

# INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT

# UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBO



15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> February 2010

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## **1. A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE UNIVERSITY AND ITS REVIEW CONTEXT**

### ***The University of Colombo, Sri Lanka***

Deriving its heritage from the oldest higher educational institution in Sri Lanka, i.e., the University College, the University of Colombo is a sprawling complex located in the heart of the capital city of Colombo, Sri Lanka. In keeping with its motto “Buddhi Sarvathra Bhrajate”, Sanskrit for “Wisdom Enlightens”, the University of Colombo strives to maintain academic excellence in all areas of study. The University of Colombo has 7 Faculties with 42 Academic Departments, a Campus, a School, 6 Institutes and several Centres and Units. Many undergraduate and postgraduate study courses in the fields of Arts, Science, Medicine, Management, Finance, Law, Education, IT, Aesthetic Studies, Molecular Biology, etc. are conducted by the University. The University also offers several other services, such as library services, career guidance, and services for differently-abled students. The Faculty of Law, the one and only law faculty in the country expanded to 3 Departments in 2009 after its 42 years of existence.

Student life is enhanced by a plethora of extra-curricular activities offered on campus. The beautiful playground and the modern gymnasium offer sportsmen and women the opportunity to exploit and develop their abilities to the fullest. The New Arts Theatre is often the arena for spotlighting the dramatic and musical talents of our student population.

Today, the University of Colombo with a proud history of over 115 years continues in its endeavour to meet the challenge of maintaining its position as a “Metropolitan university, Modern and International in Outlook and Character”. The location of the University affords the student population all the advantages of a “Metropolitan University”, with easy access to international information/resource centres, libraries, theatres, sports complexes etc. Its central location within the City of Colombo provides easy access to a wide range of cultural, entertainment and business facilities. Backed by its long and proud history, together with a rock-solid academic and administrative infrastructure which has stood the test of time, the University has evolved to embrace modern and innovative approaches to teaching, research, and service to the community. The University of Colombo has a multi-cultural multi-ethnic student and staff population, fostering social harmony, cultural diversity, equal opportunity and unity.

The University Council which is the governing authority of the University consists of the Vice Chancellor (as the ex-officio Chairperson), Rector of the Sri Palee Campus, Deans of the seven Faculties (9 ex-officio members), two representatives of the Senate, and twelve members appointed by the University Grants Commission. A general convocation and a post graduate convocation are held annually, and each year approximately 4500 graduates and 1250 post graduates are awarded degrees from the University of Colombo.

## **2. PROCESS OF INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW**

In 2009, under the direction of the Vice Chancellor, Professor Kshanika Hirimburegama, the University of Colombo undertook a self-evaluation for the purpose of Institutional Quality Assurance Review (IQAR). The process undertaken towards this aim is detailed here. A core group of academics were nominated by the Senate and the Council to coordinate the process of IQAR. The Quality Assurance Handbook for Sri Lankan Universities, published by the University Grants Commission, was used as a guideline for this process. Two academics were nominated to overall coordinate the activity. In the QA Handbook, the UGC identifies 8 domains under which the various aspects of QA review should be categorized. Hence, one or

more academic staff members were nominated as domain coordinators; their role was to collect and analyze data relevant to each of the 8 domains. For the purpose of collecting data from the different departments, Institutes, Units and Centres, representative academic staff members from each of these administrative units were appointed, through a process of nomination by the Head of each administrative unit; in general, these representatives were senior academics who were not Heads of the units. A series of consultative meetings were held with the participation of the Vice Chancellor, the coordinating core group, Deans, Directors, Rector, Acting Registrar, Bursar, selected SARs and SABs, and unit representatives. Data acquisition for the above was effected by various mechanisms. The main mechanism of obtaining information was through a set of detailed questionnaires which were circulated to the departmental coordinators as well as other key academics and administrators in the University. These questionnaires were prepared after detailed discussion and review at the consultative meetings described above. In addition to this, information was obtained directly from the relevant sources. Information collected by the above means were analyzed by the core group of academics, who then developed the final Self Evaluation document which is presented here.

The Institutional Review of the UoC was carried out from 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> February 2010. The review team consisted of the following members.

1. Prof. Laksman Jayathilake, Former Vice Chancellor of the University of Peradeniya
2. Prof. S. Mohanadas, Former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Jaffna
3. Prof. N.K. Dangalle, Professor of Geography and Former Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Kelaniya
4. Professor Lesly Panditharatne, Former Vice Chancellor of Peradeniya University and former Chairman of the University Grants Commission
5. Prof. Malini Endagama – Professor of History, University of Sri Jayewardenepura
- 6 Mr. T. B. Andarawewa Former Dean of the Faculty of Management Studies of the Rajarata University Sri Lanka

Prof. Laksman Jayathilake served as the review Chair.

The Self Evaluation Report for Institutional Review prepared by the UoC was made available to the members of the review team well in advance for perusal before the review commenced on the 15<sup>th</sup> February 2010.. During the institutional review processes following eight aspects were evaluated. ·

University goals and corporate planning ·

Financial resources and management ·

Research ·

Quality management and administration ·

Quality assurance ·

Learning resources and student support

External degree programs ·

University/Industry/Community/other extension activities

The review process commenced with a private discussion of the Review Team with the Quality Assurance Specialist of the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council (QAAC) of the University Grants Commission (UGC). Then the agenda for the review visit was finalized with the Chairperson of the Internal Quality Assurance Unit (IQAU) of the UoC. The agenda is given in Annex I. The review team then met the Vice- Chancellor who briefed about the quality assurance activities carried out at the UoC. This was followed by two presentations on the SER done by the Vice-Chancellor and Acting Registrar. The review team had discussions with all stakeholders of the university including the Vice- Chancellor, Council members, Deans of Faculties, Heads of Departments, Unit Coordinators, Acting Registrar, Bursar, members of the academic staff and non academic staff, Student counselors, students etc. The

list of persons met is given in Annex II. During the review visit, many documents were observed by the review team. The list of these documents is given in Annex III. The facilities of the UoC observed by the review team are listed in Annex IV. A report incorporating the findings of the review team is prepared after the review visit. In the report, the strengths/weaknesses of each aspect reviewed is highlighted together with some recommendations.

Based on the findings of the Review Team, a judgment on the quality assurance arrangements of the University is given. The draft report will be sent to the University and the feedback will be obtained. If there is disagreement with the findings and the judgment, it would be resolved by the 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](http://www.qaacouncil.lk).

### **3. REVIEW TEAM'S VIEW OF THE SELF EVALUATION REPORT**

The self evaluation report (SER) has been prepared in accordance with the format given in the Quality Assurance Handbook for Sri Lankan Universities published by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Directors (CVCD) and the UGC. In the preamble, a brief description on the history, the present status of the University and the Process of institutional Quality Assurance Review was given. Domain 1 describes the University goals and corporate planning. The 7 goals are precisely mentioned and along with that the implementation and the key areas are clearly highlighted. Domain 2 describes the Financial Resources and Management. Resources allocation procedures, executive responsibilities, the different committees, additional sources of finance and its disbursement through (Research and Management Unit) RMU is discussed under this domain. Domain 3 deals with Research. The broad goals and strategies related to research, Research Promotion, Infrastructure for research, Funding and Research Output along with other achievements in research are elaborated in this domain. Domain 4 describes the Quality Management and Administration. In this domain it discusses the Quality policies and strategies, the structure, the level of awareness about policies and strategies, the acceptance of the system by academics, non-academics and students, involvement and commitment for implementation, availability of human resources, methods of reinforcement, and availability of infrastructure for QAA, level of achievement of QAA goals and commitment of leadership. A substantial effort seems to have been taken to maintain Quality Management and Administration and the Quality Assurance Review Team genuinely identifies and understands the drawbacks and the reasons for the draw back as well. Quality Assurance process of the UoC is described in Domain 5. The aspect of Quality Assurance is very well elaborated in this domain and a clear picture has been able to give to the reader about the Student profiles both in the undergraduate and postgraduates programs, Program design and approval, mode of delivery, Assessment procedures, and quality monitoring procedures and so on. Domain 6 deals with, Learning Infrastructure and Student Support; the library facilities, IT facilities, the student support, Students counselor' s unit and the Departmental Student Counselors, Student Welfare Unit, Career Guidance Unit, Physical Education Centre, and Student Security is discussed under this domain. Domain 7 discusses about the External Degree programs. This domain again provides a descriptive account in relation to academic and administrative aspect of these programs. Domain 8 is based on the University/Industry/Community/Other Extension Activities. This domain gives an elaborative account of all the links they maintain with all these groups mentioned. It also explains the services rendered by the University for these groups.

### **An overview of university's Approach to Quality Assurance**

The UoC has established a comprehensive quality assurance system. According to the QA strategy adopted by the University, self evaluation reports for all Departments of all the faculties, other than the Faculty of Law (which consists of 03 departments and the total program as a whole has to be evaluated), the library and the University had been prepared and submitted to the QAA of the UGC. We note the following details:

- Preliminary workshops and pilot reviews were undertaken
- The Institutional Subject Review Report was completed in 2009
- During the first round of quality assurance implementation, subject reviews in all most all academic Departments (Except the Faculty of Law) were carried out and completed by 2010
- University Management has established an Internal Quality Assurance Unit (IQUA) of the University and the Quality Assurance is ensured with a mechanism implemented at the Departmental and Faculty levels.
- The Council, Senate and the faculty Boards monitor the progress of respective programs coming under the purview of that department and the Faculty
- The Quality maintenance and enhancement is an agenda item in the Senate and the Faculty Boards.
- The members of the IQUA are the chairpersons of the Faculty IQUA (FIQAUs). The Chairperson of the IQUA is appointed by the Senate of the University.

Further, the quality assurance activity included organizing Seminars and Workshops for training and preparing the academic Departments for the process of subject Review. This has helped individual Departments to prepare their SERs. As a result of the initiative taken by the IQAU and its enthusiasm as well as systematic programs conducted by the IQAU the UoC has completed the Subject Review process.

The University management has taken a number of steps to ensure the quality of students' education by improving the computer based education and Information Communication Technology, Library facilities, Infrastructure facilities of the lecture theatres, student accommodation and canteen facilities, health care and sports facilities and other related facilities. The operation of the student accommodation arrangements may be further improved by getting the professional advice of specialists who are available in the Faculty of Medicine.

Sustained interest in university-wide quality assurance activity is indicated by it being included as standing item in the agenda of the University Senate and the Faculty Board meetings. All these facts and information gathered during the review visit indicate that UoC has taken a substantial effort to assure a higher quality in education management and related areas. As such, it can be concluded that the University has a highly positive approach towards quality assurance.

## **4. COMMENTARY SECTIONS ON THE EIGHT ASPECTS OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW**

### **4.1 University Goals and Corporate Planning**

A well developed exemplary Corporate Plan (2008-2012) is available for the University. A revised Vision and a Mission along with goals and objectives and suitable strategies have been formulated and implemented. It was learnt that there has been much participation and

inputs from the Faculties and Departments in order to make this Corporate Plan a success. The Goals and Objectives are mostly achievable. The Corporate Plan in printed form was very comprehensive and detailed. Annual action plans with specific time frames are prepared and required funds are provided along with clear responsibilities assigned to respective officers. Some Faculties (Faculty of Medicine) have prepared their own Corporate Plans falling in line with the University Corporate Plan and they ensure achieving those goals and objectives which in turn contribute achieving the University goals and objectives in the long run. However, it was revealed that the awareness about the Corporate Plan and its, Goals, Objectives, strategies among majority first level managers i.e. SARR, ARR, SABB, and ABB in the University is minimal and hence their commitment in achieving these goals and objectives seems lessened. On the other hand the partially implemented Higher Educational Management Information System (HEMIS) has to be fully implemented ensuring a robust progress monitoring and evaluation mechanism and thereby to make aware all parties concerned about the lapses and shortcomings of achieving overall objectives and goals of the CP in the University.

#### **4.2 Financial Resources and Management**

Both Financial Resources and Management and Quality Management and Administration are addressed under Goal N0 7 in the Corporate Plan 2008-2012. There are 04 clearly mentioned objectives along with 15 strategies to be implemented in achieving these goals and objectives with clear responsibilities assigned to respective officers. Clear financial policies and procedures are adopted and followed in relation to these activities.

The University gets funds from three main sources, namely;

1. The Consolidated Fund (CF) from the General Treasury
2. Local and Foreign Donor Agencies, IRQUE Project, and Research grants etc.
3. Funds generated through Extension/Fee Levying Programs conducted by the Faculties, institutes, campus and Units functioning under the university

The disbursement of funds is done as per guidelines in the Financial Regulations and instructions given by the respective institutions (UGC/Treasury). The Finance Committee, Tender Board Committees, Supplies Committees, Library Committee, Land, Building and Maintenance Committee, Deans' Committee are met regularly. The compositions of the Committees, responsibilities of authorizing officers are clearly defined and they are strictly followed. The financial matters are well scrutinized and controlled by these different committees and the policies, procedures and circulars are well adhered to. The Auditor General has expressed his opinion about the final accounts as true and fair.

The Treasury through CF provides funds for the university under main two headings: Recurrent and Capital. The recurrent funds are basically spent on personal emoluments and this funds provision is adequately made available to the University by the treasury. The allocations provided under capital are for five basic areas of expenditure namely; Rehabilitation of buildings, Furniture and equipment, Books and periodicals, Ongoing projects and New Projects. A remarkable deficit compared to funds requested can always be seen with the funds made available by the CF for each category under capital. In some years (2007, 2008) this provision has been reduced to 42% and 49% respectively, of the requirements of that year. In 2009, 100% provision has been made available.

The generated funds of the university have been substantially increased over the past five years. However, there is a decline in research grants obtained by the University academics during this period.

The Faculty of Medicine (FoM) obtains nearly USD 110,000 per year from Bhutanese students who study in the FOM. Also they earn app. Rs. 1.0 Mn. from elective programs offered to foreign students. However, Government grant for rehabilitation and construction of the new building is inadequate. There was only Rs. 3.2 Mn available for rehabilitation and no money was available for new constructions.

The University practices a funds borrowing system in order to meet the requirements of the ongoing projects and this borrowing is done on a short term basis through the reserves available in the RMU (Research and Management Unit) which are being accumulated through generated funds: i.e. fee levying programs, research grants etc.etc. The reserves available in the RMU seem a blessing for the University for its smooth functioning. It was observed that the University has sufficiently utilized the funds generated through the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> sources stated above for the developmental activities in the University. Most of the Faculties, Institutes and Units have extensively, made use of their own generated funds for their faculty/Institute/Unit infrastructure and academic development activities making less burden to the University. The RMU is running on a project basis, meeting its expenses through generated funds.

However, although the Corporate Plan (CP) formulates its goals, objectives and strategies, they seem seldom considered when funds requirements for that particular year are calculated. Under these circumstances the funds are requested on a routine basis with least attention paid to CP requirements. On the other hand, the funds providers as well seem hardly give emphasis to the CP and its action plans for the year. In this sense both University and the Treasury seem routinely perform these activities as there are urgent financial commitments to be met at the end of the financial years.

### **4.3 Research**

It is evident from the mission statement of the Corporate Plan of the University that it has very clearly identified its role as a centre of research and generation of knowledge. The opening sentence of the mission statement says that its mission is to be a '*centre of excellence in learning and knowledge creation*'. The conceptual framework within which the university would act in order to realize its research mission has been elaborated in its goals, objectives and strategies. Its goal is to achieve standards of excellence in pure and applied research with a set of specific objectives. The objectives are to,

- develop a team of academics with commitment and capacity for excellence in research
- create and sustain a research culture and ensure that staff undertake research
- Encourage and recognize research of high quality and excellence
- maintain high ethical values and standards in research with social responsibility
- promote knowledge and technology transfer, and
- rationalize and strengthen research management in the university

Each of the above objectives is to be realized through a set of appropriate strategies elaborated in the Corporate Plan.

#### **Research Units and Cells**

With a view to encouraging and facilitating research within the university a number of research units, cells and groups have been established in all faculties. The University of Colombo Science and Technology Cell (UCSTEC) of the Faculty of Science, the Centre for the Study of Human Rights (CHSR) of the Faculty of Law, the National Education Research and Evaluation Centre (NEREC) of the Faculty of Education, Social Policy and Research

Centre of the Faculty of Arts, CRG, Conics and HSR of the Faculty of Medicine are such institutions that facilitate research activities in their respective faculties.

The university has a number of institutes that encourages and facilitates research and its dissemination. The Institute of Human Resources Advancement (IHRA), National Institute of Library and Information Sciences (NILIS), Institute of Biochemistry, Molecular Biology and Biotechnology (IBMBB) and the Institute of Agro Technology and Rural Sciences (IARS) are such institutes.

In addition, to the institutional support mentioned above the university as a whole and almost all faculties conduct Annual Research Symposia to facilitate researchers in the university to present their research work. The Annual Research Symposium of the University of Colombo, the Academic Sessions conducted annually by the Faculty of Law, the Annual Research Symposium of the Faculty of Science, the International Research Conference of the Faculty of Management and Finance, the Research Symposium of the National Institute of Library and Information Sciences, the Scientific Sessions of the Faculty of Medicine, Research Sessions of the Faculty of Graduate Studies, the Technical Sessions of the Faculty of Education and the Research Sessions of the Faculty of Arts are such symposia organized by the respective Faculties in recent years. As mentioned in the Self Evaluation Report a total of 102 scientific sessions have been held over the past five years.

The University as well as the faculties has their peer reviewed journals for publication of research papers of the staff. Very recently, the university re-launched its publication, *University of Colombo Review*. Some of the journals published by the faculties are as follows:

- *Ceylon Journal of Medical Science* - Faculty of Medicine
- *Sri Lanka Journal of Critical Care* - Postgraduate Institute of Medicine
- *Sri Lanka Journal of International Law* - Faculty of Law

As evident in the foregoing paragraphs the University has provided the infrastructure needed for research. In turn, the members of the academic staff have utilized the facilities made available by the institution. A large number of research publications of the academic staff members in the various faculties were made available to the review panel. A large majority of them have been published in peer reviewed journals. According to the Self Evaluation Report the total number of papers published in peer reviewed journals during the past five years was 1087 of which 578 and 509 were in local and international journals respectively. The total number of citation of publications during past five years was 1101 averaging at 2.3 citations per member and 0.98 citations per paper. A number of staff members have received awards of excellence in research e.g., Presidential Awards, Ministry of Science and Technology ACU Awards and CVCD Awards.

In addition to research papers read and published, a large number of books have been authored by the members of the academic staff in all faculties.

The Faculty of Medicine has shown a greater excellence in research in their disciplines. There were 1601 research outputs in the faculty over the last five years. 2 patents, 8 books/chapters, 143 papers in peer reviewed journals, 117 research presentations in scientific forums and 28 consultancies were among them.

The knowledge generated through research is disseminated within and outside the university in various ways. The most visible example is the contribution made by the members of the academic staff through supervision of graduate studies. The Faculty of graduate Studies is a case in point. In addition, the Postgraduate Institute of Medicine and postgraduate programmes conducted by the respective faculties contribute through their research students a considerable amount of research studies. At the same time, the new knowledge generated within the university is disseminated to the peripheral areas of the country through various

programmes conducted by institutions such as the Institute of Agro-technology and Rural Science. In this respect the contribution made by the Faculty of Medicine should be especially mentioned.

It is also appreciated that the University has taken necessary steps to transmit the research culture to undergraduate level. The students following special degree programmes are required to carry out an independent research study and present a dissertation. The dissertation carries a high credit value and individual supervision is provided to students by the members of the academic staff.

Although the infrastructure needed for research within the university has been at satisfactory level the financial assistance given to members of the staff specifically for research is not sufficient. At present, the Research Monitoring Unit (RMU) handles research grants (except in the case of the Faculty of medicine where the faculty itself handles grants) within the university but it is not sufficient. At the same time, some members of the academic staff are not well aware of the funding sources available within their faculties that could be utilized for research related purposes. For example, a certain percentage could be set aside from the funds generated from post-graduate for research activities. In fact, some of the faculties do utilize these sources to send their staff members overseas to present papers at seminars and conferences. Annual University research awards are conferred to academic staff members appreciating and recognizing the excellence in research and these conferments are done at the university convocation.

Also, the research potential of some of the institutes of the university should be harnessed to fullest extent possible. Otherwise, the investments made go underutilized. The IBMBB is a case in point.

Considering the above facts and information with regard to research and publications of the university academic staff, the review team is of the view that satisfactory steps have been taken by the University authorities to establish a noteworthy research culture in the University of Colombo.

#### **4.4 Quality Management and Administration**

The Quality Management and Administration (QMA) is important considering in any organization/program in order to ensure a quality product or service. The stake holders in a university as well are vigilant about the QMA because the quality of the policies and procedures adopted and practiced by QMA plays a vital role in satisfying the expectations of the stake holders. On the other hand the quality policies and procedures adopted and practiced in management and administration run across all the functional aspects of the organization and a poor QMA will surely bring down the quality of the institution as a whole. The University QMA is no exception to this requirement and having a well thought out QMA helps ensuring a conducive environment for teaching and learning along with enriching the research activities in the university. Absence of a mechanism to formulate policies in relation to QMA in UoC seems a big draw back which demands early rectification.

Not having adequate administrative plans falling in line with the goals, objectives and strategies laid down in the CP seems to have affected to a considerable extent in the process of monitoring and reviewing of the programs in the institution. There seem a role ambiguity among 50% (approximately) Administrative staff, who do not know under which category (Academic Administrator OR Non-academic Administrator) their role is considered.(Table 4.1, Institutional Quality Assurance Review – 2009. p.23)

On the other hand, most of the top level administrative posts are filled with acting personnel and their work load seems unmanageable. There are 17 officers directly reporting to the (Acting) Registrar. This situation seems a "system overload" and there by a system

breakdown is unavoidable. Thus, under this situation, day to day routine matters may be looked into leaving out any thing related to development and growth of the institution.

Although the strategies are formulated in the CP ensuring the achievement of objectives and goals, Administrators being held responsible in the process seem less compared to Academic members being held responsible for the same. In a very few places only 9% sub strategies, (i.e. 1.1.2.6, 1.1.4.4, 1.1.5.1, 1.1.5.2, 1.3.1.5, 1.5.2.2, 3.2.2.4, 4.2.1.1, 4.2.4.1, 4.2.4.3, 4.2.4.4, 4.2.6.3, 5.1.1.3 – 5.1.1.6, 5.2.1.1, 5.2.3.1, 7.3.1.1, 7.3.2.4, 7.4.3.1, the Registrar is being held responsible and so as Bursar (5%) (i.e. 1.1.2.6, 1.1.4.3, 1.1.4.4, 1.1.5.1, 1.1.5.2, 1.3.1.5, 1.5.2.2, 2.6.4.2, 3.2.2.4, 5.1.1.3 – 5.1.1.6, 5.2.3.1, 7.4.3.1) The SAR is held responsible for a very fewer strategies 3%, (1.1.2.7., 1.3.1.5, 2.3.1.5, 3.1.1.1, 4.1.3.7, 4.2.4.1, 7.2.6.1, 7.3.3.1) and they seem clue less about the CP. They attend routine matters and hardly seem any emphasis given to CP when they perform their duties. This situation seem a severe draw back in the CP itself, and more than 90% strategies are falling on the Academic Administrators (VC/Dean/Head/Director/Coordinator) and thus, there may be break-downs taking place in between at the implementation level

However, in actual practice, less action have been taken to see the suggested activities are properly implemented. There is a considerable shortage of personnel in all most all categories of employees from Registrar down ward. This situation affects considerably for the teaching learning environment. At the same time insufficient and not at all given training especially for the new recruits, may lead to inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the organization. This situation definitely would aggravate the problem by resulting in inferior quality of products.

While this situation is prevalent which needs immediate rectification at macro level, there seem some entities at micro level, performing well in this aspect demonstrating exemplary efficiency and effectiveness. Eg. FoM and Post graduate Institute of Medicine (PGIM). The Dean of the FOM and the Director of PGIM guide the respective institutions towards achievement of the intended goals and as a mark of appreciation it is worthy of mentioning in this report. When looking at the QAM of the Institute of Indigenous Medicine, the situation demands immediate attention for rectification.

## 4.5 Quality Assurance

### *An Overview of the University Approach to Quality Assurance*

In the Corporate Plan of the University of Colombo the significance of assuring the quality of its academic programmes has been clearly identified. The Goal No. 1 of the Plan is to ***achieve standards of excellence in teaching and learning to produce skilled and competent graduates***. Also, to achieve ***standards of excellence in pure and applied research*** and optimize dissemination of knowledge with ***relevance and quality*** to develop skilled and competent individuals are two other major goals of the university.

In response to the UGC directive that required the universities to establish Internal Quality Assurance Units, the University of Colombo made arrangements to establish a central Quality Assurance Unit under the chairmanship of a senior academic. However, in due course, the quality assurance in some of the faculties became active and stronger more attention was focused on the faculty programmes.

The faculty of medicine has established a separate quality assurance unit in the faculty. There is a Curriculum development and evaluation committee, Academic standards committee, Medical Education development and research centre, Curriculum implementation unit are the other main bodies responsible for internal quality assurance of the faculty.

To ensure the quality of education the faculties, departments, units and other similar academic establishments in the University have adopted a number of measures such as peer

review system, students' feedback, module evaluation, and students' academic committees, and external examiners.

The Postgraduate Institute of Medicine has taken excellent measures to ensure the quality of education, training and examinations of the PGIM. It has secured the international standards of Postgraduate education in medicine.

A large number of departments of study of the University of Colombo have undergone the Subject/programme review process of the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council (QAAC) of the UGC. Of the 28 subject/programmes to be reviewed, 24 have submitted their self-evaluation reports to the QAAC and, to date, 24 reviews (86 per cent of the total to be reviewed) have been completed.

### **Academic standards of courses and awards**

The selection of students at undergraduate level is handled entirely by the University Grants Commission. However, for entry to the Faculties of Medicine and Management and Finance certain subject combinations have been specified. The admission to the Faculty of Law is open to students following any subject combination while the Faculty of Arts has no restriction regarding subjects in social sciences and humanities streams. Since the cut-off marks for selection to most of the faculties of the University of Colombo is comparably high some of the best students gain admission to the university.

The fair practices followed by the University in order to maintain the standards of its academic programmes and awards have been duly rewarded. For example, the curriculum design, content and review and teaching, learning and assessment methods of almost all departments of study have been highly rated by the external reviewers who conducted the quality assurance subject reviews. The high standards achieved by the university could be attributed to the regulatory processes followed.

In the design of curriculum an institutionalized procedure is followed. At the outset, a member or a group of members of the academic staff design the curricula to be presented to the department meeting. Then it is discussed at the Curriculum Development Committee (variously known as Curriculum Development and Review Committee, Curriculum Development and Evaluation Committee) of the Faculty. With the recommendation of the CDC it is submitted to the Faculty and later to the Senate and Council. However, in the design of curricula the extent of participation of stakeholders does vary by faculties. For example, the active participation of industry is somewhat at a higher level in the Faculties of Management and Finance, Medicine, Science, Law and Graduate Studies.

Certain innovations have also been evident in course design in recent years. The Department of Mathematics in the Faculty of Science has introduced subjects incorporating Economics and Management components into their courses. Likewise, the Department of Economics in the Faculty of Arts, introduced four subject streams within the Economics Special Degree programme with a view to increasing the employability of its graduates. The Department of Chemistry offers five Special Degrees while the Department of Plant Sciences offering three. Although syllabi are monitored and revised from time to time the formal mechanisms for reviewing syllabi on a regular basis is not available in most departments.

Student assessment, too, vary by Faculties. Although the University as a whole has switched over to a course unit system with Grade Point Average scoring system but all faculties do not adopt the same evaluation method. Some of the Faculties are in the process of transforming into a credit based instruction/evaluation method. In the assessment of student answer scripts almost all faculties use second/external examiners in order to maintain standards.

The student feedback, as has also been shown in QA subject reviews, is not a practice followed by all faculties/departments at the same level. However, in some departments a quantifiable student feedback system can be seen.

As far as academic standards and awards are concerned, the procedures and practices adopted by the faculties and departments are fairly documented and disseminated among the students. Informative student handbooks, both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, are available in all faculties. In addition, some faculties have made institutional arrangements to deal with dissemination of information. For example in the Faculty of Arts, an Information and Documentation Centre has been set up to carry out the duties of academic counseling. In the Faculty of Science, Director, Undergraduates Studies serve as the chief student advisor for the Faculty. In other faculties, too, similar institutional arrangements have been made to disseminate information among students.

### **Staffing**

A transparent method, specified by the University Grants Commission, is being adopted in the recruitment of members to academic, administrative and non-academic staff. Recruitment of permanent staff is made through an open advertisement. In the case of recruitment to academic staff the selection committee comprises Vice Chancellor (Chair), respective Deans, Heads, senior academics and two Council members (UGC nominees). The selections are to be finally approved by the Council of the University. In the selection of persons for administrative and non-academic staff, a similar procedure is adopted but with more weightage to administrative personnel in the composition of selection committees.

After recruitment, staff is required to undergo a probation period during which they are expected to obtain necessary qualifications for confirmation. Many of the members of the academic staff secure scholarships to pursue their postgraduate studies. In addition, the Staff Development Centre of the University is entrusted with the task of improving quality and developing skills of the staff. However, at present, more attention is given to academic staff members. Most of the new recruits to administrative and non-academic staff are being received mainly 'on-the-job' training. The SDC has contributed to the professional development of academic staff in both the University of Colombo and other universities in Sri Lanka. (e.g. other university academics enroll in the SDC's CTHE Program, annual SDC-SLAIHEE Conference). SDC with the funding of SIDA SAREC has funded a several PhD studies and foreign conference paper presentations. As part of continuous professional development, workshops and seminars are held in relation with teaching and learning. For non-academic staff, computer software (e.g. MS Office) and English classes are conducted annually by the SDC. In addition, foreign training for administrators (e.g. SAB, Registrar) has also been funded by SDC. The Further training programmes for administrative, library and non-academic members of the staff have may be developed and offered by the SDC. The SDC has UK accreditation for its staff training courses.

In order to make the staff more efficient and effective, a reward system that recognizes the contribution made by the staff has to be implemented as an annual event. It is advisable to reward the members of the staff, irrespective of academic, administrative and non-academic status, at one single stage.

### **Communication Process**

As mentioned earlier, the University did establish a Central Internal Quality Assurance Unit to handle all quality assurance activities within the University. However, in due course the Central Unit was overshadowed by the Faculty Quality Assurance Units and the Central Unit has become almost non-functional. It is true that some of the faculty QA units are functioning well but it is not a generalized statement. Some faculties are still to organize such units.

The weakening of the Central QA Unit has prevented the sharing of good practices followed by one faculty with another. It is strongly recommended, therefore, to re-establish the Central Unit under a senior academic with representatives from all Faculties. The Central Unit, in

collaboration with the Faculty Units could organize programmes and workshops to share the experiences of QA Units within the University. However, the Central Unit should not be a dominating one but a coordinating body that allows the ground-level innovations and practices to come to the surface.

The participation of students in these activities is minimal but they do have representations at Faculty Boards. As such, students could be made aware of the quality assurance work planned and implemented in the University.

An institutional mechanism to entertain student complaints does not exist universally but the Faculty of Medicine does have such a mechanism through a 'Staff Group for Student Assistance'. In other faculties the massive numbers of students make it difficult to operate such services but in general the student counselors attend to such grievances. However, it is advisable to evolve a system to handle such complaints. Such facilities would give students some feeling that they are being 'heard' and taken care of.

Considering the above facts and information with regard to quality assurance, the review team is of the view that quality assurance in the University of Colombo is at a satisfactory level.

#### **4.6 Learning Infrastructure and Student Support**

There is a main library in the UoC which caters mainly for the following faculties: Arts, Education, Management and Finance, Graduate Studies and Law. The main library has around 500,000 books, 250 local and foreign journal titles, e-resources and special collections. It also has a 650 seating capacity. In addition there are two faculty based libraries; one in the FoM and the other in the FoS. The library in the FoM has around 40,000 books and a rare collection of present and past journals. The library in the Fos as well has a collection of 40000 books with around 150 seating capacity. The main library and the branch libraries (FoM and FoS) provide a commendable service to the user community through its dedicated human and electronic supports. The user community is highly satisfied about the services rendered by the library system in the UoC.

The IT infrastructure in the UoC is developing fast and almost all the departments have access to the internet facilities. Almost all departments use IT applications to improve the teaching and learning environment. The concept is “virtual Campus” is practiced by the University and few faculties including the FGS provide sufficient information for the students through this device. There are permanently fixed multi media projectors in the class rooms in many of the faculties and they are used for teaching purposes. However this facility is seldom used by some departments in their teaching learning process, mainly due to the inadequate attention paid to the maintenance of this device. The student access to IT facilities is minimal due to lack of such facilities and poor maintenance of the available resources. Lack of required personnel, specially technicians and unavailability of support devices like authentic virus guards are necessary mentioned in this connection. The University Of Colombo, School of Computing (UCSC) renders a commendable service to the nation within its capacity and it should be appreciated.

There is an IT laboratory for the students in the FoM and it is fully utilized by the students. The Wi-Fi internet facility is available for the students' even at their common room. The students' common room is comparatively at a higher standard. The students' virtual learning laboratory is in higher standards and highly fascinated by the review team. The computer lab closes at 4p.m students are unable to use it as they are only relieved of their academic activities in the faculty after 4p.m.

Despite of all these facilities available at the FoM, there are a number of further developments needed to enhance the learning resources and students' support. Many

buildings of the faculty are more than a hundred years old. Renovation has been neglected over the years. Therefore there is a need for a systematic renovation program. The Colombo medical faculty has a capacity to accommodate only 700 students. However at present there are more than 1400 students attending the faculty daily. Thus, there are extreme constraints on the area available for academic activities. No new constructions have been taken place since 1950's. Construction of a new building complex with 14 floors has been initiated a couple of years back. Unfortunately the constructions have been ceased due to lack of funds. While the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Colombo is the leading Medical faculty in the country the UGC should give priority to allocate necessary funds to construct the new building which definitely will help increasing opportunities for the students in the FOM.

The hostel and canteen facilities; in terms of space and required basic facilities are not at all at satisfactory levels which need immediate attention. The quality of meals and the prices of them made available in the canteens are at an acceptable level. Only around 12% to 15% students are provided with hostel facilities. There is a hostel for Buddhist monks as well. However, the facilities in these hostels are not with the accepted hygienic standards. The students are accommodated with overcapacity. Majority, close upon 80% students are benefited through financial assistance, i.e. Mahapola or Bursary.

The university has a sufficient number of Student Counselors, and they work in collaboration with the Senior Student Counselor. These student Counselors are appointed for a period of one year and they seem not professional counselors. Also, there is hardly any proper training given to them in students counseling. Nevertheless, they try their best to perform their duties. The Director of the Career Guidance Unit has identified some important skills to be developed among the students. However, due to non-availability of funds, these activities are limited to a few faculties especially faculty of Arts, and for a few events.

There are Medical facilities made available for the university community at the UoC but the students are not at all happy about the services provided by the Medical Centre. The reason may be due to the fact that, even at an emergency they have access to the National Hospital in a few minutes time. The review team noted that entertainment facilities available for students are limited.

The Physical Education Centre of the UoC offers its services to the students satisfactorily in a variety of sports activities. Tennis, cricket, Netball, Swimming and baseball are a few of them to mention. In 2008 the UoC has won the championship in the interuniversity games. The staff in the Physical Education Centre is frustrated about their promotional prospects. This situation seems has affected the enthusiasm among officers which in turn would affect their commitment towards this important aspect. Right now less than 10% students take part in sports. There is hardly, opportunities available for the novices to start sports activities after entering the university as there are no facilities and required funds.

#### **4.7 External Degree Programmes**

The University offers only 2 external degree programmes- LLB and BIT. The BIT is conducted by the University of Colombo School of Computing (UCSC).

External Law degree programmes were introduced to the University through LLB Bachelors degree in Law located in Peradeniya in 1961 and was relocated to Colombo in 1965. New admissions to this LLB programme were ended in 1985 with the last set of repeat papers to be held in 2010. The Faculty of Law is currently in the process of planning to launch it again.

To address the job opportunities that exist for Information & Communication Technology (ICT) graduates in Sri Lanka & overseas, an External Information Technology (IT) Degree programme leading to the award of Degree of Bachelor of Information Technology (External) – BIT was launched in 2000 by UCSC.

Over 20,000 students have enrolled for the Year 1 of the BIT programme since its inception and the 10<sup>th</sup> intake is being enrolled in 2009. Only 26% and 56% of students have so far have proceeded to Year 2 and 3 respectively. Over 3,000 students have obtained DIT certification and over 600 at degree levels. Authorities concerned with the BIT Programme are identical to those for the internal programme and it includes the Council and the Senate of University of Colombo, the Board of Management, the Academic Syndicate (which include representatives from the industry and professional bodies) and the Board of Study for External & Extension programmes of UCSC. BIT By-Laws defines the degree programme including entry and degree awarding criteria. All curriculum revisions, examination schedules, examiners list including qualifications of external personal, examination results and student awards are submitted for approval by all the authorities concerned. For operation purposes an External Degree Centre is set up in Colombo, but outside the University premises and it is operated with the assistance of academic and course coordinators, the Examination Branch, e-Learning Centre, Network Operating Centre and Web Master of UCSC. The expertise of more than 20 PhD, 05 MPhil, 20 MSc and 03 MBA drawn from the University of Colombo, other Sri Lankan Universities and the ICT industry are associated with the programme. Academic, Year and Course coordinators and Subject matter experts look after the curriculum, course content, assessments, examinations and results. The Dubai branch of the Institute of Incorporated Engineers of Sri Lanka conducts the examinations in Dubai.

A Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is provided for student learning and for social networking. LMS assists the students to access interactive learning material which is focused on activity based learning, student manuals, teacher slides, self-evaluating quizzes and assessments. Further support is given to students by the regular TV programme telecast over TV Lanka and video lectures through UCSC Internet based TV channel. Most recommended textbooks are made available in many public libraries throughout the country in response to student requests.

Many training institutes offer face to face classes and learning support for BIT students. Over 200 institutes had participated in this process with around 50 institutions in some academic years. UCSC does not accredit any of these institutions but have recognized their contributions for the success of the programme. Each year UCSC publish the summary of examination results for each course by institute so that the candidates can identify the available institutions and plan their learning mode. More than half the students study on their own with the help of the LMS and online/recommended material. In the last academic year 20 institutions from 9 districts conducted training and among them 05 institutions were involved in teaching for all three years. Some institutions offer full or half scholarships for BIT students particularly if they are current undergraduates following other degree programmes. UCSC conducts a meeting with all training institutes every semester and obtain their feedback and brief on future directions. Some of the Alumni have joined or formed training institutes. Although the UCSC facilitated the formation of a BIT Alumni Association it is not functioning as most graduates do not know each other.

#### **4.8 University/ Industry/ Community/ Other Extension Activities**

University of Colombo (UOC) has taken several steps to introduce vast array of programmes to enhance the interaction of the university with external parties such as the community and industry. The number of interactions with outside community by individual departments/campus/institutes/centers/units at the University of Colombo from 2005-2009 are summarized in Table below

Six departments of the Faculty of Arts have contributed towards the university-industry-community interactions. Department of English and Department of Economics have conducted several programmes towards the industry mainly to improve English communication skills of employees of industries. Further the English Department has conducted a diploma in English for teachers Department of Economics conducts a Diploma in micro finance. Department of Sociology

has conducted programs to enhance the social skills of probationary prison officers over the years. Further the same department was involved in an ADB funded road net work improvement project, Sociological research related to pipe water supply, Colombo Katunayake express way at Katunayake end resettlement plan and several other consultancies. Department of Sinhala serves as a member of the editorial board in editing classical text. Department of Demography has successfully conducted a certificate course on methods of survey research & survey data analysis using SPSS several times and has held a workshop in “Application of research methods in social sciences” as national programs. Department of Political Science was involved in public policy curricula development in political science and public policy in 2009.

Under the Faculty of Management and Finance the Department of Business Economics, Department of Human Resource Management and Department of Marketing together with Sri Lanka Institute of Printing conduct diploma courses in Printing Technology & Management and Visual Communication & Management. Department of Marketing has organized charity work with the involvement of students such as donations to orphanages, blood donation activities towards needy the community. Department of Accounting was involved in providing training on accounting and financial management for accounting staff of local government authorities. A national program on “Management Skills Development” was jointly organized by the Department of Business Economics, Department of Marketing and the Department of Human Resource Management in 2009.

Six departments of the Faculty of Science have positively contributed towards the university-industry-community interactions. Department of Plant Sciences has conducted 3 industrial projects. The Departments of Chemistry and Statistics and Computer Studies have had numerous interactions with the industry and the amounts of industrial interactions are 69 and 19 respectively. The Department of Chemistry has a collaboration with Ministry of Industry for a testing center. It is worth referring to the supporting documents to have an idea about the list of industries.

Departments of Plant Sciences together with the Weligatta Community Center (now the IARS) has taken biotechnology to the rural sector where training/ planting material to the farming community are provided. Department of Chemistry has conducted “chemistry magic shows” in schools at various parts of the country to enhance the student enthusiasm in studying chemistry. Department of Plant Sciences has conducted a consultancy service for LOLC and Department of Statistics and Computer Studies has provided statistical advice for toxicological research. Department of Statistics has also conducted several training programs on the data analysis using SPSS. Department of chemistry has also conducted a national program on “Analysis and modeling of water quality in Kala Oya basin”. Department of Mathematics has conducted competitions SLMC/SLMCC, prepared school students for IMC and accompanied Sri Lankan team to IMC in different parts of the world. Several departments at the faculty of science have been involved in conducting training workshops for GCE (A/L) teachers in their respective fields in science discipline. Department of Physics has conducted training courses on microcontroller programming and its applications, training program on lightning protection and workshops on electronic design automation with Cadence Orcad over the last 5 years. The same Department has also conducted a certificate course in applied electronics and automation technology. Departments of Plant Sciences has conducted the diploma in biodiversity management and recently launched the online certificate course in bioinformatics. Department of Chemistry has conducted a diploma in radiation protection. Department of Zoology had contributed to numerous national scale programs such as environmental policy development, environmental management, elephant conservation, diagnosis of malaria, training of health service workers for malaria research.

In order to formalize these industry/community interactions by the Faculty of Science, the University of Colombo Science & Technology cell (UCSTEC) was established in 2009. The objectives of the UCSTEC are to advance the frontiers of science and technology to improve the economy of Sri Lanka, to gain experience and knowledge to further the university's educational

programs and to enhance national capacity for community development through transfer of modern technology. The Department of Law, which is the only department in the Faculty of Law is conducting programs to train students as legal assistants in the justice program. Further the department has provided legal aid to improve legal literacy among the individuals in the estate sector. Department of Law has also conducted public awareness programs such as “National Law Week”.

The clinical departments of the Faculty of Medicine (Clinical Medicine, Surgery, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Pediatrics and Psychological Medicine) have direct involvement in provision of patient care in the National Hospital, Colombo and associated hospitals- Clinical staffs of these departments are directly responsible for the care of patients in these disciplines. The Department of Pharmacology has conducted an industrial project for Asian Chemistry Industries. Department of Parasitology has conducted several screening programs for the diagnosis of malaria and leishmaniasis. The department has undertaken to train personnel in diagnosis of malaria as well. Department of Pathology has provided the diagnostic cytopathology, histopathology and haematology services to the patients. Department of Pharmacology has published the diabetes handbook and 7 leaflets in diabetes in Sinhala, English and Tamil to educate the public. Further, the department was involved in capacity building of health professionals to improve service provision for the community. The department has also organized programs to enhance the awareness on non-communicable disease prevention and control such as hypertension prevention and control. The Department of Clinical Medicine acts as national advisor for the Health Ministry. Further the department also plays an advisory role in drug evaluation, outbreak control SARS, Bird flu and vaccine reactions. The Department of Clinical Medicine has contributed towards the kidney transplantation program as well. The Department of Pathology is a member of technical advisory committee in medical clinical testing, Sri Lanka Accreditation Board. The Department provides consultancy cytopathologist for Family Planning association of Sri Lanka and provides consultancy services for national committee for pap smear screening for well women. Department of Pathology also plays an advisory role in the diagnosis of referral cases. Department of anatomy has been providing clinical genetics and counseling (since 1983), cytogenetic testing (since 1983) and molecular genetic testing services (since 2006) on an ongoing basis. The Department of Clinical Medicine conducts post graduate diploma in health development and several diploma programs. The Department of Pathology conducts extension programs on Immunohistochemistry based on tumour diagnosis and prognostic markers. Further, the behavioral science stream of the faculty of medicine has conducted a workshop on ethics in physiotherapy practice for practicing physiotherapists in the year 2009.

The Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Colombo (FGS-Colombo) offers a diverse range of specialized postgraduate study programs in the applied social sciences, business studies, and international affairs. With state-of-the-art educational methods, FGS-Colombo study programs are designed to help today's knowledge worker meet the challenges of the future. It is worthy to mention that the FGS runs study programs using the innovative concept of M-Learning. In addition, the FGS conducts courses of a multi disciplinary nature. The multidisciplinary courses incorporate inputs from Arts, Social Science, Natural Science, Business and Behavioral sciences. The multi disciplinary PhD program has over 30 candidates. This seems a substantial number when considering the PhD programs conducted by any other academic institution in the country. The M.Phil. in clinical Psychology is the only of that kind offered in the whole country.

Sri Palee campus has undertaken media training internships over the last five years. Further, they conduct certificate courses in English and IT as well.

The UOC has seven institutes and one institute is now upgraded to a School. University of Colombo School of Computing (UCSC) has undertaken number of consultancy services both in public and private sectors. Some of these services are tender evaluation, systems recommendation,

software project consulting, feasibility studies, acceptance testing for computer hardware & software, planning and conducting of recruitment testing. Software Development Unit of UCSC had produced low cost software with most suitable technology for the public sector. They have conducted these services for places like Asia foundation, Virtual village, Department of Coastal Development, National Authority on Tobacco and Alcohol, Juliyes & Creases etc. The UCSC developed, Document Management System (eDMS) for Birth Marriage & Death Certificates enables issue copies of birth, marriage, death certificates within 2 minutes in many DSs in the country. UCSC has also worked on the farmers' pension system and insurance system. At national level, UCSC had processed and released the election results to the media at presidential elections, had conducted In Country Training Programme in e-Learning Technology, produced the pharmaceutical distribution system for Western Provincial Council and had conducted many projects for ministries such as the Ministry of Livestock Development. Training programs conducted by UCSC are many. Teacher training program, training personal computer applications, digital video production & animation, computer aided drafting, java application development, Unix/Linux network & system administration, is some of the training programs facilitated by UCSC.

The UOC started an agricultural project at Weligatta in 1999 and later it was developed into a center to work with the farmers under Mau-Ara irrigation project to introduce modern agro-technology. The tissue culture laboratory at the centre produces planting material for the farmers. Recently the centre was upgraded to an institute called Institute of Agro-technology and Rural Science (IARS). At present, it produces 25,000 tissue cultured banana plants per month and sells at a very nominal fee for the farmers. The institute at present offers Certificate and Diploma programs which will later lead to degree level programs on agro technology for the farming community. The model of life-long learning through open distance learning (ODL) is a major component in teaching and learning processes of this Institute.

The National Institute of Library and Information Sciences (NILIS) has conducted many workshops, conferences and exhibitions with the view to improve library and information studies education of librarians and paraprofessionals. The institute also has conducted programs on managing multimedia centers, managing e- resources, writing & publishing academic papers. Further in the year 2009 they held the NILIS Research Symposium.

The Institute of Human Resource Advancement (IHRA) earlier known as Institute of Workers Education (IWE) serves the community by way of conducting different programs to enhance the employability of graduates and undergraduates in the country. Some of such programs are diploma in drug abuse management studies, diploma in rural development studies, diploma in health promotion, certificate course in computer applications and driving and road safety instructors training. IHRA was also involved in projects like developing GIS based edu-tourism systems, evaluating the Dahasak Gam Naguma and Gurupahayen Ranpahayata community development project under the Rural Industries and Village Re-awaking Program.

Postgraduate Institute of Medicine (PGIM), Institute of Indigenous medicine (IIM) and Institute of Biochemistry, Molecular Biology and Biotechnology (IBMBB) are the other 3 institutes of the UOC which is set up to serve the community better with its expertise in respective fields.

The UOC has 5 centers. The UK accredited Staff Development Centre (SDC) is committed to training and development of human resources not only in the University of Colombo but also in all other Universities in Sri Lanka. The activities target academic, administrative, clerical and other skilled and unskilled personnel. The SDC continued to diversify its programs with the intention of providing benefits to a larger group and entered into a new direction by concentrating on young teachers and senior students.

Colombo University Community Extension Centre (CUCEC) provides an institutional base for academics to actively participate in research based community development activities. Over the years the centre was involved in project related to tsunami, poverty reduction, illicit liquor and child & women trafficking.

The Faculty of Education maintains close links with the Ministry of Education, National Institute of Education and Regional Education offices. The National Education Research and Evaluation Center (NEREC) was established with the assistance of the World Bank in the year 2000 in the Faculty of Education. The General Education Project 2 and the Teacher Education and Teacher Deployment Project of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Education and Cultural Affairs provided the basic support in terms of financial assistance to establish the NEREC. The main objective of the NEREC is to be engaged in Research in the field of Education and provide advice to Education planners. Educational Testing, Evaluation and Training are its other functions.

The Centre for the Study of Human Rights (CSHR) was established in 1991 at the Faculty of Law with the objective of contributing to and promoting human rights educational and research activities for the university-community as well as the public at large. To promote greater public awareness and recognition of human rights issues, the CSHR conducts structured programmes for various target groups. It provides an internship programme for law graduates as well as overseas graduates. The CSHR conducts a human rights training programme for newly passed out lawyers on human rights litigation as well as a Diploma programme for human rights activists. The Centre hosts a library which contains a good collection of books, journals and reports on national, international and comparative human rights law and related subjects. It offers reading, reference and photocopying services to the University Community and the members of the public.

Further the UOC has several units, the Medical Education Development and Research Centre (MEDARC) was established to support the curriculum change of the Faculty in 1995. Today it has developed into a national centre for medical education. MEDARC provides educational support to the Faculty as well as to other medical faculties in the country and the Post Graduate Institute of Medicine. It has many collaborations with local, regional and international institutes of health, medicine and medical education. Further MEDARC has conducted Tsunami relief program for Tsunami affected communities and had contributed towards implementation of national disaster management plan, in collaboration with the Disaster Management Centre, Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights

The Human Genetics Unit of the Faculty of Medicine is the only centre in Sri Lanka dedicated to provide clinical genetic services including genetic testing and genetic counseling. In addition the unit conducts both undergraduate, postgraduate, and CME courses in genetics for medical and allied health professionals and programs aimed at raising genetic awareness among the public. The unit also plays in advocacy to make genetic services available to the people of Sri Lanka and contributes to policy formation in the field of genetics in Sri Lanka.

The Virtual Learning Centre at the Faculty of Medicine began as the Computer-aided Learning Laboratory in 2001. It offers webpage development, webpage hosting, learning material development and conducts training workshops.

The Audio Visual Unit was established in the Faculty of Medicine, in 1999 as the first ever Sri Lankan AVU (Audio Visual Unit) dedicated to medical education. At present the unit has about 30 VCDs available for the public on medically related topics.

Family Medicine unit at the Faculty of Medicine plays a role in conducting on line distance education program for the General Practitioners.

**Table: The number of interactions with outside community by individual departments/campus/institutes/centers/units at the University of Colombo from 2005-2009**

Department/Campus/Institute/Centre/Unit	Links with industry	Community involvement and services	Consultancy	National programmes	Trainings programmes	Extension programmes
Faculty of Arts						
Department of Demography	-	-	-	-	04	-
Department of English	05	13		01	-	07
Department of Economics	05	-	-		-	14
Department of Political Science Public Policy	-	-	-	-	-	01
Department of Sinhala	-	-	-	02	-	-
Department of Sociology	-	05	06	05	05	-
Faculty of Education						
Faculty of Management & Finance						
Department of Accounting	-	-	-	-	01	-
Department of Business Economics	05 (d)	-	-	-	01	-
Department of Human Resource Management	05 (d)	-	-	-	01	-
Department of Marketing	05	c	-	-	01	-
Faculty of Science						
Department of Plant Science	05	04	01	-	01	03
Department of Chemistry	69	21	-	01	02	02
Department of Mathematics	n	p	-	07	-	01
Department of Physics					07	08
Department of Statistics	19	-	02	-	04	-
Department of Zoology	-	n	-	n	n	N
Faculty of Law						
Department of Law	09	01		02		01
Faculty of Medicine						
Department of Anatomy	-	n	-	-	-	-
Department of Clinical Medicine	-	-	06	08	09	07
Department of Parasitology	-	15	-	05	02	-
Department of Pathology	-	05	05	04	04	05
Department of Pharmacology	01	04	01	01	03	-
SRI PALEE CAMPUS	05	-	-	-	-	03

## INSTITUTES/SCHOOLS

Department/Campus/Institute/Centre/Unit	Links with industry	Community involvement and services	Consultancy	National programmes	Trainings programmes	Extension programmes
University of Colombo School of Computing (UCSC)	65	05	45	26	43	25
Institute of Human Resource Advancement (IHRA)	02	04	02	02	03	15
National Institute of Library and Information Science (NILIS)	-	-	-	-	18	01

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Department/Campus/Institute/Centre/Unit	Links with industry	Community involvement and services	Consultancy	National programmes	Trainings programmes	Extension programmes
Institute of Agro-Technology and Rural Sciences (IARS)	-	05	05	-	01	05
<b>CENTRES</b>						
Colombo University Community Extension Centre (CUCEC)	-	-	-	08	-	-
Social Policy Analysis Research Center (SPARC)						
Medical Education Development and Research Center (MEDARC)	-	01	04	02	-	-
<b>UNITS</b>						
Family Medicine Unit	-	02	-	-	-	-
Human Genetics Unit	02	n	-	n	-	-

n = specified number is not given

p = student projects

c = charity

d = diploma courses

## **5. OVERALL JUDGMENT OF LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE IN THE QUALITY ASSURANCE ARRANGEMENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY**

The University if taken as a whole the performance is commendable. Almost all the faculties, the campus, the school, 06 Institutes, centers and units coming under the UoC, perform their duties individually and collectively to the best of their capabilities. There are some areas as well that need improvements as mentioned above.

The strengths/commendable features as well as weaknesses along with recommendations are stated in chapter 6. Therefore the review team is of the view that a judgment of "**Confidence**" could be given to UoC with respect to its quality assurance arrangements.

## **6. COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. University Goals and Corporate Planning**

#### **Strengths/ Weaknesses**

- I. Having a committed and self motivated set of personnel in the University who could formulate, realistic goals, achievable objectives and implementable strategies with required time frames ensuring a better output.
- II. Having an exemplary faculty like Faculty of Medicine, with a clear Vision and a Mission formulated, falling in line with the University Vision and Mission and trying to work towards them
- III. Partially implemented Higher Education Management Information System could be implemented as a full fledged one in order to get reliable information in relation to Progress Monitoring and Evaluation of all activities undertaken by the different Faculties, campus, Institutes, School, Departments Centers and Units.

#### **Recommendation**

- I. Establish a progress control mechanism in the university in order to monitor the progress made by each unit periodically

### **2. Financial Resources and Management**

#### **Strengths/Weaknesses**

- I. The Auditor Generals positive opinion about the Final Accounts statements submitted by the University is a good indication to be satisfied about the financial management aspect of the UoC
- II. Functioning of almost all Financial Committees suggested by various authorities
- III. having healthy financial reserves at faculty, institute and unit levels, to address short-term commitments
- IV. non existence of an appropriate awareness among the employees at all levels in the Finance division about the time frames and responsibilities assigned for scheduled activities in the CP and their significance in the total quality management exercise
- V. approach being reactive than proactive, prevents planned developments
- VI. less room available to deviate from or to do away with red tapes
- VII. nonexistence of a list of priorities emanated from the action plans scheduled for the year ensuring efficient funds allocation from all sources available for such activities

VIII. Partially implemented Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) in the University

### **Recommendations**

- I. make available the copies of the Corporate Plan along with the activity plan highlighting the financial requirements as well prepared under each strategy and the contribution each department/unit has to make in order to ensure the achievement of objectives stated in the CP.
- II. do a priority list of activities with a proactive planning approach, linking the activities closely with the funds available for that year
- III. develop Performance Indicators, along with a monitoring plan and a HEMIS in order to monitor the progress and to ensure a bottom up and top down feedback where necessary
- IV. revise goals, objectives and strategies as required and if necessary Vision and the Mission as well taking into consideration the strengths & weaknesses and opportunities & Threats existing in the changing external and internal environment of the organization.

### **3. Research**

#### **Strengths/Weaknesses**

- I. having a higher research culture among the academics in the UOC and the large numbers of well recognized research output continuously produced in the past
- II. possessing ownerships for 08 patent rights, 19 inventions, 337 books and 131 chapters contributed to various other books
- III. greater excellence demonstrated by the FoM in connection with all the aspects mentioned above along with a substantial number of consultancies to its credit
- IV. underutilization of research grants and low interaction maintained with the industry by some faculties & departments

#### **Recommendation**

- I. steps may be taken to identify the reasons for not being able to do research and meet academic objectives and encourage the respective units for such activities

### **4. Quality Management and Administration**

#### **Strengths/Weaknesses**

- I. having a work force with positive attitudes, which considers their service is important rendering even in the absence of an appropriate training and promotional prospects
- II. having a full-fledged top management team with International reputation
- III. not being identified the vacuum existing in the area of policies and procedures in the fulfillment of the requirements in progress control
- IV. Non availability of required expertise available in the external labour market to fill the vacancies in the top administrative posts

#### **Recommendations**

- I. appropriate policies and procedures in relation to all functional aspects seem necessary formulated with least delay
- II. human resource needs and Training needs are vital identified ensuring a quality Management and Administration which leads to enhance the quality productivity
- III. immediate rectification of role ambiguity among middle level managers

## 5. Quality Assurance

### Strengths/Weaknesses

- I. a few faculties have established separate quality assurance units in their Faculties. The FoM has established a number of other committees namely: Curriculum Development and Evaluation Committee, Academic Standards Committee, Curriculum Implementation Units, and the Medical Education Development and Research Centre, which go hand in hand with the quality assurance activities. The committees in addition to the Quality Assurance Unit established in the FoM seem adequately address the interest of almost all the stake holders of that faculty.
- II. Most of the faculties also have taken initiations to introduce student Feedback measures and Peer Observation exercises in relation to Quality Assurance.
- III. The progressive measures implemented in the Postgraduate Institute of Medicine to maintain the international standards in their postgraduate programs in medicine is commendable
- IV. non existence of a apex level quality assurance forum representing all the academic and administrative units from the faculty downwards and Registrar downwards, regularly to discuss and diagnose academic and administrative lapses and shortcomings in order to address them immediately

### Recommendation

- I Set up an apex level quality assurance unit consisting of academic and administrative officers an ensure regular progress reviewing.

## 6. Learning Resources and Student Support

### Strengths/ Weaknesses

- I. being able to provide basic learning resources Library, IT, hostel, student counseling, career guidance, sports, medical and other infrastructure facilities like moderately equipped class rooms, laboratories, and canteen facilities to a satisfactory level, in addition to a well qualified academic staff for teaching.
- II. being able to provide financial assistance (Mahapola and Bursaries) for close upon 80% of the total student population
- III. inadequate hostel facilities (close upon 85% students do not get hostel facilities) and less attention paid to student welfare, i.e. Canteen, sanitary, and space for reading and entertainment

### Recommendation

- I. Remedial measures have to be introduced to improve the student welfare facilities basically the canteen hostel and sanitary facilities.
- II. Renovation of library in the FoS, expanding building capacity in the FoM, and the Sripalee campus and providing required ICT facilities in almost all the faculties with their regular maintenance

## **7. External Degree Programmes**

### **Strengths/Weaknesses**

- I The FOM conducts Certificate and Diploma programs for the external students on different areas.
- II. BIT has become the most successful External Degree programme in Sri Lanka and has a Certificate of Commendation in the Education Planner and Administrator Category of the UNESCO ICT in Education Innovation Awards 2007-2008.
- III. BIT has enabled those who could not enter the university and those who could not do an IT degree to read for a degree in ICT due to severe competition to work towards obtaining such a degree. BIT has also given an opportunity to those non-graduates already working in ICT to obtain a formal qualification in ICT through self-study.
- IV. Number of BIT graduates produced has already exceeded the number of graduates produced by all intakes of the internal Computer Special Degree programme.
- V. The expertise of more than 20 PhD, 05 MPhil, 20 MSc and 03 MBA drawn from the University of Colombo, other Sri Lankan Universities and the ICT industry are associated with the programme. Staff from the Universities of Colombo, Peradeniya, Ruhuna and Jaffna are involved in running the examinations in Colombo, Kandy, Galle and Jaffna respectively.
- VI UCSC has been successful in securing donor funded projects (SIDA, JAICA and IDRC) that contributed directly to the development of the e-learning centre, their staff and learning resources
- VII. All examination papers are moderated and scrutinized externally. Sample examination scripts are second marked with all being doubled checked for accuracy. All examination papers and model answers are published on the web, requesting students and teaching institutes to provide feedback. Based on feedback sometimes the model answers and marking schemes are modified
- VIII Academic year always begins on 1<sup>st</sup> October and Semester examinations are held in March and August. Applications for the BIT programme are accepted online

## **8. University/Industry/Community/Other Extension Activities**

### **Strengths/Weaknesses**

- I. It is highly commendable that UoC has taken several steps to introduce vast array of programmes to enhance the interaction of the university with external parties such as the community and industry
- II. The University interacts with farmers as well as with postgraduates, face to face as well as on line and close enough as well as at distance places.
- III. The virtual campus introduced under the concept of “Education for All” is the latest addition through which a great service is expected to be completed by both teachers and students in almost all the educational programs in the university.

## **7. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The University of Colombo (UoC) was established in 1978 and until then since 1921 it was known as the University College affiliated to the University of London. The University college was consisted of two faculties namely, Arts and Science. The origin of the present Faculty of Medicine of the UoC was the Ceylon Medical College established in 1870 by the British rulers. Today the UoC is comprised with 07 faculties, 01 campus, a school, 06 institutes, and a number of centers and Units. The student strength of the UoC is around

35,000 including the Postgraduate students. The UoC is located within Colombo metropolitan.

The UoC conducts a variety of undergraduate and postgraduate degree programs along with a large number of extension programs with the help of the 07 faculties and the other connected institutes. Close upon 4500 graduates and 1250 postgraduates are awarded degrees at the convocations held annually by the UoC.

The Institutional Review of the UoC was carried out from 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> February 2010. During the review, discussions were held with all stakeholders of the university including the Vice-Chancellor, Council members, Deans of Faculties, Heads of Departments, Unit Coordinators, Bursar, Acting Registrar, members of the academic staff and non academic staff, student counselors, students, employers etc. Many documents and the facilities available were also observed by the review team.

The UoC had prepared a Corporate Plan (CP) for the five year period 2008-2012. The Vision and Mission are relevant to national development and social harmony. They reflect present day national and international trends in higher education. Seven goals and a number of objectives for each goal is identified. Suitable strategies were formulated and the tasks were assigned to responsible officers in the relevant functions with the specified time frame during which they have to be implemented and achieved the specific objectives. Most of the officers in the UoC to the level of middle management knew about the corporate plan and the goals stated in the corporate plan but majority officers below middle level were unaware of the corporate plan and its details.

Clear financial policies and procedures are adopted and adhered to by the university. Disbursement of funds is done as per guidelines in the Financial Regulations and instructions issued by the UGC and the General Treasury. Annual funds made available to the UoC from the treasury were with little attention paid to the requirements stated in the action plans and there by the expected outcomes were delayed due to financial constraints. Generated funds were used in many instances to overcome some financial difficulties but they are insufficient to meet the targets.

The UoC has a research policy which is approved by the Senate. A research fund is available and it is very well utilized. A large number of researches have been conducted and their outcomes are disseminated effectively through a number of ways for the benefit of the society. A good number of patent rights along with a number of innovations as well have been secured and the research publications done by many faculties and individuals are commendable.

Administration aspect in the UoC looks lagging behind and the contribution they need to extend towards the achievement of the goals and objectives of the corporate plan cannot be underestimated. Unavailability of senior personnel in the administration may hamper achieving the expected targets. If this aspect is neglected the long term quality in both academic and administration sectors could be affected. Right now, it looks that the measures have been taken to preserve the quality of the academic programs giving less priority for the quality of the administration.

The existing level of learning infrastructure and student support seem need to be further improved. As a whole, the total student population is suffered due to lack of basic facilities such as canteen, sports, and facilities in relation to teaching learning process in some faculties. An academic counseling program is necessary implemented with least delay.

The way of maintaining inter-relationship among communities industries and the UoC is commendable. It is seen all stake holders' interests are very well addressed in various ways in this respect. The projects implemented by the university and its affiliated institutes are community oriented and farsighted.

## 8. ANNEXES

### Annex 1. AGENDA OF THE REVIEW VISIT.

#### 15<sup>th</sup> February 2010 Day 01

0800 h-0900 h Review team's Private meeting  
0900 h-0930 h Meeting with the Vice Chancellor  
0930 h-1030 h Presentation by the Vice Chancellor (with rector, Deans, Directors, Registrar  
Bursar and Librarian)  
1030 h-1100 h Discussion (with Tea)  
1100 h-1200 h Meeting with Rector, Deans and Directors  
1200 h-1300 h Meeting with Acting Registrar and Administrative Staff  
1300 h-1400 h Lunch at College House  
1400 h-1500 h Meeting with Bursar & Financial Staff and SAB- RMU  
1500 h- 1600 h Meeting with internal QA Unit and International  
1600 h-1700 h Meeting with the Senior Professors of the Senate.  
1700 h-1800 h Meeting with Members of the council (with tea)  
1800 h Meeting of the Reviewers

#### 16<sup>th</sup> February 2010 Day 02 Group 1/Group 2

0900 h-1215 h Fac. of Medicine/ Faculty of Science and Cell  
1215 h-1300 h Lunch at Medical Faculty/ Lunch at Science Faculty  
1300 h-1500 h PGIM/ Faculty of Law and CSHR  
1530 h- 1630 h IIM (with Tea)/ FGS (with Tea)  
1700 h -1730 h Review Team Meeting, Senate Hall, College House

#### 17<sup>th</sup> February 2010 Day 03 Group 1/Group 2

0900 h-1230 h Faculty of Arts, SPARC&CUSEC/Faculty of Management & Finance,  
PGMCDU  
1230 h-1330 h Lunch at Arts Faculty/Lunch at Faculty of Management & Finance  
  
1345 h-1555 h Faculty of education and NEREC/University of Colombo UCSC  
1600 h-1630 h ELTU/ IBMBB (with tea)  
1630 h-1700 h Review team Meeting, Senate Hall, college House

#### 18<sup>th</sup> February 2010 Day 04 Group 1/Group 2

0830 h-0930 h NELIS/ (0800-1115) Sri Palee Campus Horana  
0930 h-1130 h Library (Tea)  
1130 h-1300 h Sports/Gymnasium/Department of Physical Education/ Amalgamated sports  
club, Arts Council / 1230 h. 1330 h. Lunch at College House  
1100 h-1200 h Visit to Medical Centre, Hostels & Canteens  
1330 h-1430 h Lunch and SDC/1330 h. 1430 h. IHRA  
1600 h-1700 h Hotels/Canteen/Health Centre/1430 h 1515 h. Weligatta/IARS (Board Room  
1) /1515 h 1600 h Meeting with SARs of examination, Academic &  
Publications, Academic and Establishments, General Administration (Board  
Room 1 with tea)/ 1600 h. 1700 h. Career Guidance Unit & Student  
Counselors, Marshall (Board Room 1)  
1700 h-1730 h Review Team Meeting, Senate Hall, College House

**19<sup>th</sup> February 2010 Day 05**

0900 h-1000 h Meetings with necessary groups selected by the Review Team

1000 h-1100 h Open Meeting for any staff

1100 h-1200 h Meeting of the Review Team

1200 h- 1230h Meeting with the vice Chancellor, Registrar, Bursar, Rector, Deans, Directors,  
Librarian and Domain Coordinators

1230 h- 1330 h Lunch

**Annex 2. THE PERSONNEL MET DURING THE REVIEW VISIT**

Vice-Chancellor

Members of the council

Deans of Faculties/Rector/Directors

Senior Professors of the Senate

Members of the Senate Research Committee

Heads of Departments

Members of the Academic Staff

Subject Coordinators

Acting Registrar

Librarian

Bursar

Senior Assistant Librarians

Senior Assistant Registrars

Senior Assistant Bursars

Members of the Administrative staff

Physical Education Instructor

Members of the Sports Advisory Committee

Director/Career Guidance Unit

Head/English Language Teaching Unit

Chief Security Officer

Medical officer

Student Counselors

Non Academic staff

Undergraduate students

Postgraduate students

**Annex 3. DOCUMENTS OBSERVED**

Corporate Plan

Faculty Hand Books

Student's Feed Backs

Peer Evaluations

Minutes for Curriculum revision committees in faculties

Research and Policy Documents – University Research Grantees Details

Research Publication List of Academic staff

Documents for External Fund Obtain from Research

Internal Quality Assurance Unit- Activities File

Out put of the Subject Reviews of the faculties

Activities documents of Career guidance

University Research Publications – Journals and Magazines

Students Counseling Unit's Documents

Material related to University's collaboration  
Research journals published by the university  
Abstracts of Papers of the Research symposium  
Library Manuals of Policies and Procedures  
Collection development policy of the library  
Self Evaluation report of the library  
Library development plan  
Document on Inter - university champion performance of students  
List of awards received by the university in sports

**Annex 4. FACILITIES OBSERVED**

**Faculty of Science Premises at Sammanthurai**

07 Faculties

Most of the Departments/Units coming under these faculties

Computer laboratories established in the departments Centers and Units-

IIM

Auditorium

Gymnasium

Lecture halls

Board Room(s)

Main Library and Branch Libraries

Science and other connected laboratories

UCSC

Career Guidance Unit

ELTU

IHRA/NILIS

Sri Palee Campus

Hostels

Canteens

staff rooms

Demonstrators' Rooms

Physical Education Unit

Health center

Student canteen

Girl's Hostel

Sub warden's Rooms

Boys' Hostel

Hostel canteens