1. INTRODUCTION

The Government of Sri Lanka, recognizing the need to ensure life-long learning and the right of every citizen to improve their life-chances through access to higher education established the **Open University of Sri Lanka** in 1980 under Section 23(1) and Section 18 of the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978 and the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) Ordinance No.3 of 1980. Amendments were effected through the Open University of Sri Lanka Ordinances No.1 of 1983 and No.12 of 1996. The University incorporated within its system the External Services Agency (ESA) and the Sri Lanka Institute of Distance Education (SLIDE).

In a context where access to higher education was limited due to a lack of places in the conventional university system but not due to a dearth of eligible aspirants, this decision of the Government represented a commitment to the principle of **democratization** at the level of higher education also.

The Open University possesses several unique characteristics:

- Principle of Open Learning
- Provision of ladders of educational progression
- Heterogeneity of the student population
- Large percentage of employed students
- Use of the Distance Mode
- Network of Regional and Study Centres
- Extent of student support required
- Close collaboration with other educational institutions

The Open University has succeeded in eliminating several barriers that lay in the path to university education of large numbers of youth who had completed secondary education. Any person over 18 years of age, with or without formal education, resident in any part of the country could enroll in a programme of study that matched their prior qualifications.

The large number of study programmes conducted by the University, numbering 42, are structured in such a manner, from Foundation and Certificate to Masters and Ph.D. level, so that opportunities are open for those who complete one programme to move up the **ladder** and improve his/her educational qualifications.

The University’s **openness** to academic activities throughout the year makes it an attractive choice for the employed and therefore approximately 80 per cent of the students today are employed. The Open University stands out among the state universities in being the only university in which the students bear partial responsibility for financing their education. It also has the largest student...
population with approximately 22,000 students on roll, which compares with
50,000 in all other state universities in the country.

The Open University is unique within the national university system in being the
only University utilizing the **Distance Mode**. At a time when many a
conventional educational institution including postgraduate institutes are
considering dual mode provision, the Open University as a forerunner in Distance
Education, is often called upon to perform a training role to prepare the staff of
these institutions to use Distance Education.

Open University’s **network of centers** dispersed throughout the country has
brought education literally closer to the students’ homes. This regional network
has compelled the University to enter into collaborative partnerships with
conventional universities and obtain support from professionals outside the
central campus for teaching and evaluation. Due to the heterogeneous nature of
its student clientele, the University is called upon to provide a wide array of
student support services to enable them to complete the programmes they enroll
in successfully.

The organizational structure of the Open University (See Figure 1) is similar to
that of conventional universities. The post of the Chancellor is honorary while the
Vice Chancellor is the principal executive officer. The Registrar is responsible for
the custody of the records and the property of the University and its general
administration. The other **Officers** of the University are the Deans of Faculties,
the Director, Educational technology, Director, Regional Educational Services,
the Librarian and the Bursar.

Over the years, the number of **programmes of study**, **Departments** and
**Faculties** have increased in correspondence to the demands of the economy
and wider society. The output of the Open University graduates had also steadily
increased and at present its four Faculties – **Education**, **Engineering**, **Humanities**
and **Social Sciences** and **Natural Science**, provide eight Bachelors degree
programmes, four Post-graduate Diplomas, and four masters degree
programmes and several diploma, advanced certificate and certificate
programmes. The Staff Development programme conducted by the **Staff
Development Centre** of the University regularly trains, academic, administrative
and non-academic staff to enable them to manage the emerging challenges of
managing a distance mode university while **Educational Technology Division**
trains staff to produce state-of-the-art techniques in teaching-learning.

Several international donor agencies have generously assisted the Open
University to improve its infrastructure and the resources. Among these the
Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Canadian International
Development Agency (CIDA), Swedish International Development Agency
(SIDA), Korean Overseas International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), Asian
Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank are prominent.

The Open University has stepped beyond its teaching task which claimed its
attention at the beginning and is now seriously engaged in research and
dissemination of knowledge. It seeks to promote research in specific disciplines
as well as in distance education and at present publishes three refereed journals.
The passage of time has witnessed the Open University becoming more visible in the international arena, both in higher education and open and distance learning. A member of the Association of Asian Open Universities, it has forged strong links with several overseas universities, both conventional and open, in United Kingdom, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Thailand, Hong Kong and Australia. As a corollary to this initiative, efforts are being taken to market Open University’s programmes off-shore through internationalization.

In its **Corporate Plan** (2001-2005) the Open University envisioned

> “to be a leader in open and distance learning renowned for excellence for human resource development and improvement of people to achieve their full potential”.

Its Mission Statement,

> “We dedicate ourselves to facilitate Open and Distance Learning, support excellence in research and scholarship and enhance opportunities for adult life-long learning”

highlights the prerogatives the Open University has set for herself.

With the promise of generous funding from the Asian Development Bank, the Open University has been given the challenge of increasing its student enrolment and output of graduates, improving the quality of teaching materials, infusing more innovative modes of teaching-learning using information and communication technologies and evaluation designed to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes in its graduates rather than only rote learning. Assistance from the ADB will ensure that the resources and the support services required to meet this challenge are made available.
Figure 1: Organizational Chart of OUSL
2. UNIVERSITY GOALS & CORPORATE PLANNING

2.1 A Review of the University's statement of mission and Educational objectives.

2.1.1 Our mission is to enhance opportunities for adult life-long learning of people by facilitating open and Distance learning and supporting excellence in research and scholarship.

2.1.2 The preparation for the self evaluation of the University has provided an opportunity to assess the achievements of the University against the mission as stated above.

2.1.3 In order to fulfill the above mission, the University is convinced that it is necessary to

(a) create a more conducive academic environment, improve and consolidate quality, efficiency and sustainability in all current activities.

(b) broaden the scope and reach of academic programmes, particularly in information technology, to fulfil both individual and national aspirations.

(c) assure quality in Open and Distance Learning (ODL)

(d) become a centre of excellence in teaching research and scholarship.

(e) develop appropriate systems for dissemination of knowledge.

(f) develop a participatory approach for community empowerment.

(g) develop means for resource generation.

These form the seven goals of the corporate plan 2001 - 2005.

2.1.4 To achieve these objectives listed above, the University has adopted various strategies which are detailed in the Corporate Plan 2001 - 2005. The corporate Plan, while setting out the strategic and development plans for the period 2001 - 2005, also provides a basis for the review of these plans and for assessing the performance.

2.1.5 The University strongly believes in the review of its plans and strategies at different levels to ensure quality. At the department level of the Faculties, there have already been some pilot level reviews based on the CVCD quality assurance criteria. At the project level, the project for modernization of distance education capabilities of the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) funded by the Department for international Development (DFID), UK has been reviewed both at mid term and end of term.
2.1.6 The University is now in the process of reviewing the Corporate Plan 2001 - 2005 to develop the 2004 - 2009 Corporate Plan. The results of the above reviews and the on-going self evaluation will form the basis of the future plans. The corporate plan 2004-2009 will also include the different components envisaged in the Asian Development Bank funded OUSL Distance education modernization project which will run from 2003-2009.

2.2 Strategic educational developments

2.2.1 The Open University was established under section 23 (1) and section 18 of the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978 and the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) ordinance No. 3 of 1980.

2.2.2 The OUSL became fully operative in 1980, under the OUSL ordinance No. 3 of 1980. It incorporated within its system, the External Services Agency (ESA) and the Sri Lanka Institute of Distance Education (SLIDE). At the inception the academic programmes of the OUSL were conducted by two boards of study, the Board of Study for Management, Science and Technology and the Board of Study for Humanities and Social Sciences.

2.2.3 These two boards of study were serviced by the Library, the Audio/visual Section, Computer Unit, the Printing Press and the Regional and Study centres administered by Regional Education Service.

2.2.4 The OUSL created history by being the first University in the country to offer programmes of study leading to certificates, diplomas, degrees and post graduate diplomas and degrees through distance education. A multimedia study system adapted to suit local conditions was developed where face to face teaching was minimal. Student centered learning was guided by specially designed course materials which included print as well as audio and video materials. The learning process was supported where necessary by work in laboratories and the field, workshops, day schools (discussion classes) and also seminars.

2.2.5 The Open University was fortunate to have received the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) to train the staff in distance education and new developments in education technology, purchase of basic machinery and equipment for the Laboratories and the appointment of Consultants for the development of course materials.
2.2.6 A major change in the University resulted from the **OUSL ordinance No. 1 of 1987**. This new ordinance provided for **three (03) Faculties** to replace the two boards of study. The new Faculties that were established and their divisions were as follows.

- **Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences (HSS)**
  - Education, Management & Social Sciences, Legal Studies.

- **Faculty of Engineering Technology (Eng. Tech.)**
  - Civil Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Electrical, Electronic Engineering & Computer Science & Engineering

- **Faculty of Natural Sciences (NSc)**
  - Mathematics, Physical & Chemical Sciences and life Sciences.

2.2.7 The **OUSL ordinance No. 1. 1990** resulted in further changes. The main feature of this new ordinance was the establishment of **five (05) academic divisions** in each Faculty as follows:

- **Faculty of Eng. Technology** - Division of Civil Engineering, Division of Mech. Engineering, Division of Electrical & Computer Engineering, Division of Textile Technology, Division of Mathematics

- **Faculty of H.S.S** - Division of Legal Studies, Division of Language Studies, Division of Social Studies, Division of Management Studies, Division of Education

- **Faculty of N.Sc.** - Division of Chemistry, Division of Physics, Division of Botany, Division of Zoology, Division of Mathematics

2.2.8 In 1996 the academic divisions became **Departments**

At present there are 4 Faculties. The latest addition being the Faculty of Education. **The Faculty of Education** commenced with 2 departments viz. Department of Education and the Department of Early Childhood Education.

2.2.9 The Faculties of Eng. Tech. & N.Sc. now have 6 Departments each, the new Departments being **Agriculture & Plantation Engineering** and **Health Sciences** respectively. The latest addition to the Faculty of education is the **department of Special Needs Education**. The HSS Faculty now has 4 Depts.
2.2.10 The University now offers more than 670 courses of study and 42 programmes of study in a wide variety of disciplines catering to over 22,000 students.

2.2.11 It is worth highlighting some of the new and innovative programmes / projects developed by the Faculties.

- In the youngest of the Faculties, the Faculty of Education, a Child Study Centre has been established with assistance from the Ministry of Women's Affairs, UNICEF and Save the Children - Norway. This is a regional centre and the only one of its kind in the south Asian region.

  The Diploma for Youth in Development Work supported by Commonwealth Secretariat was the very first international programme conducted by the University. It commenced in 1998. The M.A in Teacher Education is another new programme developed with World Bank assistance and is the only such programme in the Asian region. The internationalizing of this programme to offer to students in the south Asian and African region is now being studied.

- In the Faculty of Humanities and Social sciences, the Language Department has developed a B.A degree in English Language Teaching, a much needed development for the country. This Department also offers a course in the Korean language. The Language Laboratory of the Department was established with assistance from KOICA. The Language Dept. has also developed a computer based testing system assisted by the Ceylon Tobacco Company.

  The Department of Legal Studies developed the first distance education LLB degree Programme in this country. The Dept. of Legal Studies has been assisted by the World Bank with a computer laboratory which services its needs of its much sought after LLB degree. It is being awarded since 1990 and recognized by the Council of Legal Education.

- The Department of Management Studies is now offering the international Commonwealth Executive Masters in Business Management / Commonwealth Executive Masters in Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programme in collaboration with the Commonwealth of Learning.
The Faculty of Natural Science was the first university to award a **B.Sc. through distance education**. The B.Sc. is being awarded since 1990. Another innovative programme developed by this Faculty is the **B.Sc. (Nursing)** awarded since 1997. This programme was developed in collaboration with the University of Athabasca with assistance from Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in response to a request made by the Ministry of Health to train the nursing staff of the Department of Health. **The Advanced Certificate in Laboratory Technology** is another regional programme, assisted by the Commonwealth of Learning and awarded in 2000. This programme trains among others, the technical officers of all the universities. This programme is a result of a request from the U.G.C to train the technical officers of the Universities.

2.2.12 The Faculty of Engineering Technology was the **first in the world** to attempt **teaching/learning, Engineering Courses through Distance Education**. It now offers Certificates/Diplomas/Degrees in Engineering Technology. The Bachelor of Engineering Technology offered since 1989 by the Faculty is recognized by the Institution of Engineers, Sri Lanka (IESL).

- The **Automobile laboratory** established with KOICA funding has enabled the faculty to introduce automobile Engineering as a special stream of study.

- This faculty is also conducting **Advanced diploma programme** in **Industrial management** which is tailor made to the need of the Institute of Incorporated Engineers of Sri Lanka (IIESL).

2.2.13 The University considers the development of inter faculty programmes to be a very necessary activity. As such the University has developed the following programmes: Bachelor of Education (N.Sc), P.G Diploma in Env. Studies, Diploma in Industrial studies.

2.2.14 The **academic sessions** of the Faculties and of the University provides a forum for the staff to present their research findings both in their own academic disciplines as well as open and distance learning.

2.2.15 The **Open University Journal, VISTAS** (the Journal of the Faculty of HSS and of Education), **Engineering Research Unit publication** of the Faculty of Engineering Technology offer ample opportunities to the staff for the publication of their research activities.
2.2.16 The **Consultancy and External Resources Centre**, CERC of the University brings under one umbrella a multitude of income generating activities such as production of audio/video programmes, conducting of workshops, testing services and other consultancies undertaken by the members of the staff.

2.3 **University wide Operational Development in support of Educational Objectives**

2.3.1 **Revising curricula and re-structuring of course materials** is usually undertaken by the Faculties once every five years. This exercise received much impetus from the DFID funded project for modernization of Distance Education. As a result the Faculties of Natural Sciences and HSS have completed the exercise & the process in on-going in the Faculty of Engineering Technology. This revision of curricula and the re-structuring has resulted in more learner friendly course materials.

2.3.2 The University is currently moving towards the **application of new Information and Communication technologies** in the teaching & learning process as well as administration.

2.3.3 **A Management Information System (MIS)** with 9 sub-systems have been develop. The Sub-system for student activities is now in operation.

2.3.4 With a view to promote **E-learning** the staff of the OUSL is trained to develop **interactive computer based learning packages**. The conversion of print based course materials to on-line packages are on-going.

2.3.5 **Out-sourcing** of the more market demanding programmes to OUSL accredited institutions is expected to increase access and student numbers. At present the programme, English language for Management is being outsourced as a pilot venture.

2.3.6 Developing curricula and Course materials jointly with regional/international Universities/institutions is another development which will support our objectives. Collaborative Programmes already on offer include CEMBA/CEMPA, Advanced Certificate in Laboratory Technology, B.Sc. Nursing and Commonwealth Diploma in Youth in Development Work. A programme is being planned for a **Post Graduate Diploma in sustainable development jointly** with the **SAARC Open Universities.**
2.3.7 The OUSL sees collaboration and partnership with other institutions to be of great importance in developing programmes of study, staff development as well as the development of infrastructure.

- The University collaborates with the conventional Universities, Research Institutes, the Corporate Sector and the Non Governmental Organizations. Some such organizations include the Certified Management Accountants, the South Asia Foundation, Research Institute for semi Arid Tropics, India, the Committee of Science and Technology for development, SAARC consortium of open and distance learning, Commonwealth of learning, FAO and the Kristinstad University in Sweden.

3. FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND MANAGEMENT

3.1 Source of University Funds

i. All monies voted by the Parliament and disbursed by the University Grants Commission as grant for Teaching and Research.

ii. Fees paid by the students.

iii. Sale of OUSL Course materials, applications for study programmes etc.

iv. Interest received from loans and investments

v. Ancillary Activities
   - Outside printing jobs
   - Hiring of OUSL facilities

vi. Service through Consultancy & External Resources Centre
   - Productions by Media House.
   - Services undertaken by Laboratories.
   - Short Term Courses.

vii. Research Grants


All monies are spent for the purpose for which they were allocated according to the approved budget.
3.2 Uses of Funds

(i) Recurrent Expenditure
- Personal Emoluments.
- Travelling Expenses.
- Supplies.
- Maintenance.
- Contractual Services.
- Utilities.
- Preparation and printing of books and preparation of AV Material
- Other Recurrent Expenses.

65% of the total recurrent expenditure is given by the government grant which covers only the personal emoluments of the permanent staff. All other items of recurrent expenditure have to be met by income generated by OUSL.


Capital Expenditure is met entirely by the government grant.

3.3 Management

i. In terms of Universities Act No. 16 of 1978 to hold, control and administering the funds and the property of the University are duties and function of the Council.

ii Monthly Reports on Income and Expenditure and Quarterly Reports on Capital Expenditure are submitted to the Council/University Grants Commission.

iii Annual Accounts and Annual Reports related to activities of the University are submitted to the Auditor General within 2 months of close of such accounts.

iv. University Council considers Auditor General's Report and transmit to the Minister to be tabled in the Parliament.

v. Council sub Committees such as Finance Committee, Audit & Management Committee deal with matters related to Finance and Audit.
3.4 Structure

- **University Council**
  Hold, control and administer the property and funds of the University.

- **Secretary to the Ministry**
  Chief Accounting Officer.

- **Vice Chancellor**
  Accounting Officer of the University.

- **Registrar**
  Responsible for custody of the records and property and funds of the University.

- **Bursar**
  Subject to the direction and control of the Registrar, responsible for the administration of the finance of the University and maintain its accounts in such form and manner as prescribed by the University Grants Commission.

3.5 Measures to improve finances

i. Efforts are being taken by the Departments/Faculties to raise required funds to maintain adequate standards in teaching and research, either from state or from other sources.

ii. Heads of Departments have been instructed to take action to identify priorities and eliminate waste, and transfer unutilized or under utilized resources (Human & Physical) to other Departments who need them. A space audit is being done at present for optimal use of available space.

iii. Activity based costing system is in progress including student support services. Cost centres have been established and action has been taken by the Faculties to present to the Council position paper in respect of all aspects of activities of the Faculties.

A committee has been appointed by the Council to make recommendations to improve the finances by enhancing student numbers for programmes of higher demand and developing new programmes with market demand.

iv. Initiative have been taken to out source some programmes by franchising.

v. Increase on CERC activities.
4. RESEARCH

The emphasis placed on research by the Open University of Sri Lanka is well-demonstrated by her Mission Statement which is as follows:

"We dedicate ourselves to facilitate Open and Distance Learning, support excellence in research and scholarship and enhance opportunities for adult life-long learning".

One of the seven Goals formulated by the Open University in its Corporate Plan (2000-2005) is to 'Become a centre of excellence in teaching, research and scholarship'.

The first few years after the establishment of the Open University, the faculty appear to have concentrated on the development of course materials to commence distance education programmes. During the first decade the research output was sparse. While discipline-based research is an important activity for a University from the point of view of the institution as well as the individual academic, distance education research is pointed out as an essential mechanism of improving the quality of an Open University’s programmes and its output, the graduates.

4.1 Distance Education Research

Distance Education research received a stimulus with the department of International development (DfID) project on enhancing the capability of the Open University from 1995 to 1998. The following Official Policy Statement on Distance Education Research was adopted by the Senate and the Council in 1997.

"The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) is committed to undertake continuing research on distance education to achieve its mission of increasing access to and success in adult learning at university level and to enhance the quality of equal opportunities for adult Sri Lankans. Distance Education research is an indispensable tool in the OUSL's efforts towards excellence in teaching and scholarship while ensuring social equity".

A Committee on Research Advice on Distance Education (CRADE) appointed by the Senate to facilitate and monitor distance education research has been functioning since 1997. The OUSL Council approved the recommendation to release staff for 50 per cent of time for a period of three months to encourage staff to undertake distance education research. The University provides a small amount of funds to Faculties to award research grants to individuals/teams whose research proposals are approved. During the last few years, several staff members have availed themselves of this facility.

Research training is provided to staff regularly by the Educational Technology Division (recently with a Staff Development Centre established within it) and the
CRADE. The former conduct workshops for staff while the latter hold training and research presentation seminars. Under the DFID project intensive training on distance education research was provided to research teams by OUUK consultants over a period of three years. Under the Corporate Plan research training is a function of the CRADE.

Researchers are expected to send progress reports every six months to the CRADE for monitoring. They also present research plans and report progress at seminars where peer review takes place.

4.2 Postgraduate Research

The number of students undertaking research degrees has increased but slightly. This is partly due to the difficulty of obtaining research grants and leave from work, faced by students.

The quality of research undertaken by the postgraduate students is ensured by monitoring carried out by the Higher Degrees and Research Committee, at present re-structured as the Research Committee. The Research Committee recommends admission of students to research degree (M.Phil and Ph.D) programmes, the titles of their dissertations/theses, and the supervisors to be appointed for approval by the Senate. The postgraduate students who are provisionally registered for degrees, are required after six months to make a successful presentation of the research proposal to the faculty for the confirmation of candidature. The progress of research degree students is also regularly monitored by the Research Committee. The Rules and Regulations governing the award of M.Phil and Ph.D. degrees prescribe the eligibility, award criteria and other requirements related to these degrees. In the case of staff proceeding for their postgraduate qualifications in overseas universities, approval of study leave and monitoring of progress of their research work is carried out by the Probationary Study Leave Committee of the University.

4.3 University Research Awards

At the beginning of 2003, the Senate approved the proposal to institute a Research Awards Scheme to promote research activities of OUSL staff. At present, Senate-appointed Panels are in the process of evaluating the research studies submitted by academics of respective Faculties. It is envisaged to formally confer the research Awards at the Open University Annual Academic Sessions scheduled for November, 2003.
4.4 Discipline-Based Research

A considerable amount of research related to specific disciplines is being carried out by the faculty. Especially noteworthy are the increasing interest in interdisciplinary research with staff from two or more departments, such as Education and Management, Education and Social Studies collaborating to conduct research. A few inter-Faculty research studies, such as between Science and Education and Humanities and Social Sciences and Engineering have also been carried out.

4.5 Dissemination of Research Findings

The first research journal to be published in the Open University was the ERU, the Journal of the Engineering Research Unit.

The launching of the OUSL Journal was approved by the Senate in 1997 to disseminate the findings of research, especially of distance education research. It is a refereed journal with a Senate-appointed Editorial Board and a Panel of Reviewers who select articles for publication. Three issues of the Journal have been published so far.

In 2002, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences inaugurated Faculty Annual Academic Sessions and the publication of its own journal, VISTAS. From 2003 Academic Sessions and the VISTAS will be a joint venture of the Faculties of Education and Humanities and Social Sciences. In September, 2003, the Open University Annual Academic Sessions will be held for the first time.

In addition, dissemination is carried out through research seminars at which findings of research are presented for discussion by faculty.

The list of studies completed and in progress, both distance education and discipline-based, can be obtained from the Open University Annual Reports which are available from 1987 onwards. It was noted that no information on research is available in the Annual Reports before 1987.

The last few years have seen several inter-departmental and inter-university research studies being initiated. Among the funding organizations are Asian development Bank (ADB), Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Department of International Development, UK (DfID), Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Research Centre for Open Learning (IRFOL) (UK), National Education Commission (NEC), National Science Foundation (NSF), Technical Assistance Team III, Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), Save the Children (SCF) (UK), Save the Children (SCF) (Norway), Swisscontact, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United National Scientific, Educational and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and World Bank.
Among the constraints faced by staff are also similar. They are resource limitations – funds, equipment and the heavy work-load. These constraints apply especially for discipline-based research.

5. QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

5.1 Objectives and Strategies

5.1.1 The corporate plan of the Open University of Sri Lanka 2001-2005 has highlighted quality assurance as one of the seven principal goals of the University (OUSL). It reads as ‘Assure quality in Open Distance learning’. Within this broad goal it has further spelt out the quality objective of ‘Continuously improve quality standards in Open Distance Learning’ for which a number of specific strategies have been laid out. The above quality objective invariably covers a broad spectrum of domains including quality management and quality assurance. The former aspect deals with administration and management perspectives of quality while the latter deals with quality assurance which cover teaching, learning, accreditation and research.

5.1.2 To achieve the above objective three specific strategies on development and delivery of study materials, development of cross-functional culture of management and continuous monitoring and review of activities at all levels have been listed in the Cooperative Plan (See Corporate Plan 2001-2005 of the University). Thus with respect to the OUSL, concerns pertaining to quality management and assurance have been explicitly stated even before the commencement of the institutional review initiatives of the Committee on Quality Assurance appointed by the University Grants Commission.

5.1.3 However, one limitation of the above mentioned objective and strategy was the unusually high focus on quality assurance with respect to educational programme development, sometimes at the expense of the administrative and management of quality. The administration and management of quality impinges on ‘service quality’. In the context of Distance Open Learning (DOL) where programme delivery and administration play a significant role, there is a greater demand for ‘administrative and service quality’ improvements. This is something unique to ‘distance education’ and hence it differentiates the Open University of Sri Lanka from the other Universities (See, Vidanapathirana et al., OUSL Journal, 2001).
5.2 Procedures

5.2.1 The OUSL has developed detailed by laws, procedural manuals, schemes, house styles, and standards to cover most of its activities with a view to standardise matters pertaining to the design and development of study programmes, development of study materials, conducting of examinations and certification including award of Degrees. There are other manuals and procedures specific to the respective faculties on student registration, academic counselling, day schools, etc. which specifically deal with ‘quality assurance’ of its study programmes.

5.2.2 A few other documents including ‘plans for change’ developed in the year 1996-98 have set out goals, actions and procedures for some of the other service quality related aspects including assignment turn over time, response time to student requests, teacher student interactions, development of A/V material etc. More recently, an initiative has been taken to institute cost centre concept with respect to ‘generation and allocation of resources’. This will initially cover the Faculties, but eventually will be extended to the other areas including Finance, Administration, and Regional Services.

5.2.3 Also, steps have been taken to streamline procedures for purchasing materials, printing textbooks, designing and delivery of study programmes, conducting of days schools, practicals and use of infrastructure at the regional and study Centres.

5.2.4 There have also been attempts to develop guidelines on norms for teachers. The Senate of the Open University after prolonged deliberations agreed in principle to accept a document outlining the norms for teachers. It covers a whole range of activities including teaching, research, community and national service obligations of the teachers.

5.3 The Organizational Structure of the University and University wide Initiatives

5.3.1 At the apex level is the University Council chaired by the Vice Chancellor, which is responsible for its overall management. The Council of the OUSL consists of seven OUSL members and eleven outside members which include the Secretary to the Ministry of Tertiary Education & Training or his nominee, nominee of CVCD, Secretary to Ministry in charge of the subject of Media (Mass communication) or the nominee of such Secretary and 8 others appointed by the UGC from among persons who have rendered distinguished service in educational professional commercial, industrial, scientific or administrative spheres. The Council is
responsible for the overall management of the University including its systemic efficacy and effectiveness. It is also the Council of the University that finally approves its Corporate Plan, Annual Report, and other major documents that deal with administrative and management quality of the University.

The OUSL has its academic and administrative arms, which are responsible for quality management and administration. The overall responsibility for ‘quality assurance’ rests with the University Senate; as academic responsibilities are finally decentralized to the Faculties, the faculty Boards are operationally responsible and accountable for ensuring quality at the lowest levels. The OUSL has four faculties each of which are headed by a Dean of Faculty. Meanwhile the Registrar of the University manages administrative functions including student affairs, finances, examination, and human resources, while it also has a number of directors overseeing the regional administration, operations, and education technology (See, the Corporate Plan, 2001-2005 for the organizational structure).

5.3.2 The University has taken efforts to create ‘a culture of quality improvement and management’, which permeate all levels including the academic and administrative leadership of the University. It has strengthened quality procedures and monitoring mechanisms, which now cut across functional departments as given below in table 1. ‘A Committee Structure’ is in place where different committees meet regularly to monitor and evaluate academic and administrative operations of the University.

5.3.3 Within this structure the Faculties are conceived as the main building blocks of academic administration. Apart from the academic departments, there are other units that are under the guidance of the registrar of the University. The overall management quality of the OUSL is excessively dependent on the capacity and efficacy of these departments.

5.3.4 At the moment there is an element of ‘lose-tight’ relationship where many of these bodies enjoy autonomy while being closely linked together. The University uses a committee structure where heads of the departments of the faculties and the administrative units meet regularly to sort out complicated issues and ensure smooth functioning of its operations.
### Table 1 - General Management and Finances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Responsibility centre</th>
<th>Monitoring Mechanism</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Management</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintenance and repairs to</td>
<td>AR /GA and works Engineer</td>
<td>Regular meetings, maintenance of minutes and follow up progress between and at monthly meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>premises</td>
<td>SAR/ student affairs Registrar and AR /GA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student affairs</td>
<td>Registrar and AR /GA</td>
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5.4 Monitoring Mechanisms

5.4.1 This document specifically addresses the administrative and management quality aspects as there is another specific document dealing with the quality assurance.

5.4.2 At the apex level the OUSL Council is responsible and accountable for its overall administrative and management quality of all operations. Three mechanisms are in place to make sure that the university is conducting its operations in a responsible manner. Firstly, the University has to prepare its Annual Report, which is approved by the Council and scrutinized by the Auditor General. Secondly, matters discussed in the annual report and other issues of interests are further discussed at the Committee on Public Enterprises (COPE), a Subcommittee of the Parliament of Sri Lanka. Thirdly, the University budget outlays and achievements are discussed at the UGC and the Treasury for the determination of expenditure planning.

5.4.3 At the apex level, the University Senate is responsible for quality assurance and improvements with respect to study programs, which include curricula, by laws, rules and regulations pertaining to examinations and evaluations, and certification. The Faculty Boards are responsible for academic administration while course teams appointed by the academic departments are accountable for quality assurance of study materials. It is mandatory that examination scripts of Special Degree and postgraduate degree programs be second corrected to assure quality. The examination matters are conducted under tight security and confidentiality to ensure quality.

5.4.4 The University has a statutory committee on Quality Management and Services, which is chaired by the Vice Chancellor. The mandate of this committee is to examine the current systems, procedures, and methods with a view to continuously improve the overall quality of activities, products and services of the OUSL. This Committee was set up about two years ago; it has initially revisited procedures pertaining to purchases, repairs, allocation of capital funds, distribution of staff and training of personnel etc. It was envisaged that these changes would streamline procedures, increase productivity and minimize delays with a view to improve productivity levels of the management system and consequently contribute in particular to the enhancement of the overall quality of administration. Consequently these changes were expected to create a conducive work environment for academics, students and other staff members.

5.4.5 The OUSL while considering quality of management and administration as a priority aspect of the teaching and learning has concentrated on a number of spheres in which quality improvements would have a direct impact on the fitness of its products and services in the eyes of our clientele.
5.4.6 These areas include auxiliary services such as operations, library, regional administration, student affairs, educational technology, finances and information systems. Each of the above activities is performed by a separate unit and under the guidance of a Head of Department. These functions are integrally connected with the quality of services offered by the OUSL, and therefore cross-functional linkages are absolutely necessary to assure quality standards. It is for this that a system of Council or Senate appointed Committees and Sub committees chaired by the Vice Chancellor is established to coordinate, document, and monitor activities of these Departments. The following list provides details of scope, activity, centres of responsibility and monitoring mechanisms pertaining to these activities.

5.4.7 Another important area has been bench marking and sharing of best practices. At the Deans Committee in particular concepts are developed to initiate action on best practices with respect to admissions, out reach, exit provisions, etc.

5.4.8 In the recent years, efforts have been made to impart training to those handling different activities. The Staff Development Centre of the University was responsible for some of these training programmes; there have also been an effort to train middle level staff at other institutions both locally and abroad. In fact ‘creating new and better opportunities for staff development’ has been one of the strategic objectives of the Corporate Plan of the OUSL.

5.4.9 The introduction of the ‘Norms for Teachers’ and ‘performance based resource allocation’ under the cost centre concept will provide a new impetus in this direction. The University also has made ‘capacity building’ as one of the major priorities to improve the quality of staff of the University.

5.5 Constraints

5.5.1 The OUSL is governed by the rules, regulations, and policies formulated and adopted by the University Grants Commission of Sri Lanka. Some of these regulations and rules are very rigid and prevent the University from exercising its authority even when theses rules are seen as unrealistic. A case in point is the scheme of recruitment.

5.5.2 Another constraint has been the severe shortage of funds arising from budgetary restrictions imposed on spending with respect to all activities. These constraints have had a damaging impact on the OUSL’s ability to provide its services and also to improve the quality of overall management.

5.5.3 Another area of concern has been the politicisation of student and staff activities, which interferes with improvement of accountability, and productivity.
6. **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

The goals of the university as stated in the Corporate Plan are

Goal 1 - Create a more conducive academic environment improve and consolidate **quality**, efficiency and sustainability in all activities.

Goal 3 - **Assure quality** in Open and Distance Learning

6.1 Quality assurance can be considered as those mechanisms, activities and procedures which are deliberately designed to regulate the input and output variables within the system to enhance effectiveness, maintain standards and improve the quality of learning among the learners in order to achieve the desired objectives for which the institution was established.

- The Open University of Sri Lanka was established to make opportunities available for higher education through distance education to a large segment of the society particularly the adults and employed who could not take advantage of the conventional university system and who could not afford higher education due to social, family and employment constraints.

- The Open University differs widely from its conventional counterparts in its organizational structure which is reflected in its policy and planning, human resource provision and development, management and administration, learners, programme/course design and development, learner assessment and media for learning. In an Open and Distance Learning context quality assurance is regarded as a characteristic of all of the above aspects. Quality Assurance guidelines and approaches of a conventional university therefore could not simply be transferred to OUSL.

- From its inception in 1980, modelled on the organizational and operational characteristics of the Open University of the United Kingdom, this University has adopted appropriate procedures and practices to ensure quality in its various aspects of the system. The quality assurance mechanisms were further enhanced and refined through the DfID Project 1995-1998 on “Enhancing Distance Education at OUSL”.

- Quality Assurance aspects of management and administration have been dealt within Chapter 5 This Chapter will deal with other aspects.

6.2 **Academic Standards of Programmes and Awards**

Responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards lies with University authorities such as Council, Senate and Faculty Boards concerned.

- **Council** is the Chief Executive Body and Governing Authority of the University which consist of both staff of the University and members appointed by the University Grants Commission who have rendered distinguished service in educational, professional, commercial, industrial, scientific and administrative spheres. Among others, its functions include approval of all academic matters after giving an opportunity to the Senate to consider them.
The Senate is exclusively an academic body which is vested with the control and general direction and monitoring of admission procedures, exemptions, curriculum and instruction, examination, awards and research. In the exercise of its functions the Senate has appointed the following Standing/ad hoc Committee with specific Terms of References, some of which are found only at OUSL. Viz. Curriculum and Programme Development Committee; University Course Development Committee; Operations Committee; Library Committee; Probationary Study Leave Committee; Research and Higher Degrees Committee; Information Technology Committee

Board of Educational Technology and the Board of Regional Educational Services are two statutory boards unique to the Open University which are responsible for the planning of technology for the production of materials and for regulating the services required by the Faculties at the outreach centres respectively.

Relevant matters are referred to them at the first instance and then taken up at the Senate for recommendations to the Council.

- Most of the recommendations of Senate are based on the reports originating from the Faculty Boards which in turn consider deliberations from their Sub-Committees such as Activity Schedule Committee, Exemption Committee, Information Technology Committee, Faculty Course Development Committee, Research Committee and Bursary Committee. Faculty Boards regulates the teaching, examination and research subject to the control of the Senate.

6.3 Any academic programme at OUSL encompasses such stages as student admission, student records, distribution of course materials, tutoring and counselling, assessments and final examinations awards. Activity schedules for each programme detailing timelines from the process of advertisement through to Final Examinations and awards are prepared in consultation with the Faculties/Departments well ahead of the announcement of the programme. The conduct of the programmes totaling 42, are staggered through a calendar year with a view to optimize the available limited resources. A Senate sub-committee referred to as Operations Committee monitors and ensures the smooth running of the various programmes.

- Admission to programmes is announced well in advance through advertisement in the national Press with a set deadline. Application forms and Prospectus/Guide Books with information in clear terms on the programmes, study system and time requirements, student support services, assessments and examination etc. are made available in all the centres of the university. For some programmes pre-registration counselling sessions are conducted and the prospective learners are made aware of all the stages of a programme at the very outset in clear and comprehensive terms. Applications are computerized. Registration of students are done in person and students profile is maintained in a database.
The University recognizes previous qualifications/work experience and offer appropriate credit exemptions as prescribed by the respective Faculty Boards and approved by the Senate.

This information is used for all aspects of policy and planning, programme and course development and support services. The University maintains the confidentiality of information about learners.

Student admission enquiries, communicating admission decisions, registration of students are the responsibilities of Student Affairs Division and Information Technology Division. A single information desk for enquiries and applicants is being planned to improve prompt responses to queries, cascade applications more effectively and improve data collection and dissemination.

6.4 OUSL provides a modular curriculum where each programme consists of a number of required and elective courses of specific credit rating reflecting the academic value of a course and the amount of time a student is expected to spend for that course.

Setting and maintenance of academic quality and standards with respect to programmes courses, awards and Research are provided through university academic regulations Rules and By-Laws, Manual of Procedure. Programme/Course development represents a major commitment of financial and human resources and therefore the full extent of the commitment required is determined before the development of the project begins. The system of programme/course planning which encompasses need analysis of learners, employers and society, learning outcomes, content, delivery and assessment has been devolved increasingly over the years and much more of the responsibility for carrying forward the development of programmes and monitoring and evaluation of courses now rests with the individual departments of study.

Different approaches are being followed with regard to programme development. Proposal usually is initiated by higher authorities, request from an outside agency, university’s already envisaged policy and plans; feedback from an already running programmes or concerned academic departments’ own plan. For some programmes need assessment survey is done to identify potential target people and their needs.

Departmental monitoring and evaluation through periodic Departmental Staff Meetings and Heads’ Meetings of the Faculty concerned is generally effective in assuring the maintenance of academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience. Nevertheless the Senate maintains oversight of the curriculum profile and ensures that the programme/courses being developed are academically appropriate to the level and nature of the award, reflect institutional mission and objectives, the course material package produced is appropriate for distance learning and keep under scrutiny clear procedures for validation and approval of new programme and award titles, course management monitoring and evaluation.
As stated earlier the university uses distance teaching methods to serve the students. The central element in the teaching system is especially prepared printed materials supported with audio/video cassettes for self study and independent learning which is the equivalent of lectures in a conventional system. The University is now moving into application of newer ICTs for course material production. Interactive video materials have been produced as CD-ROMs for a few courses.

Thus once the programmes are approved in principle by the academic bodies the departments assume the full responsibility for the instructional design.

Instructional design is an important process in a distance learning system because
- how to teach in interactive learner centred way becomes crucial to the success of the entire system.
- learning materials are prepared in advance with learner support built into the design of the course.
- media to support those materials are pre-selected to reflect the teaching/learning needs.
- the framework continued within each course has to be structured to enable distance learners to be come independent learners able to cope with often complex written, and audio and visual material on their own.
- changes to material cannot be conveniently incorporated mid-session.

To ensure quality a course team approach to instructional design is mandatory with flexibly composed course teams whose specific roles and responsibilities are delineated. A team method of operation is intended to embed quality assurance procedures. The course team comprises curriculum and syllabus designers, course writers, editors, style editors, graphic designers and illustrationists. Suitably qualified and experienced teams are selected from the academic departments of relevant faculties, external experts from conventional universities, research institutes and industries. There are also collaborative ventures in the design and development of courses between Departments of study, between Faculties, between OUSL and other Open Universities in Asia/Commonwealth.

The development of course material is based on a project plan that describes processes timeliness, finances, infrastructural requirements, resources and the delegation of responsibility among those involved.

It ensure that teaching-learning approaches are varied, interactive, learner-centered, appropriate practicals field work and project work are incorporated in the course materials. A range of media is appropriately integrated into the course material.
OUSL has its own typical format for developing course materials (House Style, Bridging the Gap). The university through its Staff Development Centre provides necessary guidance and training in aspects of distance education requirements to all persons involved in course design and development. The overall process of preparing a manuscript, managing it through to printed finished copies is called course production and it involves the following major stages: generating text learning activities, appropriate media for integration and illustrations, designing the material, preparing for printing and printing. Provision for evaluation of course material during the developmental process in the form of critical comments and pilot testing is made in respect of each course. Peers and prospective students’ participation is sought in pilot testing. This ensures quality in course materials. External review of study material is undertaken by critical readers selected on the basis of their expertise in the subject and their sensitivity to the needs of learners. Managing course production in an open and distance learning system is a unique challenge. Course materials are printed in the University Press.

Formal opportunities for students’ feedback on the learning package are provided through student representation at Faculty Boards and Student Association Meetings and during face-to-face contact hours.

As course development for a programme takes a minimum period of three years this is taken into consideration when launching a programme is planned.

The main component of a programme delivery comprises printed lesson materials supported by discussion classes, audio-visual materials, assignments, seminars, workshops, laboratory practicals and field work depending upon the nature and needs of a specific course in a programme of study. The student is expected to devote about 55% - 70% of time to the printed material and 15% to face-to-face session and practicals. Faculty/Department takes the responsibility of monitoring the courses at the operational level and maintain academic standards and the quality of student learning experience.

Continuous student assessment is an essential feature of teaching and learning process in a distant learning institution. It is integral to every learning and teaching strategy adopted and includes formative, diagnostic and summative processes. Senate ensures that students are assessed fairly and equitably in all faculties/departments and a common approach is adopted to the classification of undergraduate degrees.

Self assessment is extensively incorporated in the course materials to enable independent learners while learning to gauge and adjust their progress. Each course also consist of tutor marked prescribed number of continuous assignments/assessment tests and terminal examinations at the end of the semester/year. Continuous assignments/assessments are regarded as vital didactic tools and a minimum continuous assessment mark is required to obtain eligibility to sit the final examination in that course. Both continuous assessment and final examination contribute to the final marks for awards.
There are effective university procedures for appointment of examiners, supervisors and invigilators. External examiners are appointed as moderators for all final examination question papers and as second marking examiners for courses at level 6 and upwards and for post-graduate degree courses. Both internal and external examiners are appointed for each course by the relevant Faculty Board and approved by the Senate and Council as laid down in the *Manual of Procedure for Continuous Assessment and Final Examination*. Detailed guides are provided to all external examiners which clearly state the expected responses to questions, the range of acceptable solutions, and how marks/grades are to be awarded.

### 6.9 Staffing

- All appointments, confirmation and promotion conform to the national policies and made in accordance with schemes of recruitment as prescribed by the University Act and Ordinance/Rules made by the University Grants Commission. Any variation from such schemes are made with prior written approval of the UGC. A copy of the University Establishment Code which prescribes these has been made available at the offices of the Deans, Registrar, Bursar and heads of the relevant Units in the Administrative sector, so that all staff are informed of them. However, in practical terms many staff are not familiar with the provisions.

- University-wide promotion to higher academic grades is primarily based upon teaching quality, individuals contribution to curriculum development and research. Quality Assurance aspects of Research has been dealt within Chapter 4.

- The differences in teaching methodology and the way curriculum is presented in the form of course material in ODL system demands **different roles from the teaching staff**. Roles are planners, curriculum developers, writers, editors, script writers, evaluators, monitors, tutors, co-ordinators, trainers, demonstrators, managers, researchers, reviewers, supervisors, team leaders, etc. With the latest development of ICTs roll of teachers will further be revolutionized. Development of course material in distance education and course writing is challenging, time consuming and demanding. Senate approved list of duties and responsibilities of academic staff is in existence. Work norms are now being prepared by a Senate sub-committee.

### 6.10 Orientation workshops for staff

Orientation workshops for staff are conducted by the staff development centre of OUSL for all staff periodically. Additionally a Lecturer (Probationary) is required to complete one year (part time) induction training course within a period of one year from the date of first appointment as a pre-requisite for study leave and confirmation in the post. Appraisal schemes are in place for all other categories of staff on which increments and promotions are based.
6.11 **Visiting Staff**

Where required visiting staff are exposed to briefing/training sessions in the various aspects of distance teaching system, lay out of the course material and assessment procedures.

6.12 **Staff** is an important asset of the University and the University uses a combination of incentive and training to develop the quality of its staff.

- The Staff Development Centre of OUSL conducts training workshops for continuing professional development for all staff.
- Annual work plan of the training workshops are planned discussed and approved at the Board Meeting of the Educational Technology and decisions communicated to all heads of academic/administrative units for nominations.
- Staff Orientation Workshops are conducted by the Staff Development Centre of the University which gives training and awareness on the characteristic features and practices in a Distance Learning Institution and the Teaching and Learning systems of the OUSL.
- Visiting academics who assist in the delivery of courses and appointed according to the University Guideline form a considerable part of the human resources at OUSL. They receive appropriate training in handling various activities by the relevant Faculty.

6.13 The University conscientiously support in full or in part training, study visits, attendance at conferences and seminars both in Sri Lanka and abroad. Identification of individual needs of staff for updating and skills enhancement as well as institution-wide requirement is the responsibility of the head of the relevant unit. University support towards course fee and duty leave are available for all non-academic staff upto two programmes of study at an institution approved by the University.

6.14 **Incentives and Awards**

University system has established **long service and meritorious award** for all staff at the end of 25, 30, 25, 40 years of university service stipulated by the UGC guidelines. To encourage research and build a research culture OUSL has also initiated an award scheme for outstanding research which will be awarded for the first time in 2003.
6.15 Communication Process

- Student population in an open and distance learning system is diverse and many of them may visit the premises only occasionally. It is important to be able to communicate appropriately with students who have different needs and aspiration and who are studying in a wide range of academic courses and programme, modes and locations.

- **Documentary Communication** is done to staff and students through handbooks/prospectus/guide books prepared by the faculties and distributed to all prospective students at the time of application; newsletters; notices on notice boards placed in the respective departments/faculties/units; By-Laws relating to General Discipline, examination, student elections, etc. made available to the Union Office.

- Opportunity for formal involvement in institutional arrangements is provided through elected representation in Unions/Associations; ex-officio presence at committees such as Canteen Committee, Temporary Residential Committee and Faculty Board Meetings; Forums such as staff meeting with Union Representatives. Where formal meetings take place participants are provided with advance notice through the year planner and notice of meetings and accurate minutes/notes are circulated.

- **Ad hoc meetings** are also held if and when required between students and Vice-Chancellor/Deans/Warden/Student Counsellors or any other relevant staff.

- Individuals can identify and present problems so that complaints and grievances can be satisfactorily resolved within an acceptable and agreed period of time. Complaints and appeals are first handled by Chief Student Counsellor who then may refer the students to the appropriate staff member/administrator.

- Dates and venues of all meetings for a calendar year are circulated through a **Year Planner**.
7. LEARNING INFRASTRUCTURE & STUDENT SUPPORT

7.1 Study System

The Open university is a distance education institution with a **student centred learning approach**. Therefore the system of study is designed to support a **distance learner** through **multiple media** which includes specially designed printed lesson material for a **self learner**, audio visual aids, discussion and day classes, seminars, workshops, tutor clinics and laboratory and field work, Factory /Industry visits, e-mail and internet. The printed material offers the student the equivalent of lectures and tutorials. Students are provided the lesson material at the point of registration.

Teaching also includes a system of **continuous assessment** through a planned schedule of home assignments, tests, project work etc. The assessments have a dual purpose viz. a teaching tool as well as a means of helping the student to assess their own progress. Assignments are marked and returned to the student with the marks, tutors comments and observations. The continuous assessment component also form part of the mark of the final examination.

7.2 Programmes

The Open university has progressively increased the number of programmes from 4 offered at its inception to 41 as of date, offered by the 4 Faculties: Education, Engineering Technology, Humanities & Social Sciences and Natural Science. These range from conventional, non-conventional, job oriented, welfare oriented to continuing education. The Open University of Sri Lanka is one of the pioneer Distance Learning Universities to offer a Bachelor of Science Degree award and a Bachelor of Engineering Technology award.

The programmes are at Foundation, Certificate, Diploma, Degree and Post graduate level to provide an opportunity of entry at different levels. It provides a readily accessible and progressive **ladder of opportunity** through its **lateral entry / exit system**. The Foundation level has been introduced as an alternative to GCE(Advanced level) to assist students to acquire a qualification to enter the degree or diploma programmes.

7.3 Outreach

OUSL students are spread all over the country and are served through the Regional Educational Service **network of 28 Centres** covering the length and breadth of the island. The network consists of 4 Regional Centres at Colombo, Kandy, Matara & Jaffna and 17 Study Centres and 7 smaller units called Teaching Centres which have been established to cater to very specific programmes.
The RES is headed by a Director. The Centres are administered under an Assistant Director or a Regional Officer. Academic staff and Counsellors are also stationed at the Regional Centres to provide academic support. Students may use a centre of their choice for registration and for academic activities.

- All Centres provide facilities for counseling, distribution of course material, collection of information, conducting of examinations and viewing and listening facilities for videos and audios. Libraries and Computer Laboratories have been established at the Regional Centres and at some Study Centres. Regional Centres have more activities while the Study Centres have fewer activities.

90% of the Study Centres have less than 10% of students. The Colombo Regional Centre caters to 56% of the student population. Hence most of the laboratories and a large computer laboratory is located in the Central Campus at Nawala. The next largest Centre in terms of students and facilities is the Kandy Regional Centre. The Kandy and Matara Regional Centres also have laboratory facilities for basic science and engineering courses. More activities are therefore conducted at the Regional Centres.

- The OU has gradually increased the number of Centres in order to enhance access to education to the rural population. A Centre was established recently in Hatton to cater to the plantation sector in the upcountry area. Not all centres are located in premises owned by the OU. Some are located in Technical Colleges in the locality. The facilities at these Centres are very limited owing to space constraints. New and spacious premises with better facilities were built at Ratnapura, Kurunegala and Galle. There are plans to build new premises for the Ambalangoda Centre and to establish Study Centres in Gampaha and Hambantota.

- The computer laboratories at Centres are annually upgraded with new hardware. They service the practical component of OU programmes. They also conduct a Computer awareness programme for persons in those localities.

- There is an urgent need to widen access to education to the rural population. New channels of delivery to reach out to all sectors and parts of the country is necessary. This is now under review.

7.4 Physical facilities and human resources

A good infrastructure is necessary for efficient operation of the university system. The existing infrastructure is far from enough. Owing to budgetary constraints it has not been possible for the university to increase the much needed facilities. The university rents classrooms from secondary schools but the supply is unstable and the quality is far below expectations and unsuitable for adult learners. Programme schedules are often disrupted due to non-availability of schools at short notice.
7.4.1 The **Central campus** at Nawala has the Vice-Chancellors Secretariat, the Administration Secretariat, working space for Academic staff, services such as the Library and Audio Visual Centre, Media House, Printing Press, Dispatch Centre, Medical Centre, Pre-school and Day Care Centre. The Colombo Regional Centre includes Laboratories, Lecture rooms and Canteens. The Regional Centres at Kandy & Matara have limited Science and Engineering laboratory facilities, computer laboratory and work space for a limited number of staff.

7.4.2 Audio-visual aids required for academic purposes are produced by The **Education Technology Division** housed in the Media House which is equipped with State of the Art audio and media studios and post production facilities. Educational audio and video tapes are produced for many courses. The videos deal with topics/concepts requiring visual exposition that cannot be adequately dealt through print and audio media alone. Media House has produced 325 audio tapes and 556 video films to date.

7.4.3 There are approximately 1659 titles and volumes of books which are issued to students at the time of registration. Some books are produced in English, Sinhala and Tamil. Printing and publishing of all lesson material issued to students and other publications is done by the **OUSL Printing Press**. These course material are stored in the **Books Dispatch Centre** and issued to students at registration.

7.4.4 The Press plays a key role in the OU since the smooth conduct of academic activities depends much on whether the books are delivered to students on time. The Press is functioning with equipment purchased mostly at the inception of the university. Some machinery has been added to the Press and production has been improved. In 2002, 39 million pages were printed.

7.4.5 **Library**

- A network of libraries have been developed comprising the main library at Nawala, Regional libraries located at the Regional Centres and small libraries in the Study Centres. The OUSL library system is different to the conventional academic library system in that it caters to the needs of a large body of students dispersed throughout the country. The main library provide reference and lending facilities to staff and limited lending facilities to students registered for courses at level 3 and above. Reference needs of students are met through the reference book collection at the Regional/Study centres.

- The main library has over 64,540 books spanning a wide variety of subjects and 190 foreign and local journals. Growth of the library has been a continuous process with over 3000 new books being added annually. Inter library loan facilities of books, journals and video films are available. In-house photocopying facilities at very nominal rates for the convenience of library users was introduced a few years ago. Information on new accessions are provided to the Regional and Study centre libraries regularly via a subject-wise accessions booklet.
monthly. The main library is open 7 days a week from 9.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m.. Opening hours at other Centres are varied to meet the student needs.

- The Library Catalogue and bibliographic data is computerized and from 1999 the bibliographic database of books, journals, audiovisuals and CD-ROMS has been mounted on the LAN in order that it is accessible to staff from their desk tops. The library web OPAC is also accessible through Internet. Library automation is due to be completed when bar coding is done.

7.4.6 Students are also provided a host of other facilities at the main Campus such as a fully equipped **Audio Visual Resource Centre** with over 1038 video films, 666 audio cassettes and 125 CD-ROMS of educational instructional nature and listening and viewing facilities, class rooms, examination halls and 2 canteens.

7.4.7 The **Canteens** are spacious and open and designed for promoting **peer learning**.

7.4.8 **Temporary residential facilities** are also available in Colombo, Kandy and Matara for students who are required to attend academic activities or examinations at these Centres. 60 Male and 60 female students can be accommodated in the dormitories in Colombo and 40 each at Kandy and Matara.

7.5 **Staff**

- The university has 188 academic staff, 95 academic support staff and over 600 visiting academics recruited intermittently for the purpose of delivering the programmes at various centres in the regional network. They are supported by 32 Administrative staff and 528 Non-academic staff. To ensure quality in the instructional design of the course material, suitably qualified persons and experts in the relevant field are engaged from other universities, research institutes and industries.

- The teaching methodology and the way the content is presented in the form of course material package in Open and Distance Learning system, demands a **multi faceted role to be played by the teaching staff**. These roles being, curriculum planners, and developers, writers, editors, script writers, evaluators, monitors, tutors, co-ordinators, trainers, demonstrators, managers, researchers and reviewers etc.

7.6 **Staff Development Centre**

Staff is an important asset to the university Staff training programmes are conducted throughout the year to upgrade knowledge and skills of academic and administrative staff. **The Staff Development Centre** is entrusted with this task. It has organized 6 training programmes in 2002 in the areas of Instructional design and course development, Educational AV material production, Multi media courseware, Research methodologies, Educational testing and evaluation, Administration and Financial Management.
7.7 **Student Support**

Learner support is a crucial area for distance learners as the education system is based on self study.

7.7.1 The **university issues a Guide Book** to all applicants together with the application form. The Guide Book contains information in clear terms on the programmes, study system and time requirements, student support services, assessments, examinations etc.,

At the commencement of the programme an **orientation programme** is organized for new students to introduce them to the new environment and the system of study, the academic dept. staff and the services and facilities available to them. A handbook giving details of day school and examination schedules and departmental information is also issued to them. For some programmes pre-registration orientation and counseling sessions are also organized.

7.7.2 **Face to face interaction** is provided through Day Schools conducted by the Academic staff, Academic Support staff and visiting staff from other universities and institutes are also engaged for this activity where necessary.

7.7.3 A student’s progress is assessed continuously throughout the course of studies by means of a specified number of **assignments**. These are graded and returned to the students together with the tutors’ comments.

7.7.4 Since distance education is open to students with any qualification and background, students require intensive **counselling** on academic or administration related matters. Academic and academic support staff provide counseling on a continuous basis throughout a students career and are available at any time to meet students. The University has also appointed Student Counsellors to assist students who need counseling.

7.8 **Career Guidance Unit**

- A **Career Guidance** Unit would also be established shortly. Some career guidance work has been undertaken. Since the majority of OU students are employed, the functions of the Career Guidance Unit is different to conventional universities. Presently D/RES is entrusted to oversee the activities of the CGU and is representing the university in the UGC Standing Committee on CGUs of universities.

- The CGU participated in the orientation programme conducted by the Faculty of Natural Sciences for their newly registered students and spoke on “List of attributes required in a graduate”. The CGU also participated in seminars, workshops and exhibitions held in different parts of the country to create an awareness about the OU among the general public, especially among youth, about the programmes conducted by the university.
7.9 Bursaries

Students are offered financial assistance through bursaries. 400 Mahapola scholarships Rs 8000.00 in value are awarded annually based on need, to students enrolled for degree programmes. University Bursaries are also given based on need and merit. Bursaries have also been organized through private organizations such as the Ceylon Tobacco Company and Ceylon Cold Stores. The university also encourages employers to sponsor their employees who are following study programmes at the OU.

7.10 The University also has elected Student Unions in the 4 faculties and a University Students' Union constituted by the faculty Student Unions. 2 student representatives elected from each faculty are members of the faculty Board.

7.11 Staff and students have facilities to obtain medical assistance at the Health Centre which has a Doctor, a Nurse and other staff in attendance. Banking facilities are also available to students through the Open University Branch of the Peoples bank located at the Colombo Regional Centre.

8. UNIVERSITY/INDUSTRY/COMMUNITY AND OTHER EXTENSION SERVICES

8.1 Links with industry through students themselves; in Course Development; Project Work, etc.

Since most of our students are employed in the industry, we have better links with the industry through them. Project work selected by most of our students relate to their work places. This makes their study at the OUSL more meaningful and relevant.

Field visits to industry form an integral part of some of our courses. Several engineering courses and courses in Commonwealth Executive MBA (CEMBA) come under this category. In addition, all engineering students have to undergo a 30-week long compulsory industrial training course.

CART (Chamber of Commerce and Academic Round Table) and Institute/Industry partnership Programme sponsored by the ADB Personnel development Project, are two forums where the OUSL gets another opportunity to interact with the industry.

A large number of our visiting staff comes from the industry. Services of these visiting staff and other consultants from the industry are used extensively to develop courses that meet the requirements of the industry.
Some examples of links with industry are given below:

- The Rural research Unit (RRU) of the University was able to construct a model suspended bridge at Colombo Regional Centre (CRC) with help from two private companies. Geotech Limited assisted RRU by driving the anchoring rails in the canal bed while Lanka Transformers Limited gifted the turnbuckles to tension the wire ropes.

- Two members of the staff provided services to Diamond Cutters, a BOI Company in Panadura, to solve technical problems in its factory.

- Two members of the staff are conducting a research study under the sponsorship of the Ministry of Science & Technology to convert the present IC engine-driven three wheeler into an electric-driven one. In doing so, these members interact with the potential investors and industrialists.

8.2 Workshops/Seminars

Workshops and seminars are held frequently at the OUSL, not only for the benefit of our own students and staff, but also for targeted groups of people from the industry and community. For example, our Department of Civil Engineering has offered workshops and seminars on topics such as “Construction Material Acceptance Criteria” and “Laboratory Testing Procedures for Major Construction Materials” for Technical Officers, “Urban Environmental Management” for Municipal personnel, etc.

Some of these workshops/seminars are conducted in collaboration with various government and other organisations. For example, a seminar on “Life-long learning opportunities” was conducted by the Department of Textile and Apparel Technology in collaboration with the Industry – Institute Partnership Programme of the Ministry of Science and Technology. Similarly, the same Department collaborated with the Institute of Chemistry to conduct a seminar on “Chemistry hand in hand with Textiles” at the OUSL.

Some of these workshops are conducted outside the OUSL. For example, a workshop for the Training of Writers of Distance Education Materials was conducted at the Post graduate Institute of Medicine and a workshop for Training of Young Researchers in Social Sciences for National Science Foundation was conducted at the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute.

8.3 Course Development Teams

From the inception of the OUSL, the concept of Course Development Teams was used to develop courses for all programmes. Course Development Teams comprise of members from internal staff as well as resource persons from the industry.
8.4 Community Services

The provision of educational facilities to students in remote/rural areas through a network of 27 centres spread island wide, is in itself a huge community service. In most of these centres, students have the opportunity to learn English language and Information Technology.

Another community service provided by the OUSL is to maintain model preschools in Colombo, Kandy, and Matara Regional Centres for the benefit of the children of OUSL employees and people of the area. Teacher educational materials on child rights and a source book on child rights were also published in all three languages by the OUSL as a community service.

The staff and senior students of the Department of Legal Studies maintain a legal aid service called LAMP (Legal Aid and Mediation Project) to help general public in land and family matters.

The Computer Science Society of OUSL is actively engaged in providing several community services, some of which are listed below:

- Organised by the Lions Club of Habaraduwa Central, the Society has conducted a 6-day IT training programme for 100 school teachers in the Galle district.
- The Society has repaired 25 computers belonging to the Ministry of Education free of charge for distribution to rural schools.
- Plans are underway to establish an IT Resource Centre with 18 computers at a school in Vilachchiya in Anuradhapura district in December 2003. The Society got the computers for this project with the courtesy of Nations Trust Bank. The members of the society are intending to maintain this IT Resource Centre on a continuing basis by providing training for trainers and other required technical assistance.

The OUSL also provides the expertise available within its ranks to help the community. As an example, the Rural Research Unit of the University introduced a low cost paddy husk fried stove in collaboration with Total Development Association in Ranna. It is presently being manufactured and sold in Hambantota area. Another such example is the two books written in all three languages on “Agrowell for Drought Mitigation” and “Livelihood Options for Coping with Drought” by one of our staff members. These were written on a request by the Ministry of Social Welfare for their community awareness activities.

8.5 Extension/Short Courses

The OUSL conducts numerous extension/short courses for the benefit of various segments of general public. They are usually conducted on cost recovery basis. In some instances, these courses are sponsored by various government and other organizations. For example, the short courses on “Agrowell and Ground Water” were fully sponsored by the Ministry of Social Welfare. So far, over 100 government officials were trained through these short courses. Similarly, the two short courses on “Fabric Technology” and “Flat Pattern Design” were sponsored
by Science and Technology Personnel Development Project of the Ministry of Science & Technology.

Some short courses such as “Personal Computer Hardware and Networking” are advertised in newspapers and conducted on a fee-levying basis during periods when the laboratories are not in use.

The OUSL also provided training for Community Development Officers under Jana Saviya Programme and training for Creche assistants for the Plantation Trust.

8.6 OUSL staff serving in other Boards/Institutions

Several members of the academic staff of the OUSL serve in government, professional and other institutions in various capacities. Public Service Commission, Sri Lanka English Language Teachers Association, Sri Lanka Association for Advancement of Science (SLASS), Arthur C Clarke Centre for Modern Technologies, Wages Board, National Disaster Management Committee, Institute for Construction Training and Development (ICTAD), National Institute of Education (NIE), Sri Lanka Inventors Commission (SLIC), Institution of Engineers, Sri Lanka (IESL), Organization of Professional Associations (OPA), National Building Research Organization (NBRO), Colombo Municipal Council (CMC), and Sri Lanka Railways (SLR), Textile Institute - Sri Lanka Section, Advisory Committee on Gender - Ministry of Policy Planning & Implementation, Standing Committee on Higher Education - National Education Commission, Standing Committee on General Education - National Education Commission, Board of Study - Faculty of Graduate Studies - University of Colombo, Faculty Board - Faculty of Education - University of Colombo, Board of Management - Centre for the Study of Human Rights, Research Committee on Social Sciences - National Science Foundation, Committee on Social Sciences - Section F - Sri Lanka Association for Advancement of Science, Council - Sri Lanka Association for Advancement of Education, Academic Board - National Educational Research and Evaluation Centre - University of Colombo, Standing Committee on Humanities and Social Sciences - University Grants Commission, Standing Committee on Science - University Grants Commission, Standing Committee on Engineering - University Grants Commission, Standing Committee on External Degrees and Distance Education - University Grants Commission, etc., are some of the institutions where OUSL staff members serve.

8.7 CERC Projects

Consultancy and External Resources Centre (CERC) of the University facilitates interaction between the University and the community at large through such activities as research programmes, consultancy services, extension courses and other services. These activities generate much indeed funds for the University.

The Educational Technology Division of the University has several CERC projects through its Media House. The Department of Civil Engineering offers material testing through CERC to construction organizations on a regular basis.
The Department of Mechanical Engineering provides vehicle testing and fuel testing facilities to other universities and private sector organisations. The Faculty of Engineering Technology offers Advanced Diploma in Industrial Management programme to the members of Institution of Incorporated Engineers, Sri Lanka (IIESL), who hold important positions in the industry. Given above are some of the several CERC projects being undertaken by the University.

9. CONCLUSIONS/CONSTRAINTS

The preparation of this self evaluation report provided an opportunity for the University to take a stock of its powers and responsibilities which we hold for quality and standards and also assess to what extent we have succeeded in achieving that.

It served as an eye opener in certain respects such as unavailability of cost per course, lack of data on benefits accrued by the students after graduation. We envisage that the Review Team’s report will provide a reference point to support and guide OUSL staff in their continuing quality assurance activities.

Constraints

9.1 With its mandate to democratize knowledge and use higher education as a lever of social transformation OUSL should also address the needs of the rural poor, disadvantaged and other groups who are harder to be reached.

As OUSL is a fee levying institution to widen the access and to reach out availability of scholarships and stipends to students should be increased both in number and amount.

9.2 OUSL should be realigned to “student first” to be a distance teaching institution in the true sense. However, OUSL is not geared to this and still demands students to adjust to the University for want of good infrastructure and student support facilities in the Region/Study Centres and a strong ICT

- Outreach Centres already established should be well equipped and staffed. Many Centres are only loaned rooms manned with a part-time/temporary staff.

- Further venues identified to increase access to undeserved areas. They need land and building.

- Physical facilities including laboratory space and equipment for Science and Engineering and modern ICT facilities for on-line delivery and administration should be strengthened and centres networked.

- Centres developed properly could also serve as tele-centres for community welfare and development.
9.3 True distance learning system and modern multimedia curriculum are very necessary to improve learning ability of distance learners. Technological effectiveness of the educational process should be increased through remote – access electronic technologies, multimedia and interactive methods including radio, TV, E-mail and internet facilities. Admission, administration, accreditation management and financial development should be through ICT network.

This would require:

- A radio channel and TV channel specially devoted to OUSL.
- Educational Technology resources Unit with electronic and digital library to promote the use of educational technologies in the teaching process and introduce virtual reality in the teaching profile and out reach of OUSL system.
- Adequate IT both in number of qualified persons and equipment to cater to the demands of the institution and its campus outreach. With new educational technologies such as multimedia courseware and online web based teaching network will provide a flexible efficient and widely accessible leaning tool. If this is done it can become a national resource for other post-secondary institutions.
- The printing service, which is very central to the institution, needs upgrading and automated impressing of and finishing.

9.4 The teaching methodology and the preparation of specially designed self-learning study material (print and AV material) require a much longer preparatory time before any programme can be offered and demands a multifaceted role from the teaching staff. Training opportunities for the staff are very limited. Pressure and demand of their time for student support limits the teacher’s time for research and other activities. This in turn demoralizes the staff. Cadre approved by the UGC does not keep pace with the diversity of the programmes, large number of students and the heavy student support hours required from the staff.

9.5 Conclusions

If the capacity of the OUSL is strengthened along the lines mentioned above and provided with the capital and recurrent expenditure required we could expand the current enrolment over the next few years and address the human resource development of the country and personal development of the rural disadvantaged and the disabled.

This will help the country through solving the critical problem faced by the post secondary education system in Sri Lanka today of its inability to absorb the 90,000 A/L holders who do not gain admission to conventional universities thus preventing the waste of valuable talent. It would also serve better professional continuing development of the workforce to keep abreast with the advancing knowledge and technological skills necessary at their workplaces.
LIST OF EVIDENCE

1. Introduction
   - Universities Act No. 16 of 1978 , 1.1
     Open University Ordinance
   - Open University Handbook 1.2 a
   - Hand Books of Faculties 1.3 a-d
   - Corporate Plan 2001-2005 1.2 b
   - OUSL Profile 1.2 c
   - “OUSL is” leaflet 1.2 d

2. University Goals & Corporate Planning
   - Corporate Plan 2001-2005 1.2b
   - Vice-Chancellors Report- 16th Convocation 2.1
   - OUSL Ordinance 1.1
   - University Act 1.1
   - DFID Review Report 2.2
   - Departmental Review reports- Dept of Education & Educational Technology Division 2.3
   - Minutes of CERC meetings 2.4

3. Financial Resources & Management
   - Financial Matters 3.1
     (a) Financial Results
     (b) Financial Position
     (c) Cost analysis based on actual Expenditure
     (d) Student enrollment
     (e) Collection of fees
     (f) Actual & Estimated Expenditure (Get good copy)
     (g) Income expenditure (update)
   - Services through Consultancy & External Resources Centre (CERC) – Books printed in the Open University Press for orders obtained through CERC 3.2
4. Research

- Minutes of Probationary Study leave Committee 4.1
- Minutes of Higher Degrees & Research Committee 4.2
- Minutes of meetings of CRADE Committee for Research in Distance Education 4.3
- Research Journals – VISTAS, ERU, OUSL Journal 4.4
- Research by Faculties – Extracts of Annual Reports 4.5

5. Quality Management & Administration

- Open University hand Book 1.3
- The Corporate Plan of the OUSL 2.1
- Minutes of Senate meetings 5.1
- Minutes of Faculty Board meetings 5.2 a - d
- Minutes of the Meetings of –
  - Operations Committee 5.3 a
  - Board of the Regional Educational Service(RES) 5.3 b
  - Library & Information Science Committee, 5.3 c
  - Board of Education Technology( ET), 5.3 d
  - Finance Committee 5.3e
  - Information Technology Committee 5.3 f
- Minutes of the Quality Service Committee 5.4
- Annual report of the University 5.5
- UGC& Treasury Circulars governing recruitment and promotion of staff 5.6
- University Handbook 1.2a
- Faculty Hand Books 1.2 a - d
- Academic Programme Brochures 5.7 & 6.2
- Manual of Purchases 5.8
- Minutes of Deans Committee Meetings 5.9
- Minutes of Council Meetings 5.10
- Activity Schedules 6.3
- University By-laws 6.7
6. Quality Assurance

- Minutes of - Curriculum & Programme Development Committee 6.1 a
  - University Course Development Committee 6.1 b
  - Operations Committee 5.3
  - Library & Information Science Committee 5.3
  - Probationary Study leave Committee 4.1
  - Research & Higher Degrees Committee 4.2
  - Information Technology Committee 5.3
  - Bursary Committee 6.1 c
- Application forms & Registration Package 6.2
- Activity Schedules 6.3
- Documents issued to students at orientation sessions –
  For pre-registration orientation 6.4 a
  For information 6.4 b
- Course Material Package 6.5
- Year Planner 6.6
- University By-laws 6.7
- Rules & Regulations 6.8
- Minutes of Senate meetings 5.1
- Minutes of Council Meetings 5.10
- Minutes of Faculty Board Meetings 5.2
- Procedural manual of Examinations 6.10
- Establishment Code 6.11
- Recruitment Criteria & Circulars 6.12
- Newsletters 6.13
- Minutes of Meetings of Heads of Departments 6.14
- Minutes of Departmental Staff meetings 6.15
- House style & Bridging the Gap 6.16
- Samples of Continues Assessment Test papers & Assignments 6.17
- Minutes of Board of Educational Technology 5.3 d
- Minutes of Meetings with - Trade Unions 6.18 a
  - OUTA 6.18 b
  - Student representatives 6.18 c
  - Hostel Committee 6.18 d
  - Canteen Committee 6.18 e
  Student Counsellors 6.18 f
7. Learning Infrastructure

- Open University Hand Book 1.2
- Hand Books of Faculties 1.3
- Multi media study packages 6.5
- Samples of CA Tests & Home Assignments 6.17
- Activity Diary – Engineering Faculty 7.1
- Statistics 7.2
- List of Books issued to students 7.3
- Production Reports of the Printing Press 7.4
- Documents issued to students at Orientation session 6.5

8. University/Industry/Community and Other Extension Services

- ADB Personnel Development Project 8.1
- Chamber of Commerce and Academic Round Tables 8.2
- Course Development Teams 6.1 b
- Open University Hand Book 1.2 a
- Hand Book of Engineering Faculty 1.3 b
- Source Book on Child rights 8.3
- “Agrowell for Drought Mitigation” 8.4
- “Livelihood Options for coping with Drought” 8.5
- Minutes of CERC meetings 2.4
- University Press – Books Printed for CERC orders 3.2