

- The Vice Chancellor
- The staff members of the Department of Languages and Cultural Studies (Academic)
- The staff members of the Department of Languages and Cultural Studies (Non-Academic)
- Students of the Department of Languages and Cultural Studies (Undergraduate)
- Post-Graduate students of the Department of Languages and Cultural Studies
- Students Counsellors (2)

Annex 3. LIST OF TEACHING SESSIONS OBSERVED

- CAST 1204- Dancing practical unit.
- HIND 3205- Hindi lecture
- CAST 4207- Music
- FREN 1201- French
- SANS 1203- Sanskrit

Annex 4. LIST OF FACILITIES OBSERVED

- Library
- Class rooms
- Instruments (Music and dancing)
- Other audio-visual facilities

Annex 5. LIST OF DOCUMENTS OBSERVED

- Syllabi
- Publications
- Student feedback reports
- Past papers
- Student records
- Hand outs to students
- Other material used in a class room (photocopies etc)
- Lesson plans