Self Evaluation Report – The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL)

Executive summary

What are the key strengths of the institution

- The key strengths of the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) are its physical and human resources. Its physical resources in terms of a spacious library with audio-visual resources (AVR), University Press with modern printing facilities, a Media House with equipment of state-of-the-art technology, Automobile laboratory, Automation Laboratory, new buildings that house the Faculty of Education, Science and Engineering Technology, Health Care Centre, a model Day-care Centre and the building that houses the Public Relation Office are wealth of the university. More importantly, its trained work force is an asset to the institution. They are multi-skilled as they need to carry out different functions with different clientele. Its network of regional and study centres is an envy of all providers of tertiary education in the country.

- LLB Programme, Postgraduate Diploma in Education Programme, Advanced Diploma in Pre-school, B.Sc in Nursing, Diploma in English, Certificate course in Wild-life and ecotourism, Certificate course in Tourism are much sought after programmes.

- Collaborative work with international institutions to develop/deliver the following programmes: Commonwealth Executive Masters in Business Administration and Public Administration with Commonwealth of Learning, Masters in Business Administration in Human Resource Management with Institute of Personal management (IPM), Master of Arts in Development Studies and Public Policy by Marga Institute and OUSL, B.Sc Nursing with Kristenstaad University, Online Master of Science in Sustainable Energy Engineering program offered by the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), Sweden, Online certificate courses in Continuous Medical Education (CME) for professional development of medical practitioners with Monash University. A new multidisciplinary Mechatronics Engineering degree in Sri Lanka by the Department of Mechanical Engineering. In addition, Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) for training academic staff on using modern technologies for teaching.

What are the key weaknesses that the institution needs to address

- Poor communication between stakeholders and inadequate publicity for events that takes place at OUSL among its community.
- Inability to provide quality products and timely services to stakeholders
- Slow in responding to change in environment by innovation and creativity
- The investment made in capacity building of personnel has not been fully utilized by the university
• Absence of a performance-based monitoring mechanism in the university system which had frustrated committed and hard-working staff.
• Slow implementation of recommendations made by various committees and findings of institutional research.

What are your improvement plans

• Identify and improve most effective channels of communication.
• Identify and prioritise the needs of stakeholders and address them.
• Put in place an Appraisal System to recognize and reward creative work
• Attract, recruit and retain qualified trained staff
• Develop the structured performance appraisal system and monitor its implementation.
• Have structured mechanism to collect feedback from stakeholders and take prompt remedial actions.

1. Introduction to the Self-review of Open University of Sri Lanka – August – October 2010

General information

The Open University of Sri Lanka celebrated 30 years of its existence this year. It has a student enrolment of 27,756 and a strong work force of academic, academic-support, administrative and non academic, all working towards a common goal of serving the student community. It has a net work of regional and study centres located strategically closer to main cities. It has four faculties, namely Education, Engineering Technology, Humanities and Social Sciences and Natural Sciences.

• Who does it serve

The OUSL is committed to serve a community of students who would have otherwise been denied access to higher education, due to commitment to work or family or severe competition to enter conventional universities. It does so through Open and Distance Learning (ODL) using its network of regional and study centres, to give wider access to those living in different geographic locations.

• What challenges does it face

The OUSL was the premier ODL institution which offered degrees, diplomas and certificates. The challenge it faces this decade is to compete with other providers of higher education through ODL including the conventional universities in our higher education system that have embarked on offering some programme through ODL with the financial assistance from the Distance Education Modernization Project of the Asian Development Bank (ADB-DEMP). It is equally challenging to offer excellence, equity and efficiency through ODL.
When did the COL RIM process start

The Commonwealth of Learning Review and Improvement Model (COL-RIM) is a quality assurance model designed for post secondary institutions in Commonwealth countries. As the second step in the implementation of COL-RIM, a staff survey was conducted at the Open University of Sri Lanka in July 2010. The purpose of the staff survey is to inform the internal self-reviewers about areas of possible strength and weakness. Self review is the third step in the model. The self-review process started on the 10th August 2010 with a three day workshop for a group of selected staff members nominated by the Vice-Chancellor. One of the tasks was to evaluate key function of the Open University with six pre-identified evaluative questions that were related to six different themes; they are Communications, Needs orientation, Engagement, Innovation and creativity, Capacity building and Quality Management. The participants initially formed six teams (which later reduced to five) to work on these themes and each team had at least three members. The teams met separately to discuss the strategy to carry out the self review process. Within a team, members defined the scope and the leader of each team presented the scope to a panel that included the members of other teams, the Quality Assurance team (verifiers), the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Vice-Chancellor. Each team had preliminary meetings to discuss and finalise the process.

The members of the teams, Communications, Needs Orientation, Innovation and Creativity, Capacity building and Quality Management are given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communications</th>
<th>Needs Orientation</th>
<th>Innovation and Creativity</th>
<th>Capacity Building</th>
<th>Quality Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Theodore Fernando</td>
<td>Dr. D.A.R. Dolage</td>
<td>Mr. N Abeysekera</td>
<td>Dr. R. Perera</td>
<td>Dr. L. P. S. Gamini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Anjali Wickremasinghe</td>
<td>Dr. S.S. Iqbal</td>
<td>Mr. R. De Mel</td>
<td>Dr. P.C.P. Jaufer</td>
<td>Prof. T. M. Pallewatta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Sugandika Muthumina</td>
<td>Dr. N.Morais</td>
<td>Dr. J. Wattewidanage</td>
<td>Ms. B. Jayawardena</td>
<td>Mr. N. Kuruppuarachchi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dr. W. Seneviratne</td>
<td>Ms. K. Suresh</td>
<td>Mrs. D. Godagama</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mr. J.C.D. Pirithiviraj</td>
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</table>

The self review was carried out according to the guidelines prepared by COL-RIM expert panel. Each team had a theme and a member had a task identified for the purpose. Separate questionnaires were developed and interview schedules prepared to collect relevant information from the different sectors of the university. Each team member was playing the role that was assigned to him/her amidst his/her busy day to day activities, whether it be interviewing a person, administering a questionnaire or handling a focus group discussion (FGD). The selection of participants for each activity was made randomly. In the case of an interview, prior consent of the relevant Head was obtained. In some instances, some teams visited the regional centres. Some interviews were conducted by telephone and through emails; some conversations were recorded, with the consent of the interviewee. The scoping sessions conducted helped focus on important issues.
Though burdened with academic work and other mandatory duties, gathering of evidence, the quality and quantity of evidence gathered remained at a higher level. Also adequate time was spent with selected respondents to elicit answers to probing questions.

This was a new approach to review the performance of the university and thus a learning experience to all the members of the teams. To some teams this opportunity of carrying out self review gave them a bird’s eye of the whole university and its many valuable assets and exposed them to the experiences of some of the people who work and study in the university. They felt the need for self review of any institution for otherwise it will lose its relevance in modern society.

2. Scope of the Self-review

*Explaining which areas were chosen for focus and why:*

The scope of this survey is varied and wide. However, to carry out the self review within the time allocated, each team had to consciously decide on selected performance areas and enablers with justification.

Communications team concentrated on four research questions on the thematic question, “How effectively does the institution communicate with its stakeholders?”; they are: What are the different communication and information needs of all the stakeholders of the university? What are the processes and systems in place that hinder or facilitate effective communication? What are the types and sources of information stakeholders need? What are the different processes in place to monitor the effectiveness of communication between the university and its stakeholders? In order to find answers to these questions and based on the thematic question, the Communications team selected 6 performance areas and 10 enablers/outcomes, after scoping.

The COL-RIM staff survey indicates that the OUSL meets the needs of its stakeholders in many ways, especially in the flexible delivery of popular programmes allowing employed people to work and study concurrently. However, without systematic feedback from stakeholders on how well their need are being met (satisfaction data) and without regular reporting on student outcomes (retention and success), the OUSL is not able to demonstrate conclusively that it is meeting the needs of its stakeholders. Therefore, based on the thematic question, “How well does the institution provide the outcomes that its stakeholders value?” the Needs Orientation team selected, through the scoping process, five performance areas and 12 related quality indicators of which, 10 are enablers indicators and 2 outcome indicators.

The thematic question for the Innovation and Creativity team is “How effective are the institution’s innovative and creative responses to a changing environment?” The team considered 7 performance areas and 9 enablers/outcomes.

Capacity building team decided to confine the study to cover the most relevant areas of the survey to the theme “How effectively does the institution develop the capacity of its
people to provide valued outcomes for stakeholders?”. They selected five performance areas and eight related enablers for their study.

To answer the thematic question, “How well does the institution monitor and improve its performance?”, the Quality Management team prepared questions for the survey questionnaire to reflect the staff response to 8 key performance areas and 11 related enablers.

3. Implementation of the Self-review

3.1 How you decided to go about the review and the rationale for your approach

The teams carried out the self-review using questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions. The type of the questionnaire and the time spent on each interview and the depth of interview varied from team to team. The details are discussed below:

The Communication team relied on a questionnaire to collect data. It underwent several cycles of revision in order to get the correct answers and adapted to suit both the internal and external stakeholders. The team visited offices to meet people who worked there. The participants for the interview were selected randomly; they were interviewed after obtaining the permission from the relevant Heads. They were questioned or rather probed further to find out the exact answers for the four main questions. Time spent for an interview ranged between 30 to 45 minutes. The lengthy questionnaire serve as a guiding tool and the team sometimes had friendly conversation to identify the best as well as bad practices in the system. The total number interviewed was 35 which included people from Anuradhapura, Jaffna, Kandy, Matara and Jaffna (see Annexure 1a and b for questionnaire).

Due to limitations on time and resources, the Needs orientation team place more emphasis on students and academics as the key stakeholders. Primary source of evidence came from the questionnaire based survey involving student (student- survey), focus group discussion (FGD) and interviews with key stakeholders (students, academics and Principal officers of OUSL). The secondary source of evidence came from OUSL documents (policies and procedures, student handbooks, corporate plan), records (minutes of meetings, reports from moderators of question papers, ODL/DE research) and reports (annul reports). The student survey was administered across three faculties namely, Engineering Technology, Humanities and Social Sciences and Natural Sciences. The responses to the questions were obtained on a Likert scale. However, though the exercise aimed at getting 200 students (50 from each faculty) involved in the survey, only a total of 76 students from all faculties actually took part in it. The questionnaire consist of 19 questions with the suitable response on a five- point Likert scale that ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to determine the overall level of agreement (LOA). It also contained 3 questions that require descriptive answers. The focus group discussion was conducted with the participation of 12 academics to discuss 13 well structured questions. The participants were also encouraged to express their opinion freely on pre- identified questions and any issue that emerged during the discussion. The discussion continued until a consensus was reached for a question. In addition 12 senior
academic staff members from three faculties were interviewed regarding the following aspects:

- Peer evaluation and student evaluation of delivery of courses (Day schools)
- Continuous assessment, marking of assignment and feedback to students (including preparing model answers)
- Final evaluation, setting and moderating question papers
- Revising and updating course materials.

Innovation and creativity team considered creativity and innovation in terms of University, Faculty and individual. They interviewed 29 staff members and 10 students from all faculties. They used interviews and methods of observation and content analysis for the review. Interview method was used because of the advantages such as highest cooperation, lowest refusal rate, high quality of response as well as the advantage of the presence of the interviewer. Observation method was used to triangulate the findings of the interview.

The Capacity building team collected information to address every aspect of the scope and analysed some of these aspects horizontally across all faculties and others horizontally and vertically all over the university. They interviewed three Deans of faculties and two Heads of departments from the four faculties. Though they intended to select two departments from Engineering Technology, one from education, two from Natural Sciences and one from Humanities and Social Sciences, depending on the number and size of departments within each faculty, the numbers were reduced drastically due to practical difficulties of meeting them. Ten academic staff members, three administrative staff members, ten non academic staff members and 15 students provided information using a questionnaire or by telephone.

The Quality Management team adopted survey method and questionnaires were used for the purpose of collecting data. A structured questionnaire, consisting of 29 questions with the suitable responses on a Likert scale and five open-ended questions, was administered to a sample of 40 academic staff and 10 administrative staff and received 31 responses (see annexure 5 for the questionnaire). The questions were prepared to measure the response of staff to the 8 performance areas.

3.2 Your observations on the methods you used to gather evidence and on the quality and quantity of evidence gathered

Despite being burdened with other academic commitments and mandatory tasks of the university, the teams were satisfied with gathering of evidence and quality and quantity of the evidence. The Communication team was able to spend adequate time with the selected respondents to elicit answers to their questions. The Needs Orientation team was impressed by the cooperation it had from the officers of the university to make documents available for inspection.
3.3. How (as a team) did you make judgements based on evidence and decide on ratings

Evidence gathered from the interviews, questionnaires and focus group discussions were given values from 0 (opportunity for improvement) through 1 (threshold) to 2 (good practice) and ratings were calculated for the relevant indicators under the different themes. The results are tabulated below:

Table—Ratings by group for key performance areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Area</th>
<th>Enabler (process)/Results (Outcome)</th>
<th>Survey Rating</th>
<th>Review Team</th>
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<td>Survey Rating</td>
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<td>1. Managing Change Strategically</td>
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<td>0.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Stakeholder and partner orientation</td>
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<td>2.3</td>
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<td>3. Learner and knowledge society focus</td>
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<td>3.2</td>
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<td>4. People Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Resources, facilities knowledge and information management</td>
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<td>0.7</td>
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<td>5.2</td>
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<td>0.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Impact on society outcomes</td>
<td>6.2</td>
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<td>0.1</td>
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<td>6.3</td>
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<td>6.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Teaching and learning outcomes</td>
<td>7.1</td>
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<td>0.6</td>
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<td>7.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Research, innovation and entrepreneurial outcomes</td>
<td>8.4</td>
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<td>9. Staff outcomes</td>
<td>9.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Support system outcomes</td>
<td>10.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average Rating</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 3.4 Record of evidence used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Departments where we made observations</th>
<th>People we interviewed</th>
<th>Documents we looked at</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communications</strong></td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>17/9/10</td>
<td>Senior Academic &amp; present Dean of HSS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17/9/10</td>
<td>Office Aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legal</strong></td>
<td>17/9/10</td>
<td>Office Aid</td>
<td>Minutes of the staff meeting-Legal studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VC office</strong></td>
<td>17/9/10</td>
<td>Personal Secretary</td>
<td>No systematic information about who is present and not present in the dept’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17/9/10</td>
<td></td>
<td>From the central desk phone calls are not properly directed to the right person</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SLRC</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Deputy D/ Prog. Prese.</td>
<td>The “Gana Yathra TV prog. Was not communicated well inside the university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administration</strong></td>
<td>17/9/10</td>
<td>Receptionist /Tel.Op.</td>
<td>Information from various depart.dept’s are not properly communicated and on their own they have to hunt for information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administration</strong></td>
<td>18/9/10</td>
<td>Registrar</td>
<td>Advertisements should specified that OUSL is a recognized institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ET</strong></td>
<td>18/9/10</td>
<td>D/ET</td>
<td>Most of our academics are not known in national level</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Legal dept.</td>
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<td>Various dept’s</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Paper ads</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Needs orientation | 17/9/10 | Dr. J. Liyanagama  
Mr. K.M. Premaratne  
Ms. Anupama  
Prof. T.M. Pallewatte  
Mr. M.R.M. Haniffa | DVC  
Bursar  
Asst. Bursar  
Head  
Senior Lect. | 24/8  
25/8  
24/8  
23/8  
26/8 | ADB-DEMP  
Annual Budget  
Doc. related to University Bursary & Mahapola Schol.  
Staff evaluation  
Moderator reports | Office of DVC  
Office of Bursar  
Finance Division  
Chemistry dept |
| Innovation and Creativity | | Heads/HSS  
Two Lecturers/Education  
Six Lecturers/HSS  
4 Students/HSS  
Two Visiting lecturers/HSS  
12 academic members/Eng. Tec  
2 students/Eng.Tec  
4 Students/NSc  
3 staff members/NSc | 20/9  
21/9  
10/9  
15/8  
15/8  
16/8  
15/8  
15/8  
16/8 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capacity Building</th>
<th>Establishment Division</th>
<th>4/10</th>
<th>Dean/ Eng. Tech</th>
<th>Norms for Teachers</th>
<th>Norms for staff other than teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Department of Textile Engineering</td>
<td>5/10</td>
<td>Dean/ NSc</td>
<td>UGC recruitment criteria</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Department of Mechanical Engineering</td>
<td>6/10</td>
<td>Dean/ Edu.</td>
<td>Cadre Vacancies of depts.</td>
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<td>Head/ Mech. Eng</td>
<td>Council decision on induction for Senior Lecturers</td>
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<td>Head/ Text. Eng</td>
<td>Guidelines-marking scheme for interview</td>
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<td>Director/ RES</td>
<td>Application form- Annual increment</td>
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<td>Academic staff members</td>
<td>Performance appraisal form</td>
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<td>Admin staff members</td>
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<td>Tech and clerical staff</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Students</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Management</th>
<th>Dean/HSS</th>
<th>11/10</th>
<th>Academic/ administrative staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Head/Social Studies</td>
<td>12/10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Head/Management 31</td>
<td>12/10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5 What did you learn from the process, what you think the benefits are, how you might do it differently next time?

From the process, the teams learnt about the themes itself and understood how the institution has evolved over three decades, practicing the concepts underlying these themes. The benefits are that we were able to identify the gaps, while appreciating the strength of the system, so that more meaningful steps can be taken to carry on with the work efficiently and effectively with the available resources. Next time we should be able to carry out the review in a more systematic manner using some of the members of the group who undertook the initial review.

4. Findings of the Self-review
- Findings by Performance area
1 Managing change strategically

1.1 The vision and mission of the institution reflect national and community goals and the identified interests and needs and expectations of its stakeholders

Both Communications and Needs orientation teams obtained a rating of 0.8, while Innovation and Creativity team 1.0. There is general consensus among the academics regarding the appropriateness of the Vision and Mission statements of the OUSL although only a small number of staff members can remember the content. Most felt that the Vision and Mission statements should be displayed prominently at sufficient locations and it should be communicated to all internal and external stakeholders.

1.2 Ongoing strategic planning is informed by information about institutional performance and external environmental information

Only the Communications team gave a rating of 0.6. They attribute this to the fact that only those in the Corporate Plan committee and Senate and participating in the Open University Management Information System (OMIS) meeting usually receive relevant information officially, but rest of the staff are not aware of what is going on in the university. Plans and the developments are not communicated properly to the grass roots.

1.4 Performance is reviewed regularly against agreed performance targets and improvement plans are implemented and monitored

The Capacity building and Quality Management teams obtained ratings of 0.99 and 0.93 respectively. The academics and administrative staff said that there are performance targets for them. Clerical and technical staff did not reply to this question. During the interviews with Heads and Deans, it was revealed that there are working norms only for academics. Further, this was clarified with the documents available with the Establishments Division, norms for Academics and Admin staff attached herewith. Having norms for academic and administrative staff may be a main reason for higher rate of positive response to this question. No response from other categories of employees is due to non availability of norms for them.

1.6 Finances are managed to support the institution to achieve its goals

The Needs Orientation team gave a rating of 0.7. The team had access to all the documents related to the source of funds which includes capital vote which comes from the Treasury, government funding for 70% of recurrent expenditure (for salaries) and funds generated by the University and funds from external sources. The academic staff indicated that the OUSL does not have a separate allocation for research and development. Perhaps the respondents were not aware of funds available at faculty levels. There is a need to create awareness among staff. Some felt that the funds set aside for financial support for students is not fully utilized. The reason may be that the students are
unaware of the availability of funds or not interested. This is an area that needs attention for improvement. May be we need to simplify the process of application or find innovative answers.

2 Stakeholder and partner orientation

2.2 Identified stakeholders are informed about the performance and plans of the institution and the services it offers in relation to their own interests and needs and expectations

The rating from the Communications team is 0.5. The team attributes this to the fact that achievements and developments of OUSL are not informed, except to the key persons who are involved. For example its awareness programme, “Gnana Yathra” telecasted through the National TV Channel every Friday at 6:15 pm to 6:30pm from 4th June to 3rd December 2010 was informed only once through email; most of the internal staff are not aware of this. The Newsletters are not distributed regularly. The programmes for 30th anniversary of OUSL were not communicated properly among the internal staff and the general public.

2.3 There are structured processes for eliciting and using feedback from stakeholders to inform decision making

The ratings varied from 0.0 (Communications team) through 0.5 (Needs Orientation) to 1.18 (Quality Management). According to the Communications team, there is hardly any evidence to say that there is a mechanism to get a feedback in the university. The Needs Orientation team discovered that there are processes in different faculties about using feedback for the improvement in the development (peer & student evaluation-instructional material), evaluation (moderator- Final examination) and delivery (peer & student evaluation- Day schools) of courses.

3. Learner and knowledge society focus

3.1 Programmes are designed and developed to meet learners’ needs and to review regularly in order to ensure that they remain current and relevant to present and future needs

The rating from the Needs Orientation team is 0.5. Generally, study programmes in the OUSL are not reviewed regularly in order to ensure that they remain current. Some faculties revise courses and develop new courses regularly. The student-survey revealed that students are moderately satisfied with the updating of course materials. The problem of academics having less time to devote to revision of course materials when they are burdened with the delivery of courses was highlighted.

3.2 Teaching and learning methods and delivery modes are deployed to meet the needs of learners and other stakeholders
The rating from Needs Orientation team is 0.7 and that from Innovation and Creativity is 0.8. The students are moderately satisfied with the learning and teaching methods used at the OUSL. Although the students are satisfied with the quality of teaching at day-schools, the attendance is poor. The student-survey revealed that students are moderately satisfied with the way the day-school venues and dates are informed. The survey also revealed that students are moderately satisfied with conditions of classrooms and the facilities provided at the classrooms.

3.3 Learners are provided with information and support services that are learner/client-centred and support the academic, social and personal development of all learners

The ratings are 0.1 from Communications team and 0.6 from Needs Orientation team. The need to introduce short stand alone courses based on the industry requirements were pointed out by many during the discussions the Communications team had. The Needs Orientation team found that the students are not satisfied with the way important changes in credit ratings, programme structures, eligibility criteria and course code and title, related to academic programmes are informed. They are moderately satisfied with the way the registration schedule is informed. They are dissatisfied with the time duration available to find money to pay tuition fees when invoices are dispatched late. They are also unhappy when admission cards come late.

3.4 Educators and learners develop effective relationships for teaching and learning

The rating from the Needs orientation team is 0.6. According to the findings of the student-survey, students are moderately satisfied with the availability of teachers during the working hours for clarification of academic matters related to their course. Further, employed students consider meeting their teachers outside working hours (or on public holidays) as important. In general, in ODL environment, educators and learners get the minimum opportunities to develop effective relationships. However, there are some evidences that prove educators and learners have been able to develop effective relationships by exploiting the limited opportunities available to them.

3.5 Assessment and feedback to learners supports learning and provides useful information to stakeholders

The feedback from academics varies from providing model answers for the assignments, together with the marked scripts to giving a framework or broad guidelines with regard to assignments to work out the answer themselves, particularly in the essay type assignments. Other academics provide comments on the answer script itself, where necessary, in addition to the model answers or guidelines. There are others who do not provide any of the above but provide only the Grade, which offers little or no benefit for learning. The rating from the Communication team is 0.1 while that from the Needs Orientation team is 0.6. The students indicated that they are moderately satisfied with the time taken by academics for marking and returning of assignments. The students are moderately satisfied with the quality (sufficiently descriptive) of model answers.
3.6 Quality assurance of assessment ensures that assessment outcomes are valid and fair and assessment information is reliable

The rating from the Quality Management team is 1.09. The staff members are certain about the standard and quality of their academic programme as to whether it meets the contemporary needs of the knowledge society. The respondents attribute the resource limitations at central campus and regional levels to the less efficient delivery of academic programmes. They also pointed out that insufficient IT skills of OUSL are also causing mismatch between current academic programmes and the emerging needs of the students.

3.7 Strategies, policies and agendas are implemented to encourage and support educators to engage in relevant research

The rating from Capacity building team is 0.87. Most of the academics said that practices like “Annual sessions and annual research awards, Prizes for best annual research publication and making research component in carrier advancement are in place to encourage research while minority of them said that there are no policies of the university to encourage research.

However, rigid & cumbersome procedures of finance division, discrimination, curtailing research facilities, lack of instruments, chemicals etc., stringent procedure for procurement, too much administrative duties, delay in processing payments etc., too many meetings, heavy administrative work, no access to international recognized journals, no support from university to publish in internationally recognized journals which involves payments, not providing sufficient cadre positions by UGC, delaying of appointment of technical officer, lack of funds for equipment and computers, no proper system and guidance discourage research at the university and lack of research culture discourage academics to undertake research.

3.8 Strategies, policy and agendas are implemented to encourage and support educators to be innovative and creative in meeting the needs of learners

The rating from Needs Orientation is 0.7 and that from Innovation and Creativity is 0.6. Only a very limited number of examples can be found as evidence to show that there are strategies and policies to encourage and support educators to be innovative and creative in meeting the needs of learners. It was pointed out that the Department of Chemistry allows the students to take the MCQ papers with them after the examination, and provides the students with the marked answer sheet together with the answers. For some courses, MCQs are administered online where a typical question paper for a group of students can be generated from a question bank consisting of 1000 questions. This was practiced well before offering courses online by the University.

4. People Management

4.1 Appropriately qualified and experienced educators are effectively attracted, recruited, and integrated into the institution
The ratings from Capacity building and Quality Management teams are 0.8 and 1.04 respectively. The findings from the Capacity building team indicate that there are unfilled vacancies. A higher number of unfilled academic positions indicate that there is a problem of attracting appropriately qualified and experienced educators to the University. During discussions with Heads and Deans it was revealed that because of low salary scales within the university system, it make unattractive for people to join the University system. The Quality Management team attributed this to the misconception among academic community about ODL institutions. They spoke of difficulty of recruited educators to get integrated in to OUSL system.
4.2 Educators participate in improvement-oriented performance and are supported to engage in professional development activity

The rating from Capacity building team was 0.64. Minority of staff members did not know whether performance is managed; a few recognized good practices in this area. It was revealed that in the Faculty of Education, there is a professional development program in place to support young lecturers and mentors have been assigned. The staff development centre is engaged in conducting professional development programmes for lecturers, administrative staff and other categories of employees. It is compulsory for all probationary lecturers to undergo a training programme on teaching methodologies before their confirmation. Recently, the Council of the Open University approved a proposal to make it compulsory for newly recruited Senior Lecturers to undergo an induction programme before being promoted to the next grade.

4.3 Allocation of workload is fair and transparent and reflects the vision, mission and goals of the institution

The ratings from Capacity building and Quality Management teams are 0.68 and 0.93 respectively. Capacity building team indicated lack of consistency in allocation of workload. The response varied between faculties. The Deans and Heads highlighted constraints such as insufficient staff for different specialties, fields, Number of students, activities of the course, lack of know-how and expertise, lack of qualified staff for post graduate programmes and only a few works in extra hours. The Quality Management team also found that the workload is not allocated among staff in a fair and transparent manner. It was pointed out that the academic staff spends more time in the coordination and administration of academic programmes than developing course material and doing research. In the absence of clear procedures and systems to allocate work among staff fairly, only those self motivated are taking on responsibility.

4.4 Staff contribute to interdisciplinary teams and collaborative projects with local and international colleagues to achieve valued outcomes

The rating from the Innovation and Creativity team is 0.8. The team identifies the innovative courses and programmes by the faculties: Bachelor of Education in Science, interfaculty collaborative programme by Natural Science and Education Faculties. Master in Environmental Science by Natural Science, Engineering Technology and Humanities and Social Sciences.

Master in Arts in Teacher Education (MATE) – International Programme developed by the Department of Secondary and Tertiary Education, Faculty of Education with collaborative partnership with Commonwealth of Learning (COL).

Commonwealth Executive Masters in Business Administration and Public Administration with Commonwealth of Learning, Masters in Business Administration in Human Resource Management with Institute of Personal management (IPM) and Master of Arts in Development Studies and Public Policy by Marga Institute and OUSL,
Association of individual staff members with professional organizations like Sri Lanka Association for Advancement of Science (SLAAS), Institute of Biology, Institute of Chemistry and Institution of Engineers of Sri Lanka.

4.5 Staff establishment is adequate for the size and diversity and strategic direction of the institution

The rating from Capacity building team is 0.62. It was stressed that the university has to fill the existing vacancies in the academic departments before looking into the problem of inadequacy of cadre positions.

5. Resources, facilities knowledge and information management

5.1 Allocation and maintenance of facilities and resources is adequate for the mode and type of teaching and learning, and for the number of students and reflects the vision and mission and goals of the institution

The ratings from the Needs Orientation team, the Capacity building team and Innovation and Creativity are 0.7, 0.68 and 0.6 respectively. There was a consensus among the members who participated at the staff FGD that resource allocation and maintenance of facilities are inadequate to meet the needs of the distance learning. The student-survey revealed that students are dissatisfied with the non-availability of printed course materials at registration. The students are moderately satisfied with the facilities provided for the conduct of day-schools; however they are dissatisfied with the way postponement of day-schools is informed. They also expressed concern over the services provided by the temporary residential facilities. According to the Capacity building team, most of the students are dissatisfied about the facilities with respect to internet speed, to get printouts and bind documents and quality of on-line teaching materials. They found that the majority of students prefer printed material than the on-line teaching materials. The students are satisfied with the services provided by the skeletal staff at smaller centres.

5.2 Infrastructure for communication flow, quality assurance and accountability is clear

The rating from the Quality Management team is 0.92. Staff members are less satisfied with the communication flow and quality assurance mechanism. When faculties set up their Quality Assurance units, evaluation of courses and both student and peer evaluation of day schools will take place.

5.3 Performance information (such as data on staff and learners) is well managed, accessible and used for planning and improvement purposes

The rating from the Quality Management team is 0.95. Most of the staff members do not have a clear idea about the management of information on staff and learners. The information on learner performance (student’s achievements in Continuous Assessment and Final Examination), student’s employability, dropout rate/level etc. are not collected regularly and used for planning and decision making. Likewise, the staff members believe that information on staff performance (academic progress and academic inputs,
contribution to administration) is not collected properly and whatever that was collected is not used for planning and decision making activity.

5.4 Users are adequately trained to make innovative use of equipment and information management technologies

The rating from the Innovation and Creativity team is 0.7. Majority of the respondents indicated that there are training programmes but there is no follow up. The respondents indicated that in the absence of “role models” in some faculties, there is no conducive environment for young members to be innovative and creative.

6. Impact on society outcomes

6.2 The institution engages positively with its stakeholders and demonstrates accountability

The rating from the Communications team is 0.1. The team reports that there is no indication of accountability at many levels. They stress the need to communicate to all staff the fact that they are accountable and to whom and for what.

6.3 The institution meets stakeholder expectations and public perception of the institution is positive

The rating from the Communication team is 0.1. The team found that this aspect is not considered across all faculties in the university. Very often the course materials are not updated regularly thus becoming less relevant to the students’ need. However, some departments (e.g. Mechanical Engineering) have taken initiatives to introduce new courses to address the needs of the country. The team also found that the university is moving away from targeting adult learner. There is a need to train the work force in public sector and private sector to empower them through various courses at the OUSL.

6.4 The institution demonstrates leadership in public and academic debate and contributes to the development of local and international communities

The rating from the Innovation and Creativity team is 0.5. There seems to be no apparent contribution from the staff of the OUSL towards national and international development. However, many of our staff members are involved in activities of national importance.

7. Teaching and learning outcomes

7.1 Learners persist with their studies and progress steadily

The rating from the Needs Orientation team is 0.6. The team found that a segment of the student population is committed and enthusiastic in completing the programmes within the stipulated time period. They are those seeking promotions in their careers, higher studies here or abroad or waiting to migrate. There is another segment that discontinues/
postpones their studies at OUSL for various reasons and resume later when they feel ready to do so. A further segment drops out of the programme for work pressure, difficulties with English Language, that the programme they selected is no longer useful and financial reasons. The experience of the Faculties of Engineering Technology and Natural Sciences has been that of the employed students, the younger people tend to complete the degree programmes earlier than the mature ones.

7.3 Learners are generally satisfied with all aspects of their academic, social and personal development experiences

The ratings from the Communications and Quality Management teams are 0.0 and 0.96 respectively. The Communications team could not find any important qualitative or quantitative evidence about learners’ satisfaction. Many interviewed said that instructional material need to be more attractive and user-friendly.

7.4 Graduates of the institution are employable in their field(s) and eligible to progress to higher levels of study

The rating from the Needs Orientation team is 0.8. The students responded to this with confidence about securing employment after graduation, in a competitive environment of work. In the Focus Group Discussion, too, this was highlighted. Further, students agreed that OUSL degree programmes are most helpful to those who are employed for their career progression. The group stressed the need to increase the awareness of the ODL method among the prospective employers and to familiarize them with the different programmes offered by the OUSL.

7.5 Improvement and excellence in teaching are recognized and rewarded

The ratings from the Innovation and Creativity, Capacity Building and Quality Management teams are 0.65, 0.64 and 0.69 respectively. The Innovation and Creativity team finds that the OUSL had failed to recognize and reward teaching while outside institutions have done so. One clear example is where the online teaching was rewarded by the Sri Lanka Institute of Marketing. Both the Capacity Building team and Quality Management team found that majority of staff, all academic, technical and clerical, say that their improved work has not been recognized by the institution.

8. Research, innovation and entrepreneurial outcomes

8.4 Creative and innovative approaches to meeting the needs of learners are recognized and rewarded

The rating from the Innovation and Creativity team is 0.6. The responses indicated that there is a reward scheme but this mechanism needs further improvement. They also want to see a reward scheme for teaching and learning.
9. Staff outcomes

9.2 Staff are actively involved in the organizational, social/cultural and academic life of the institution

The rating from the Communications team is 1.4. There is no formal communication system between different departments and faculties. According to the Communications team, some of the members take their work seriously while many others do not have the motivation and therefore synergy of working together to improve the whole university system.

10. Support system outcomes

10.2 The institution practices fact based decision making and continuous improvement in all key performance areas

The rating from the Quality Management team is 0.74. It was learned that OUSL staff members are not satisfied with the decision making process because the OUSL does not practice fact-based decision making; instead it follows day-to-day decision making approach which is rule-based or reactionary based. Therefore it is necessary to adopt fact-based decision-making approach to enhance the quality of decisions.

5. Ratings by theme, based on your evidence-based judgements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Rating of the Self-review team</th>
<th>Comment on why this rating seems appropriate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How effectively does the institution communicate with its stakeholders?</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>Communication seems to be the core channel of ODL, if that is not in place the consequences are damaging. Requires immediate attention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How well does the institution provide outcomes that its stakeholders need and value?</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>This shows that the needs orientation is not adequate and needs further improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How effective are the institution’s innovative and creative responses to a changing environment?</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>This rating shows that with effort that there is room for improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How effectively does the institution develop the capacity of its people to provide valued outcomes for stakeholders?</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>With the investment for capacity building the rating looks somewhat disappointing. However with planned activities and monitoring, the OUSL will be able to achieve the threshold.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How well does the institution monitor and improve its performance?</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>This rating shows promise for better performance and achieve good practice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Recommendations of the Self-review

- The area of communications needs improvement to inform students about any change in the course delivery, e.g., change of venue (class room, examination hall) and answering students query regarding the course by way of notice board, sending emails and SMS. Getting through to the university by way of telephone to be made efficient and publicise the direct dialing facility: 2881xxx.

- The Vision and Mission statements should be displayed prominently at sufficient locations and it should be communicated to all internal and external stakeholders.

- Plans and the developments are not communicated properly to the grass roots. The Heads of departments and divisions should take more responsibility to pass information to all staff in the departments or divisions.

- To make allocation of finances fair, transparent and known to all stakeholders. This will make staff applying for funding for career advancement and students for Bursary and scholarships.

- To broad base the quality assurance mechanism/ process throughout the university. The best practices of maintaining quality in teaching, evaluation and research need to be publicized in order to recognize those who contribute to it as well as to encourage/ motivate those fail well behind it. Reward those who display excellence in teaching and research.

- To develop and administer a well structured performance appraisal system to identify those who contributed to improvement and excellence in teaching

- To have a structured mechanism to collect feedback from the stakeholders, regularly, analyse the data and make the stakeholders known of the outcome of the study.

Professor Upali Vidianathirana
Vice-Chancellor
The Open University of Sri Lanka.

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