



**SUBJECT BENCHMARK STATEMENT  
IN  
ACCOUNTING**

**Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council  
University Grants Commission  
Sri Lanka**

**January 2010**



## CONTENTS

	<b>Page No.</b>
Foreword	III
1 Introduction	1
1.1 The Concept of Benchmarking	1
2 Degree Programme Covered by this Statement	1
3 Nature and the Extent of the Subject	2
4 Aims and Objectives of the Subject	2
5 Student Skills, Abilities and Attributes	3
5.1 Subject Specific Knowledge and Skills	3
5.2 Cognitive abilities and related general skills	4
5.3 Attitudes	4
6 Teaching, Learning and Assessment Process	5
7 Performance Standards	5
8 Annexes	6

## 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**

## **ACCOUNTING**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1. The Concept of Benchmarking**

- Benchmarking is defined as "the process of identifying and learning from best practices anywhere in the world"(Allan, 1997).
- Benchmarking of academic standards is an essential component of quality assurance in the University system. Subject benchmark statements provide the means for the academic community to describe the nature and characteristics, general expectations, general guidance for articulating the learning outcomes and guidance for quality assurance of programmes in a specific subject.
- Subject benchmarking is a policy device aimed at improving the capacity of subject communities to regulate their academic standards. It achieves this by creating subject-based information that can be used by teaching teams as a prompt for self-critical reflection and further development. It provides a set of reference points to show how the key features of a programme, its intended learning outcomes and the standards that derive from these intended outcomes, relate to what is deemed appropriate by the subject community (Jackson, 2000).
- The purposes of benchmark statement are to provide:
  - an external point of reference for institutions when designing or approving programmes of study;
  - a means for external examiners and reviewers to verify and compare standards;and
  - information for stakeholders.

### **2. DEGREE PROGRAMMES COVERED BY THIS STATEMENT**

This statement is intended to cover programmes of study in accounting at national universities in Sri Lanka leading to the award of four year special study programmes in which accounting is taught as the major or core subject area. Accordingly, degree programmes in the subject usually have titles such as Accountancy, Accounting, Accounting and Finance, Accounting and Financial Management.

### **3. NATURE AND THE EXTENT OF THE SUBJECT**

1. The basic purpose of accounting is to provide trusted relevant information to management of organizations, investors, creditors, government, and the general public. Accounting is an indispensable part of running a business and can be crucial to individuals with complex financial situations as well. This being so, Accountants participate in planning, analyzing, and steering the activities of a firm provide planning, management and security to an individual's finances; and collect revenue and prepare statistics for government. Hence the study of accounting involves the consideration of both theoretical and practical aspects in accounting.
2. Accountancy has continuously been a popular subject discipline in the Commerce stream in Advanced level examination and in the higher education in Sri Lanka. It has to be admitted that the Accountancy degree programme is also highly competitive in the university system in Sri Lanka.

Accounting degrees are designed to prepare students for employment as executives in the corporate and public sectors and in global markets, and to obtain professional qualifications in parallel with degree programmes. They also prepare students to proceed to postgraduate studies.

Given this variety of reasons it is to be expected the degree programmes in the subject will have a range of aims.

### **4. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SUBJECT**

The objective of the subject is to produce high quality graduates with the appropriate knowledge, skills, and abilities to enable them to make a meaningful contribution to the management of purposeful organizations at national and international level by complying with the highest academic standards. In this context, the overall aims of the subject are:

- to provide in-depth knowledge and understanding in theory and practice of Accountancy & Finance;
- to facilitate the acquisition of skills-based techniques and problem-solving capacities;
- to outline the intellectual understanding about accounting discipline and other related areas;
- to describe the activities which are usually assumed to take place in real practice;
- to enable students to develop a theoretical understanding to explain as to why these practices have emerged and how they function in the corporate world; .
- to enable students to develop the ability to communicate orally and written form opinions related to theory and practice of Accounting discipline;

- to encourage students to adopt international perspectives and new developments into the curricular by taking into account the existing domestic environment related to Accountancy;
- to provide new perspectives on Accountancy studies, focusing on meeting the new educational horizons;
- to introduce both general skills of management and finance and administrative skills geared towards professionalism within the context of Accounting environment;
- to professionalize the degree holders;
- to provide opportunities for students to develop the skills and enthusiasm required for lifelong learning;
- to provide continuous support by teaching staff to students for their career development;
- to facilitate the effective organization of teaching, learning, assessment and quality assurance;
- to enable students to develop important skills pertaining to Information Technology and their applications in Accounting; and
- to enable students to develop effective communication skills and English speaking skills to meet the needs of contemporary business environment and globalization issues.

## **5. STUDENTS SKILLS ABILITIES AND ATTRIBUTES**

On successful completion of the programme, students should have obtained the following two sets of specific skills:

### ***5.1. Subject Specific Knowledge and Skills***

Accounting specific knowledge and skills covers the following areas such as, financial accounting, cost and management accounting, auditing, taxation and financial management.

- a. An understanding of some of the contexts in which Accounting can be seen as operating. For example political, economical, social, technological and legal environment.
- b. Knowledge and understanding of the main current technical language and practices of accounting. For example recognition, measurement and disclosure in financial statements.
- c. Knowledge and understanding of some of the alternative technical languages and practices of Accounting. For example alternative recognition rules, valuation bases, alternative managerial accounting approaches to control and decision making.

- d. A conceptual and theoretical knowledge of accounting.
- e. The knowledge and skills in acquiring, analyzing, and communicating accounting and accounting related information in computerized environment. For example use of computer accounting packages, spreadsheets, database management, internet and websites relevant to information technology.
- f. Skills in observing, recording and summarizing economic activities and events, preparation of financial statements, analysis of operations of business (for example, decision analysis, performance measurement and management control), financial analysis and projections (for example, analysis of financial ratios, discounted cash flow analysis, budgeting, financial risks);
- g. Knowledge and understanding of contemporary theories and empirical evidence concerning Accounting in at least one of its contexts and the ability to critically evaluate such theories and evidence;

### ***5.2 Cognitive abilities and Related General Skills***

In addition to the subject specific knowledge and skills, a student should have acquired the following varieties of exposures:

- a. a capacity for the critical evaluation of arguments and evidence
- b. an ability to analyze and draw reasoned conclusions concerning structured and, to a more limited extent, unstructured problems for a given set of data and from data which must be acquired by the student;
- c. ability to locate extract and analyze data from multiple sources including the acknowledgement and referencing of sources;
- d. capacities for independent and self-managed learning;
- e. numeric skills, including the ability to manipulate financial and other numerical data and to appreciate statistical concepts at an appropriate level;
- f. skills in the use of communications and information technology in acquiring, analyzing and communicating information;
- g. communication skills including the ability to present quantitative and qualitative information together with analysis, argument and commentary, in a form appropriate to the Intended audience;
- h. ability to work in groups and other interpersonal skills, including oral as well as written presentation skills.

### ***5.3. Attitudes***

Furthermore students should have acquired the following exposures.

- a. proactive approach
- b. ethical practices

## **6. TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

1. It is the responsibility of each university offering a degree programme in accounting to select a set of teaching, learning and assessment activities that is appropriate for meeting the aims and desired outcomes of the programme. Whatever set of activities is determined, a university should be able to demonstrate how these activities enable students to achieve the subject specific knowledge and skills and the cognitive abilities and related subject specific skills.
2. The knowledge, understanding and skills are acquired through a combination of lectures, assignments, practical training, tutorials, workshops, seminars, discussions, audio visual presentations, debates study tours, field works, and self studies throughout the programme.
3. Students' skills, abilities and attributes are assessed through a mixture of individual reports, essays, overall presentations, quizzes, mid semester examinations, end semester examinations, laboratory works and interviews.
4. The curriculum of degree programmes covered in this statement should embrace a significant training component. This training component covers Accounting and Finance, Auditing, Taxation, Legal environment of business, etc. The training valid for the evaluation of achievements or the outcome of the degree programme should include recognized audit firms and commercial establishments.

## **7. PERFORMANCE STANDARDS**

1. This provides minimum standards of achievement that warrant the award of a degree. Performance standards are at two levels, classified as optimal and threshold levels. This classification is made using the depth of understanding the breadth of knowledge and level of other essential skills.
2. Graduates in accountancy programmes with a first class or a second class upper division are required to achieve the optimal level performance.
3. Optimal level graduates can be distinguished from threshold graduates by displaying a more thorough knowledge and by demonstrating enhanced capacity to develop and apply critical, analytical and problem solving abilities and skills.
4. Threshold level graduates will demonstrate a basic knowledge and understanding in the subject.

## 8. ANNEXES

### Annex 1. Membership of the Accountancy Benchmark Group

Prof. M W Wickramarachchi (Chair)	University of Sri Jayewardenepura
Mr. Hilary E. Silva	University of Sri Jayewardenepura
Mr. A.S.P.G. Manawaduge	University of Sri Jayewardenepura
Dr. W.G.S. Kelum	University of Sri Jayewardenepura
Mr. K.B.M. Fonseka	University of Sri Jayewardenepura
Mrs. N. Abeydeera	University of Sri Jayewardenepura
Mr. M.S.J.S.K.D. Fernando	University of Sri Jayewardenepura
Prof. (Ms.) D.S.N.P. Senarathne	University of Sri Jayewardenepura
Dr. P.M.C. Thilakemthne (Co-Chair)	University of Kelaniya
Mr. J.M.D. Ariyaratne (Rapporteur)	University of Kelaniya
Dr. R.P.C. Ranjani	University of Kelaniya
Mr. K.K.Thilakasiri	University of Kelaniya
Mr. W.V.A.D. Karnarathne	University of Kelaniya
Mrs. Amila Munasinghe	University of Kelaniya
Mrs D.K.Y. Aheywardena	University of Kelaniya

## **Annex 2.**

The following documents were consulted by the group in drawing up this benchmark statement.

Allan S. (1997), "Partners benchmarking:

[http://www.benchmarking.co.uk/bmark.htm#partners.](http://www.benchmarking.co.uk/bmark.htm#partners)

Subject Benchmark Statement in Accounting, The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, UK, 2000.

Funded by



World Bank Project

Edited and Printed by

Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council

65/4, Kirula Road, Colombo 5, Sri Lanka

Tel: +94-11-2368794; Fax: +94-11-2368621

E mail: [colinpeiris@qaacouncil.lk](mailto:colinpeiris@qaacouncil.lk)

Website: [www.qaacouncil.lk](http://www.qaacouncil.lk)