

# **SUBJECT REVIEW REPORT**

**DEPARTMENT OF  
ECONOMICS**



**FACULTY OF ARTS  
UNIVERSITY OF SRI JAYWARDENEPURA**

21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2005

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# CONTENTS

Section	Page
1. Subject Review process	2
2. Brief History of the University and the Department	3
2.1 The Faculty of Arts	4
2.2 The Department of Economics	4
3. Aims and Learning Outcomes	6
3.1 Aims	6
3.2 Learning Outcomes	7
4. Observations and overall Judgment	7
4.1. Curriculum design, content and review	7
4.2. Teaching learning and assessment methods	8
4.3 Quality of students student progress and achievements	9
4.4 Extent and use of student feedback	10
4.5 Postgraduate studies	10
4.6 Peer observations	10
4.7 Skills development	10
4.8 Academic guidance and counseling	11
4.9 Overall Judgment	11
5. Conclusions and Recommendations	11
Appendix 1 Curriculum of the Special Degree Programme in Economics	13
Appendix 2 Curriculum of the Special Degree Programme in Political Science	14

## 1. Subject Review Process

The promotion of tertiary education to explore new frontiers of knowledge and match labour market requirements is essential in achieving long-term economic and social development objectives. Sri Lanka's tertiary education system has to be reoriented to meet the challenges of knowledge-based future economic development, incorporating modern quality standards and improving access to modern learning techniques.

The subject review process introduced by the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Directors and the University Grants Commission has been designed to evaluate the quality of education within a specific subject or discipline, for both undergraduate and postgraduate programs in a university. It specifically focuses on the quality of the student learning experience and student achievement.

Higher education is a 'public good' and plays a crucial role in the economic and social development in Sri Lanka. As public institutions delivering this public good universities in Sri Lanka have a responsibility to maintain and improve upon the high standards and the quality of higher education.

This report presents the findings of a review of the quality of education provided by the Department of Economics of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka. The review was conducted at the Department of Economics from 21st to 23rd of November 2005 adhering to the guidelines provided in the *Quality Assurance Handbook for Sri Lankan Universities*, published by the CVCD and University Grants Commission in July 2002. The review process was based on the Self Evaluation Reports (SERs) submitted by the Department of Economics for the subjects of Economics and Political Science and supported by the knowledge and experience gained by a three-day site visit to the department.

The SERs have been prepared under following headings:

- 1) Overview
- 2) Outcomes of the Study programmes
- 3) Students
- 4) Academic staff
- 5) Other facilities
- 6) Evaluation
  - 6.1 Curriculum content of the Special Degree programme
  - 6.2 Teaching and assessment
- 7) Quality of Students
- 8) Feedback from the students
- 9) Postgraduate students
- 10) Peer observation
- 11) Skills development
- 12) Academic guidance and Counseling
- 13) Student profile and completion

The quality of education was reviewed according to the aims and learning outcomes given in the SER and the knowledge gained through the site visit. 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. 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 21st to 23rd November 2005. The evaluation of eight aspects was supplemented by the:

- Discussions held with the Dean, Head of department, academic staff and undergraduate students representing all four years
- Observation of department facilities (lecture rooms, staff rooms, office space etc.) and other facilities of the faculty and the university (library, computer unit etc.).
- Observing teaching sessions
- Reviewing documents available at the department, such as examination papers, marking schemes, answer scripts, minutes of Departmental meetings, Economics Society magazines

Each of the eight aspects was judged as good / satisfactory / unsatisfactory, paying attention to the strengths, good practices and weaknesses found in each area. Based on the judgments of the eight aspects, an overall judgment was given as confidence / limited confidence / no confidence.

## **2. Brief History of the University and the Department**

The University of Sri Jayewardenepura has its origins in the historic Maligakande Vidyodaya Pirivena founded in 1873 by the Ven. Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala Maha Thero as a centre of learning for Buddhist monks. From the inception till 1959 it functioned as an internationally recognized centre for oriental studies under the guidance of learned venerable monks like Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala, Baddegama Sri Piyaratana and Welivitiye Sri Soratha. In 1959, the Vidyodaya Pirivena became the Vidyodaya University of Ceylon and later, the Vidyodaya Campus of the University of Ceylon in 1972. In 1978, it was renamed as the University of Sri Jayewardenepura.

University of Sri Jayewardenepura is one of the major national universities of Sri Lanka. It is located just outside the limits of the Colombo Municipality. University has five faculties as follows:

1. Faculty of Arts
2. Faculty of Applied Sciences
3. Faculty of Graduate Studies
4. Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce
5. Faculty of Medical Sciences

The Post Graduate Institute of Management (PIM) is affiliated to the University of Sri Jayewardenepura.

The undergraduate enrolment in the different faculties in 2004 is given below:

Faculty	Number of Students
Arts	2669
Management Studies and Commerce	4630
Applied Science	1014
Medical Sciences	1063
Total	9376

## 2.1 The Faculty of Arts

The Faculty of Arts consists of 9 departments of study. The Faculty conducts two degree programmes, i.e. the Bachelor of Arts Degree (General) and Bachelor of Arts Degree (Special). The number of students enrolled in a year is around six hundred (600). The students gain entry to the faculty on the basis of their performance at the GCE (Advanced Level) examination.

## 2.2 The Department of Economics

The history of the Department of Economics can be traced back to the days when Economics was taught as a subject in the Faculty of Management Studies. A separate Department for Economics was established in 1968 within the Faculty of Arts.

The Department of Economics conducts degree programmes in two major fields, Economics and Political Science, leading to Special and General Degrees. The Special degree programme is of four year duration and the duration of the general degree programme is three years. The number of students following these degree programmes is given in Table 1.

**Table 1**

**Number of Students Enrolled in the Study Programmes in Economics and Political Science, 2005-2006**

Year of Study	Economics		Political Science	
	General Degree	Special Degree	General Degree	Special Degree
First Year	200		200	
Second Year	48	23	35	07
Third Year	55	40	55	14
Fourth Year	n.a.	50	n.a.	07

Source: Self-Evaluation Reports, Department of Economics, University of Sri Jayewardenepura

The medium of instruction of courses is Sinhala, but in the case of Special Degree both Sinhala and English are used as medium of instruction.

The students are selected to read the special degree programmes in Economics and Political Science at the beginning of their second year. To be qualified to read the Special degree programme in Economics students should have passed all the subjects for which they have registered themselves in the first year and have secured B grade passes for the two units in Economics. In addition, they should have secured passes in two Statistics units and two Mathematics units offered by the Department of Social Statistics for the first year. In the case of Political Science students are required to obtain 'B' passes for Political Science units and passes in all other subjects offered in the first year.

For successful completion of the special degree programme students should collect 120 credits. Except in the case of the Independent Study, each module offered by the Department of Economics for the subjects of Economics and Political Science are of 3-credit value. As such, to complete a special degree either in Economics or Political Science, students should study 40 modules of which 22-24 modules belong to the specializing discipline. The remaining number of modules could be collected from two or more other disciplines.

The students who follow a general degree programme must collect 90 credits in total. All course modules offered for the special degree programmes up to the year 3, both in Economics and Political Science, available to the general degree students for selection.

The curriculum of the Special Degree Programmes in Economics and Political Science are depicted in Appendices 2 and 3 respectively. In both cases, the modules offered for the years 1, 2 and 3 can be offered by students who follow the General Degree Programme. A Faculty Handbook containing all the details on available modules for the above degree programmes is distributed among the students.

In the above table, the 'teaching hours' refers to the normal lecture hours. 'Other contact hours' mean the time allocated for tutorials and other contacts between students and the members of the academic staff. The lecturer in charge of the module, known as the coordinator, does the lectures but to avoid the monotonousness of the programme sometimes guest lecturers are invited to deliver the lectures. Also, students are taken out of the university to relevant institutions with a view to providing them with empirical knowledge.

The teaching staff of the discipline of economics consists of one Associate Professor, four Senior Lecturers Grade 1, one Senior Lecturer Grade 2, one Lecturer and four Probationary Lecturers (Table 2).

Table 2  
Teaching Staff of the Economics Programme

Name	Educational Qualifications	Designation
Dr P. Wilson	BA; MA; Ph D	Associate Professor
Mrs. DPMS Thanthirigama	BA; MA	Senior Lecturer 1
Mr. KR Kodagoda	BA; M Sc	Senior Lecturer 1
Mr. DPS Chandrakumara	BA; MA	Senior Lecturer 1
Dr HMTNR Herath	BA; MA; Ph D	Senior Lecturer 1
Dr GAU Wickramasinghe	BA; MA; Ph D	Senior Lecturer 2
Mrs DP Wthanage	BA; MA	Lecturer

Mr. SCB Heenkanda	BA; PG Dip (Bus. Stat)	Prob. Lecturer
Mr. KGG Weerasinghe	BA	Prob. Lecturer
Mrs. DWR Damayanthi	BA	Prob. Lecturer
Mr SWA Kalyanaratne	BA	Prob. Lecturer
Mr GKK Wicramasinghe	B Sc	Lecturer (Temp)

Source: Self-Evaluation Report on Economics, Department of Economics,  
University of Sri Jayewardenepura

The teaching staff of the Political Science programme consists of five (5) members (Table 3).

Table 3  
Teaching Staff of the Political Science Programme

Name	Educational Qualifications	Designation
Dr P. Athukorala	BA; MA; Ph D	Senior Lecturer 1
Mr. PLR Purasinghe	BA; MA	Senior Lecturer 2
Mr HAA Nishantha	BA; M Phil	Senior Lecturer 2
Mr. KRAP Perera	BA	Prob. Lecturer
Mr SDR Gunasekera	BA	Temp. Lecturer

Source: Self-Evaluation Report on Political Science, Department of Economics,  
University of Sri Jayewardenepura

### 3. Aims and Learning Outcomes

#### 3.1 Aims

The Economics and Political Science programmes offered by the Department of Economics of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura seek to,

- Provide a high quality degree programme with a blend of Economics, Statistics, Mathematics and Political Science in an environment of internationally recognized standards so as to expose students to both theory and practice
- Encourage students to improve their knowledge base in research skills and to expose them to recent advances in knowledge and technology and proficient academics
- Provide opportunities to students to improve their writing and communication skills in both English and Sinhala
- Provide opportunities to students to improve their cognitive skills and enthusiasm required for life-long learning

- provide support to the academic staff to assess and improve their teaching quality
- Provide a basis to maintain academic links with other study programmes in the faculty by offering modules of the study programmes of those departments

### **3.2 Learning Outcomes**

On successful completion of the degree program students should,

- acquired a conceptual knowledge that would be helpful to gain employment and to further studies
- acquaint themselves with the subject-specific knowledge that can be applied to research
- gain ability to transfer the acquired knowledge and skills to use statistical tools in the analysis and interpretation of data, utilize computer literacy, verbal and written communication, engage in team work and learn independently and think critically
- acquire skills to use graphs, diagrams and models to explain concepts and to analyze the real world situations
- be able to analyze positive status of economics and think of normative status

## **4 Observations and overall judgment**

Overall judgement was based on the following eight components.

### **4.1 Curriculum Design, Content and Review**

The study programme in Economics aims at providing students with knowledge on theory, concepts, thought and other subject-specific information and the application of this knowledge in practical issues. The study programme in Political Science has not clearly specified subject-based learning outcomes. However, this programme intends to develop research skills among undergraduates to enable them to follow postgraduate courses.

Economics Special Degree programme has been designed to cover all major areas in economics such as economic theory, international trade, public economics, environmental economics, finance, project management and econometrics. Core contents in economics are well represented in the curriculum

Several innovative courses such as entrepreneurship, rural institutions, and regional economics have been introduced to improve the quality and employability of graduates.

Both Economics and Political Science programmes characterize multidisciplinary nature. For example, economics students are required to offer several political science course modules while Political Science students are required to take several economics modules.

In spite of the multidisciplinary nature of the study programmes, the lack of flexibility regarding the selection of course modules appears to be an obstacle to achieve the objectives of course module system. All course modules in the economics and political science programs are compulsory courses.

Introduction of some elementary courses in Mathematical Economics and Historical experience of economic development (Economic History) as optional courses can strengthen the content of the economics curriculum.

The study programme has to depend on other departments to conduct some of the core courses in the Economics Special degree programme. For example, a number of Statistics and Econometrics course modules required for Economics Degree programme are conducted by the Department of Social Statistics.

Out of 40 course modules in the Economics Special degree programme, nearly half (16-18 courses) are conducted by the other departments. This may be an arrangement made to strengthen the multidisciplinary nature of the programme. However, excessive decentralization may harm the overall goals and objectives of the study programme.

The Department of Economics conducts regular review of the curriculum with the participation of outside experts and other relevant stakeholders.

***It is the view of the review team that the curriculum design, content and review of the department can be judged as good.***

#### **4.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods.**

The common method of imparting knowledge is through delivery of lectures. Even though the medium of instruction is Sinhala, it was revealed that in some instances the same lecture is delivered both in Sinhala and English by two lecturers. Most of the lectures were conducted according to a carefully prepared format. The review team observed that the lecturers were successful in attracting the attention of almost all students in the class. The team appreciates the techniques of teaching adopted by some lecturers such as constant interaction with students.

In the delivery of lectures white board and handouts were the sole teaching aids used in the class room. Handouts have been prepared in English. It should be mentioned, however, that the use of an Overhead Projector to show transparencies would have certainly increased the effectiveness of the lectures.

In the case of some modules, Study Guides have been prepared. However, compared with the number of course units that a student should offer for the degree the present number of Study Guides are not sufficient. It was the view of the students, too, that all modules must have Study Guides. However, the review team appreciates the fact that the practice is in place and attempts are being made to extend it.

The learning environment is fairly conducive. The department possesses four large lecture rooms. All rooms are well ventilated and fitted with ceiling fans and seating arrangements are also satisfactory.

The department has a group of qualified academics guiding the students along a carefully prepared degree programme. *It was the common view of the students, however, especially the final year special degree students, that their programme must be enriched by the inclusion of more practical/in-service training programmes so that they will be able to face the challenges of the job market.*

The Faculty of Arts has a computer centre with 39 computers and it is available for the use of students who are following Economics, Social Statistics and Political Science. However, the students were of the view that the time periods allocated for them are not sufficient. *At the same time, it should be mentioned that the computer facilities available for the members of the academic staff are not at all satisfactory.*

The University Library houses a good collection of reading material on Economics and Political Science. The journals section of the library, too, has a fairly good collection of journals and magazines. Internet facilities are provided to students but the library authorities are of the view that the facilities are hardly used by the students.

The department adopts a variety of assessment methods. A continuous assessment method is being practiced through tutorials and assignments and mid-semester examinations. The end semester examination, which consists of structured and essay type questions is the main method of assessment of the theory component and, carries the bulk of the total mark allocated. However, the distribution of marks between the end-semester examination and the continued assessment methods vary by different modules. In some instances the end-semester examination carries 80 per cent and the continued assessment claims the remaining 20. In other cases the distribution is 60/40 and 75/25. The question papers reviewed by the team indicated that the standard of questions was at appropriate level. In the preparation of end semester question papers and the correction of answer scripts, the services of second examiners are obtained. This ensures the quality and the transparency of the examination procedure.

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

#### **4.3. Quality of Students including Student Progress and Achievements**

The review team noted that the participation of students in the learning process is fairly satisfactory. At the observation of teaching sessions it was apparent that they are very attentive and to some extent, responsive. The observation of question papers and mark sheets indicated a satisfactory level of performance of the students. The organizational skills and the ability to work in a team are indicated by the activities of the Economics Society.

The discussions held with the members of the academic staff of the department revealed that the Department of Economics attracts good students for the specialization programmes of Economics and Political Science. The insistence of B passes in Social statistics and Mathematics in addition to two B passes for economics modules at the selection of students to read for the Bachelor of Arts (Special) Degree in Economics could be considered as a strategy adopted to ensure the quality of students at the point of

entry. The teaching of modules in English, introduction of the modules such as 'Entrepreneurship', and sending students out for in-service training to institutions like the Central Bank are among some of the measures which have taken by the department to equip the students with generic and specific skills.

Although the members of the staff were of the view that their students are successful securing employment after graduation, it was noted that the department does not maintain a record of their output. **It is strongly suggested that the department should pay attention to construct a database of their graduates.**

*It is the view of the review team that the quality of students, student progress and achievements of the department can be judged as good.*

#### **4.4 Extent and Use of Student Feedback**

Although it was recently that a formal system for obtaining student feedback was implemented the importance and the need of student feedback had been emphasized by Prof. P. Wilson, Associate Professor of Economics, as far back as in 2003. According to the minutes of the department meeting held on 14. 12. 2003, Prof. Wilson had drawn the attention of the members of the academic staff to this exercise. At present, the department uses a questionnaire to obtain student feedback on teaching.

*It is the view of the review team that the extent and use of student feedback of the department can be judged as satisfactory.*

#### **4.5 Postgraduate Studies**

The department has a number of postgraduate students in economics reading for higher degrees such as MA, M Phil and Ph D. The postgraduate students are satisfied with the facilities including supervision provided to them.

*It is the view of the review team that the postgraduate studies of the department can be judged as satisfactory.*

#### **4.6 Peer Observation**

As in the case of student feedback, the importance of the peer observation had been identified by the members of the staff as far back as in 2003. At present, peers are appointed at the very beginning of the academic year especially for the lectures conducted by the younger lecturers. Although it is not a fully pledged system that includes the comprehensive methodologies of peer observation, at least a method is in practice. Also, the members of the staff have recognized the value of it.

*The present status of peer observation adopted by the members of the staff is judged as satisfactory.*

#### **4.7 Skills Development**

As far as subject specific skills are concerned, the department has adopted various methods to improve the skills of their students. They have introduced new courses of

study, such as Entrepreneurship, which will greatly enhance the marketable skills of their graduates. Also, the students are being trained to conduct independent research studies that enhance their research capabilities.

The department has also made arrangements to improve generic skills of their students through the provision of language (English) proficiency, computer training and in-service training in the institutions outside the university to enhance their employability.

Student abilities in organizing academic work are displayed by the continuous publication of the journal of the Economics Society, which is of high standard.

The review team however feels that the standard of English knowledge and information technology skills of students have to be further improved. At the discussion with the undergraduate students it was revealed that the students, especially those in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year, need more hours for computer training. **While endorsing the view of the students, the review team feels that steps in this direction should be taken gradually and carefully. Improvement of IT facilities is also urgently needed.**

*It is the view of the review team that the skills development of the department can be judged as good*

#### **4.8 Academic Guidance and Counseling**

Although the department does not have an organized academic counseling system, all members of the staff engaged in counseling in an informal manner. Academic counseling is taking place in the form of advising students in the selection of course modules, especially at the beginning of academic year. Sometimes students have personal problems that could have an effect on their studies and, in such instances, members of the academic staff do assist them. The student-staff relationship is at a satisfactory level.

Some of the members in the department function as student counselors of the university and they play a bigger role in students' affairs at university and faculty levels.

Although the efforts of the members of the academic staff are commendable, it would be much better if the department could establish an organized system for academic counseling within the department.

*The present situation with regard to academic guidance and counseling can be considered as satisfactory.*

#### **4.9 Overall Judgment - Suspended**

### **5. Conclusions and Recommendations**

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

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Judgment</b>
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	Satisfactory

### **Recommendations**

In addition to the suggestions, which have been made already, the review team would like to make the following recommendations, in order to improve the quality and the relevance of the degree programmes implemented by the Department of Economics, University of Sri Jayewardenepura.

- Explore the possibility of enriching the degree programmes by the inclusion of more practical/in-service training programmes in order to equip the students with employable skills.
- Computer facilities available for the members of the academic staff must be expanded. At present the situation is not at all satisfactory.
- Computer facilities available for students must also be expanded.
- It is strongly suggested that the department should pay attention to construct a database of their graduates.
- Provide a room within the department for students to increase interaction among students and between student and teachers
- Provide an adequate number of academic support staff
- Provide more facilities for the members of the academic staff
- provide a forum for the graduate students to facilitate interaction

**University of Sri Jayewardenepura**  
**Curriculum of the Special Degree Programme in Economics**

Year	Semester	Module	Teaching Hours	other contact hours
1	1	Principles of Microeconomics	30	15
	2	Principles of Macroeconomics	30	15
2	1	Intermediate Microeconomics	30	15
		Intermediate Macroeconomics	30	15
		Evolution of economic Thought	30	15
	2	Applied Economics	30	15
		International Trade and Finance	30	15
		Entrepreneurship	30	15
3	1	Financial Economics	30	15
		Development economics	30	15
		Service economics	30	15
	2	Contemporary Economic Issues	30	15
		Public Economics	30	15
		Regional Economics	30	15
4	1	Advanced Microeconomics	30	15
		Advanced Macroeconomics	30	15
		Econometrics	30	15
		Project Formulation, Analysis and Management	30	15
		Independent Study 1		
	2	Agriculture and Rural Institutions		
		Operational Aspects of Financial Markets	30	15
		Economics of natural Resources and the Environment	30	15
		Practical Aspects of International Trade and Finance	30	15
Independent Study				

Source: Self-Evaluation Report on Economics, Department of Economics, University of Sri Jayewardenepura

**University of Sri Jaywardenepura**  
**Curriculum of the Special Degree Programme in Political Science**

Year	Semester	Module	Teaching Hours	Other Contact Hours
1	1	Introduction to Political Science	30	15
	2	Basic concept in Modern Politics	30	15
2	1	Constitutional Development of Sri Lanka	30	15
		Introduction to Comparative Politics	30	15
		Introduction to Political Sociology	39	15
	2	Ancient and Medieval Political and social Theory	30	15
		Political Movement, Policy Making and Policy Areas	30	15
		Advanced Political Sociology	30	15
3	1	Comparative Political Systems	30	15
		Public Policy and Public Administration	30	15
		Introduction to International relations	30	15
	2	Modern Political and Social Theory	30	15
		Comparative Public administration	30	15
		Political Parties, Pressure Groups and Public Opinion	30	15
4	1	Political Structures in South Asia	30	15
		Political Economy of Sri Lanka	30	15
		Modern Political Ideologies	30	15
		Conflict Resolution	30	15
		Independent Study		
	2	Selected Issues in Sri Lankan Politics	30	15
		Political Process in South Asia	30	15
		International Politics	30	15
		Recent economic Policies in Sri Lanka	30	15
		Independent Study		

Source: Self-Evaluation Report on Political Science, Department of Economics, University of Sri Jaywardenepura