

Quality Assurance of Undergraduate Education in Sri Lankan Universities

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Abstract

Quality assurance scheme in the Sri Lankan University system was initiated in 2001 by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Directors in collaboration with the University Grants Commission. The main activities carried out in this scheme include subject reviews and institutional reviews.

In the subject reviews, the aspects that are evaluated include Curriculum design, content & review; Teaching, learning and assessment methods; Quality of students including student progress and achievements; Extent & use of student feedback; Postgraduates studies; Peer observation; Skills development; and Academic Guidance & Counseling.

The aspects evaluated in the institutional review include University goals and corporate planning; Financial resources & management; Research; Quality management & administration; Quality assurance; Learning resources & student support; External degree programmes; and University-industry-community linkages & other extension activities.

Subject reviews and institutional reviews are carried out by trained external reviewers. These reviews are not yet mandatory in the Sri Lankan University system and are carried out only on voluntary basis. Of the 15 Universities in Sri Lanka, three have undergone institutional reviews by the end of March 2007. Of the 413 academic departments, 81 departments have undergone subject reviews by the end of March 2007.

Subject benchmark statements for 11 subjects/subject streams have also been completed under the quality assurance scheme by the end of March 2007. These include Accountancy, Botany, Civil engineering, Economics, Geography, Mathematics & Statistics, Mechanical engineering, Medicine, Physics, Veterinary medicine & animal science and Zoology. In addition, Codes of Practice on six key aspects have also been developed. These include Codes of Practice on Assessment of students; Career guidance; External assessors; Postgraduates research; Programmes approval, monitoring & review; and Student support & guidance.

Internal Quality Assurance Units have also been established in all universities to ensure that quality assurance activities are successfully carried out. At the University Grants Commission, a Standing Committee on Quality Assurance has been established and this committee meets every month to monitor the quality assurance activities in the universities.

The Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council, which functions under the University Grants Commission coordinates all quality assurance activities in the Sri Lankan university system. Information on these activities are available on the website www.qaacouncil.lk.

Key words: Subject review, Institutional review, Bench marking, Codes of Practice