



**SUBJECT BENCHMARK STATEMENT
IN
HISTORY**

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FOREWORD

The work in connection with the development of Subject Benchmark Statements was begun in August 2003 as a part of the overall quality assurance framework that supports academic standards and the furtherance and dissemination of good practice in Universities in Sri Lanka. Subject Benchmark Statements will support and promote quality and standards by:

- Providing universities with a common and explicit reference point for internal and external programme approval and review;
- Guiding and promoting curriculum development, especially in new departments and new universities, and in other institutions of higher education;
- Evolving over time to take account of changes and innovations that reflect subject development and new expectations;
- Providing an authoritative and widely recognized statement of expectations of what is expected of a graduate in a specific (or designated) subject area in a form readily accessible to students, employers and others with a stake in higher education;
- Providing a clear and transparent reference point for External Examiners;
- Assisting international comparison and competitiveness of higher education awards and student achievement.

SUBJECT BENCHMARK STATEMENT

HISTORY

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Subject Benchmark Statement – Scope and Purpose

The objective of preparing a subject benchmark is to provide general guidelines to the academic community engaged in teaching a particular subject. It provides guidelines on:

- the nature and the characteristics of degree programmes in the related subject.
- the general expectations about the standards for the award of degrees at a given level

and

- the attributes and capabilities that the graduates of the specific subject should be able to demonstrate.

Subject Benchmark Statements are, used for variety of purposes.

- Benchmarking of academic standards is an essential component of quality assurance in the University system
- Subject Benchmark Statements are an important source of reference for higher education institutions when new programmes are been designed and developed in a subject area.
- They provide variety and flexibility in the design of programmes and encourage innovation within an agreed conceptual framework.
- They explain the conceptual framework that gives the discipline its identity and coherence.
- They make explicit the differences and diversity of programmes within agreed limits set out by the subject community itself.
- They provide academic staff and institutions with a framework for developing and specifying intended learning outcomes of the programmes.
- They make explicit the nature and standards of awards that carry the subject title and in turn provide a foundation for employers, public and others, to have confidence on the academic awards of higher education.
- They explain teaching, learning and assessment strategies.
- They set out minimum standards for the award of degrees in a specific subject.
- They set out the attributes and capabilities expected of graduates in order to represent the general expectations of standards in awards.
- They enable learning outcomes specified for a particular programme to review and evaluate against agreed general expectations about standards.
- They provide peer reviewers with a point of reference for making judgments about the appropriateness of academic standards within the institution in pursuit of internal quality assurance.
- They provide external subject reviewers of the quality assurance programmes with information to arrive at reasonable judgments with regard to the quality of teaching, learning and assessing while they also contribute to identify the

shortcomings that in turn make it comfortable to submit recommendations to improve the quality of the awards.

- They help to establish consensus within the academic community on the nature and standards of awards.

1.2 Level of Teaching

- This Subject Benchmark Statement for History was, undertaken as an activity of the Quality Assurance Project (QAP) of the UGC by a subject benchmarking team drawn from full Professors and Heads of Departments of History in the University system on behalf of the subject community.
- The term **programme** is, used here to refer to courses of study leading to a degree and term **module** to refer to courses or units within the degree programme.
- The concern of this statement is with the work of students completing four- year duration Special Bachelors degree programme in History and three-year duration General Degree programme with History as one of the subjects. It is recognized that the potentials in the subject is very extensive and can be used as single, combined, honours, general and interdisciplinary programmes. However, the principal concern at this stage is with programmes leading to an award in History Special degree and General Degree with History as a subject. Still, there is scope to extend the criteria towards combined or History majoring degrees.
- It is, expected that this subject benchmarking statement would ensure maintaining high standards and quality of the degree programmes in History in all national Universities.

Guiding Assumptions:

- History differs from many subjects in that it has no body or a core of knowledge specifically recognized as required to obtain. It is self-evident that knowledge and understanding of the human past is of incalculable value both to the individual and to the society, at large. Therefore, acquiring knowledge is the first objective of studying History. This entails an approach that concentrates on using knowledge to develop certain skills, competencies and attitudes.
- Criteria for judging the suitability and adequacy of Honours and General degree programmes in History is been stipulated here. It is, attempted to achieve it in a specific way without undermining the principle that there are many different suitable and adequate ways of constructing programmes and making available the great richness and variety in History. Need of the adaptability of programmes and teaching methods to modern academic developments has also, been accepted.
- It is, accepted that teaching and learning area is an evolving processes. Good undergraduate History teaching takes a variety of forms and various programmes usually combine different teaching methods in a number of ways. Therefore, it is not the intension here to fix the teaching of History to a particular model. Differences in teaching methodology arise:
 - from different interests and abilities of individual teachers,
 - from the requirements of the different areas of the field of History, and
 - from the availability of different combinations of teaching resources in different Departments or subject groups in different institutions.

- This benchmarking statement should, therefore be taken as a starting point. The departments and subject groups will have opportunity with the guidance if any of professional scrutiny provided by institutional peer reviewers, external examiners and QAA scheme of academic review to suggest improvements to this benchmarking statement.
- Particular characteristics of History as a discipline has been, taken full account of. Its subject matter consists of the attempts of the human beings in the past to organize life materially and morally, individually and collectively. The benefit of studying these things is that it widens the students' experience and develops qualities of perception and judgment. History provides a distinctive education by providing a sense of the past, an awareness of the development of diversity of values, systems and societies and the inculcation of critical yet tolerant personal attitudes.
- It is possible to acquire important abilities and qualities of mind through the study of History. They are particularly valuable for the graduates as citizens and are readily transferable to many occupations and careers. These include respect for historical context and evidence, a greater awareness of the historical process unfolding during our own time and a deeper understanding of the varied traditions current today. These qualities of mind and abilities are most effectively, developed, by the practice, methods and material of the subject itself.
- Due to the deteriorated nature of the national culture that prevailed for centuries in Sri Lanka, rebuilding the nation has become an urgent and essential requirement of the day. The general belief that historical perspectives are the best precedents to utilize in nation building is accepted in full. Therefore, when laying down the expected skills of the History graduates the requirement of empowering them to make use of historical frame of reference in accommodating national development is emphasised.
- Well designed, history programmes should be able to facilitate the progression of students. History programmes do not input knowledge to, be, passively observed. Reading, discussion, writing, exploration and discovery are essential. The Historians' skills and qualities of mind are, developed through the process of acquiring evaluating and discussing historical knowledge. Therefore, we stress the importance of encouraging the undergraduates and providing avenues for them to acquire the knowledge and skills that the degree programmes demand. This could, be done through classroom learning and independent study.
- The discipline of History has a reciprocal relationship with a lot other disciplines. It is said that, "History is the storehouse of all the disciplines". This relation is of utmost importance in developing the experiences of history students. Hence, the requirement is, stressed and it is proposed, that the academic communities of all the Universities to pay special attention and provide for multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary studies when structuring History programmes.
- Assessment is a critical element in the educational process and an essential element in effective learning. Therefore, it is, recommended that all the departments of History in Sri Lankan Universities should develop a clear assessment policy that is consistent with the learning outcomes. They should specify clearly in their documentations what the students should learn and how their work, will be, assessed.
- It is evident that it will be impossible for subject reviewers to make judgments about academic standards in History without some consideration on every aspect of degree programmes taken for consideration here. It is also, believed, that

departmental statements about the framework of programmes if they are to be useful to both staff and students will need to cover all the grounds that we have covered here.

1.3 Scope of Employment for History Graduates:

- History is a subject where if studied and kept to the said standards the graduate will build up abilities and aptitudes to get employment in any sector, in any position, under any situation. To become a good historian, the student should reach the standards set by the benchmark. If they meet the expected quality of, the degree they will be acquainted with the whole procedure of the development of human civilization. They will be knowledgeable about the responses to challenges the humankind had to face in economic, political, social and cultural spheres of their life. They will gain skills in organization, facing the challenges, guiding others and making decisions through discussion listening to others and being tolerant. Therefore, they will be able to perform the duties of any position after obtaining sufficient training in that position.
- History graduates will no doubt are best suited to administrative positions in any sector, as teachers in schools and higher education institutions, for positions in research and publication institutions, as coordinators in national development projects etc. However, it is not feasible to mention a comprehensive list of employment opportunities available for History graduates. They will be well acquainted with human relations in society and be able to have cordial interactions with people of different cultural and ethnic groups. They will have the ability to think logically and to write and express fluently. Therefore, the scope of employment for standard history graduate is unlimited.

2. SUBJECT AIMS

- **to provide knowledge on the nature of the discipline.** History deals with thousands of years' long development of human civilization. The diversity of periods and different cultures of human development will have to be, analyzed.
- **to make aware of the continuity and change in the development of human civilization that extended over a time span for centuries which is central to historical perusal.** The programmes should introduce the students to the issues of continuity and changes and give them experience of the intellectual benefits accruing from the study of History.
- **to establish the ability of History to promote understanding of different cultures.** It is an evident fact that History students study the developments of more than one society or one culture. This opens the way for comparative perspectives, tolerance and respect to other cultures, accommodate differences, confer and compromise and teamwork.
- **to make the students aware and follow the accepted rule that the sound study of History depends on the use of historical sources.** Any view expressed on a historical event or an incident will not accept by scholars if it is, not founded, on critically analyzed sources. The use of historical source material is compulsory in the study of History. Source materials appear in various forms such as written documents,

artefacts, visual evidence etc. and history student should carry out intensive critical and analytical studies on such source materials.

- **to accomplish the ability of all the history graduates to reveal the nature of their discipline, its social rationale, its theoretical strengths and its intellectual standing.** This is possible to achieve through a separate module on historiography or historical methodologies.
- **to introduce the students to varieties available in the discipline of History.** The discipline comprise of many varieties, each with its distinctive focus and theoretical orientation; for instance economic, social, political, cultural, religious, environmental, etc. These varieties of approach should be introduces to students. The aim is to provide a critical awareness that there are many principles of selection and modes of enquiry. Where a module strongly based on one variety, serious comparison must make with the contribution of other historical understanding.
- **to inculcate national feelings and love for national identity among the students.** The aim is to make aware of the existing degenerated situation of Sri Lankan culture, the causes that led to this situation and the remedial measures to be, carried out. The substance of national culture and national identity are to be, found in the historical traditions and hence the discipline of History has the capacity to strengthen the future leaders capable of rectifying the existing situation. The study of History will inculcate national feelings and love for the country that will in turn help to re-build the nation by breathing new life to it.
- **to provide students practical training and analytical skills.** This is possible by assigning the students to complete independent research with appropriate supervision. Research has to be, based on source materials. Use of basic research methodologies train the students not only to critically analyze the sources but also to enhance them with the practical experience of collecting data using the libraries and resorting to fieldwork.
- **to foster and inculcate in students a range of transferable skills that will be useful in employment and daily life in society.** Learning History also will cultivate attitudes and qualities that will stimulate mutual and cordial living in society, and develop ability to contribute in appropriate national development.

3. SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

- The subject of History does not expect to have a core with surrounding options as it is a discipline that engulfs a broad knowledge on human civilization that evolved over a long span of time. The modules have to be prepared in accordance with various types of presentations such as periodization (Ancient, Medieval, Modern) thematic (Economic Political Social etc.) and the different cultures (History of India, History of Great Britain etc.)
- It is essential that the Universities of this country should embark on in-depth study on Sri Lankan History. It is also of utmost importance and hence essential to structure modules to include all the periods and all the themes of Sri Lankan history as well as its current developments to the curriculum of the History degree programmes.
- History discipline includes the development of almost all the disciplines. The students of any other discipline will study only the history of a particular subject while the History students study the origin and development of almost all other disciplines such as Economics Political Science, Technology, Religion, Medicine, Science etc. in order to trace changes and continuity of the evolution of human civilization.

Therefore, multi disciplinary and inter disciplinary approaches are essential to study History, fully and well.

- In order to impart a sound knowledge and understanding of the discipline of History provision should be, made available to study the subject scientifically. The major concepts, principles and theories of Historiography and methodologies of collecting, interpreting and analyzing data have to be acquainted with in order to enable the students to understand, interpret and set the information and data within a theoretical framework with critical analysis.
- To comprehend fully the subject knowledge and understanding, students should be familiar with and be able to interpret terminologies used in the study of History.
- It is very important to make the History students be aware of the contribution of the discipline to the development of knowledge and the improvement of insights, skills, attitudes, aptitudes, competencies etc. Teaching methodologies have to be, designed to communicate this awareness.
- Subject knowledge and understanding should be, delivered in a manner feasible to inculcate abilities, qualifications and attitudes to get engagement in a career acceptable to the academic level of the graduate.
- It is essential that the subject knowledge and understanding imparted among the students should correlate with the current developments of the subject and there by produce graduates suitable to contribute to the current national development programmes.

4. SKILLS AND ATTITUDES

The programmes introduced should be able to foster and develop the following skills and attitudes in the History graduates.

4.1 Subject Specific Skills

- The ability to understand the manner, in which the people lived, acted and thought in different contexts in the past. This ability also will shed light on their influence on the present.
- The skills to read and use texts and other source materials critically
- The ability to appreciate the complexity and diversity of situations, events and mentalities the people have to face.
- The ability to understand the problems inherent to historical records, the existence of a range of different viewpoints and the problems involved in interpreting them.

4.2 Skills of Critical Approach

- Skills to recognize the statements on their own validity, that there are different ways of testing them and that the historians operate by rules of evidence.
- The History graduates should develop the skill of intellectual independence. This involves skills of preparing bibliographies, the ability to gather, sift, select, organise and synthesise large volumes of evidence and the ability to formulate appropriate questions and to provide answers to them using valid and relevant evidence and arguments.

- Skills in written and oral presentations with the ability to marshal appropriate arguments. Such arguments should have a structure and be relevant and concise,

4.3 The Transferable Skills

- Self-determination
- Self-direction
- Independence of mind and initiative
- Ability to work with others and have respect for others' viewpoints
- Ability to gather , organize and deploy evidence, data and interpretation together with familiarity in appropriate means of identifying, finding, retrieving, sorting and exchanging information
- Analytical ability and the capacity to consider and solve problems including the complex ones
- Intellectual integrity and maturity,

4.4 Attitudes

- Punctuality
- Duty consciousness
- Law abidingness
- Love for heritage
- Devotion to preserve national identity
- Public consciousness,
- Critical thinking

5. TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

The primary aim of teaching and learning strategies is to equip the student with the necessary subject knowledge and skills appropriate to their chosen area of work. Therefore the teaching and learning strategies should design to encourage progressive transition from a teacher-centred or dependent learning to learner-centred or independent learning situation so that the students become increasingly responsible for their own learning as the programme advances.

A balanced selection of the following teaching and learning techniques can be, used:

- **Provide the students with documentations for each module explaining the objectives expected to achieve and the means to achieve them.** They should include the aims of the modules, subject contents, bibliography and the method of testing.
- **Lectures with audio visual aids-** Lectures enhanced by these aids provide a broad framework that helps to define the modules. They also introduce students to its main themes, debates and interpretations. Lectures offer direct entry into a range of information and ideas that students may never or rarely be able to gather for themselves. They enable the students to develop their skills in listening and selective notes taking.
- **Writing Tutorials:** The tutorials written by the students on the topics given by the Tutors and presented in front of the Tutor and other students provide opportunities to

embark on free discussion. This exercise can be considered as the best way of giving a basic training for university students to inculcate in them the qualities of organization, planning, writing, logical presentation, discussions with logical arguments, tolerance, independent study using sources etc. Therefore practising the method of writing tutorials as one of teaching and learning strategies during the whole of undergraduate period is of utmost importance in the process of History programmes.

- **Provide the students with regular and formal opportunities to maintain contacts with tutors and other students.** These engagements are useful to broaden their research activities, develop their skills of communication and expression. They also will inculcate the qualities of self-discipline that are necessary for the successful pursuit of the discipline.
- **Engagement in Seminars and group work;** At these sessions, students should be encouraged to participate in presentations, discussions and group work. These group works help the students to improve communicative skills and understanding in depth the theme or the subject rather than acquiring superficial subject knowledge. They also encourage a critical and self-critical but tolerant approach to discussion and build students' self-confidence. These engagements are useful to improve their abilities to command historical evidence and meet the arguments as well as to present ideas quickly and instantly. The students will learn to communicate with others safely and identify the value of group work.
- **Opportunities to work independently;** the tutors should encourage the students to use the library facilities. It is essential for History students to spend more time working independently because it is largely a texts based discipline and hence need reading widely, rapidly and critically. This strategy further helps the students to take down relevant and useful notes, digest arguments and synthesise information quickly and intelligently.
- **Wide range of assignments;** They can include seminar and group presentations, reports on different topics, essays of varying lengths, project reports, bibliographies, book reviews, etc. Guidance on preparing the assignments and their usefulness to reach the required standard at the assessment stage should explain by the tutors to the students.
- **Site visits.** When studying Sri Lankan History the need to visit the sites would be of utmost importance since the students will be able to acquire first hand knowledge of what they learn in the classroom or from books. Furthermore seeing them live will help them to understand them better and will inspire them to come out with new interpretations as well. This in turn will provide them with a new inspiration to inculcate love for their long historical heritage.
- **Distance learning approaches and the access to modern technological innovations.** In this world dominated by modern methods of teaching and learning strategies it is inconceivable to think of teaching and learning processes divorced of them at any level of education. Hence, it is, anticipated, that much emphasis would be, laid to the possibility of introducing the students to these modern techniques such as print materials, videos, broadcasting, internet facilities etc. wherever possible and appropriate.
- **The need to provide the students with critical and constructive comments on their own progress:** There should be an adequate discussion of and response to a student's individual works. It is essential that the tutor should give the students in writing a specific time and date in the week to meet him/her. It is useful for academic consultation, individual encounters with the tutors, feedback on written work that

helps the student to clarify areas of confusion and gain a better understanding of their performance. It will lead to much useful self-confidence.

- **The medium of Instruction:** It is essential that the medium of instruction is best suited to the ability of the students. They should be able to read, understand, write, and express ideas fluently to achieve best results of their efforts. Any other medium not conversant to them if introduced will definitely obstruct their studies and as a result, the standard of the degree awarded, and the established prestige of the national education will deteriorate.
- **External Exposures:** Some History programmes incorporate the methodologies of other disciplines of humanities and social Sciences. History programmes should make provisions for the use of IT, Archaeological and Archival Studies or skills associated with the study of other disciplines that history has a close link.
- Importance of the overseas exchange or study abroad programmes to enrich students' intellectual and personal development need deep attention in improving the skills of the Graduates.

6. ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

Assessment strategies are integral to teaching and learning. Diversity in assessment is vital because the full range of a student's abilities is most unlikely to be, revealed through any single method. Assessment strategies should be, designed to match the intended learning outcomes. They should aim to test subject knowledge, skills acquired and the sort of information provided about the candidate that will be useful to employers. Some of the following popular assessment methods can be, selected.

- Formal written examinations,
- Independent research Reports,
- Continuous assessments,
- Module work assessments,
- Tutorials/ term papers,
- Group Reports,
- Field Survey Reports,
- Essays/Dissertations,
- Written Work such as Book Reviews, Problem Analysis, Field Notes etc.
- Case Studies,

7. MAINTAINING STANDARDS

The maintenance of standards is vital to university education for the confidence of the degrees awarded by the University depends on the quality and the standards of the awards. Several strategies can be, used to safeguard and maintain the standards. They include the following.

- Using a medium of instruction conversant to students is essential to maintain the quality of the degree.
- The quality of assessment is decisive for the maintenance of the standard of the degrees awarded and hence involvement of experienced examiners is of great value. (Professors on the subject, Senior lecturers who have specialised on specific areas, Retired Professors etc.)

- Two independent examiners are to be, used to mark the answer scripts and one of them specially to be an external examiner
- Peer evaluation on setting and moderating the question papers to be, done by either a board or two examiners including one external examiner.

8. STUDENTS ATTAINMENT AND BENCHMARK LEVEL (STANDARD)

The benchmark levels described below apply

- I to a B.A General Degree which includes History as a subject,
- II to a B.A general Degree with a class and a B.A special Degree with a Second Class lower Division or a General Pass,
- III to a B.A Special Degree (Honours) with a First Class or a Second Class Upper Division,

B.A General Degree with History as a Subject

Threshold level- A Graduate should:

- demonstrate basic knowledge on human civilization,
- demonstrate basic understanding on the main features of several different cultures,
- demonstrate extended knowledge and understanding on the specific themes/periods\areas selected and studied by the student,
- display basic knowledge on the sources related to the study of History,
- display basic skills and attitudes expected from a History Graduate.
- display the abilities to contribute to national development,

B.A General Degree with History as a subject and a pass with a Class, B.A Special Degree with a Second Class Lower Division/ General pass,

A good History Graduate should:

- demonstrate good knowledge on human civilization,
- demonstrate understanding on the main features and differences of various cultures studied by the student,
- demonstrate extended knowledge and understanding on the specific themes/periods\areas selected and studied by the student,
- display knowledge on the variety of the sources and their use in the study of History,
- demonstrate the subject and transferable skills and attitudes expected from a History Graduate,
- demonstrate the ability to study independently by using research methodology,
- display the proficiency to use modern techniques in the study of History,
- display the abilities to contribute to national development,

B.A Special Degree with a First Class or a Second Class Upper Division (with Honours)

- demonstrate in depth knowledge on human civilization developed for a long span of time,
- demonstrate in depth understanding on the main features and differences of various cultures studied by the student and their interaction,

- demonstrate broad and extensive knowledge and understanding on the specific themes\periods\areas selected and studied by the student,
- display
- knowledge and proficiency on the variety of sources and their use in the study of History,
- demonstrate the subject and transferable skills and attitudes expected from a History Graduate,
- demonstrate in depth understanding on Historiography,
- demonstrate the ability to engage in research studies, writing reports, synthesis and presentation, by using sources and research methodology,
- demonstrate acquaintance with the problems of modern world related to human civilization,
- display the capacity to see through any problem to bring out its salient points through the skills inculcated by in depth study of the discipline of history,
- display the proficiency to use modern techniques in the study of History,
- demonstrate the abilities to contribute to national development,

9. ANNEX1. MEMBERS OF THE BENCHMARK GROUP

Prof. Malani Endagama	University of Sri Jayewardenepura
Dr. A. H. M. H. Abayarathna	University of Kelaniya
Prof. W. I. Siriweera	University of Peradeniya
Prof. P. V. B. Karunathilake	University of Peradeniya
Dr. N. R. Dewasiri	University of Colombo