



**SUBJECT BENCHMARK STATEMENT
IN
ENGLISH**

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

December 2010



CONTENT

Page No

Foreword	III
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Subject Benchmark Statement – Scope and Purposed	1
1.2 Nature and Extent of the Subject	2
2 Subject Aims	1
3 Subject Knowledge and Understanding	2
4 Skills and Attitudes	3
4.1 Generic Skills	3
4.2 Subject Specific Skills	3
4.3 Attitudes	4
5 Teaching and Learning Strategies	4
6 Assessment Strategies	4
7 Maintaining Standards	5
8 Student Attainment and Benchmarking Level (Standard)	5
9 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

ENGLISH

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Subject Benchmark Statement-Scope and Purposes

Regarded as an essential component of Quality Assurance, Benchmarking of academic standards in the University System was initiated by the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Directors (CVCD) and the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council (QAAC) of the University Grants Commission, Sri Lanka. While describing the nature and characteristics of Degree Programmes in specific subjects, Benchmark Statements provide guidance to all stakeholders of such programmes on the standards expected to be achieved at their successful completion.

A Benchmark Statement of an academic subject provides a set of reference points to show how the key features of a programme, its intended learning outcomes and the standards that derive these outcomes relate to what is considered appropriate by the subject community. Further, it could be regarded as a policy device, aimed at improving the capacity of subject communities to regulate their academic standards, enabling self-critical reflection and further improvement.

1.2 Nature and Extent of the Subject

The term 'English' as applicable to this document should be interpreted as one that relates to the broader concerns of the subject which involve the study of the English Language, New Varieties of English (NVE) and Literatures in English drawn from all parts of the world. Its intersection with the related disciplines-drama and theatre, cultural studies, communication media, the visual realm, General Linguistics, Applied Linguistics, Psycholinguistics, Sociolinguistics, translation studies etc. is also incorporated into this term as applied here.

The study of English, as envisaged at present, involves linguistic, literary and socio-political concerns, spanning physical/psychological territory extending beyond and comingling with the colonial and postcolonial responses to what was originally known as a language synonymous with Britain. Thus, the levels of achievement articulated within this document shall address these contemporary concerns and expectations related to the extended parameters of the subject.

This Benchmark Statement is applicable to academic programmes of English at the undergraduate level. Universities in Sri Lanka offer two categories of such programmes, namely the Special Degree Programmes in English and General Degree Programmes with English offered as a subject.

2. SUBJECT AIMS

The main aims of the subject English, as applicable to the language and/or literature-based degree programmes currently offered by the Sri Lankan Universities may be termed as those seeking to enable students to

- express themselves with competence, clarity and coherence via the four language-related skills-listening ,speaking, reading and writing.
- distinguish with discernment between the main and sub genres of literary creations.
- offer sophisticated and problematized responses to literary and non-literary texts in English.
- locate texts in their historical and contemporary contexts, engage in cross-referencing through independent critical thinking.
- offer sensitive, logical, versatile responses to human issues reflected in language and literature.
- develop sensitivity towards alternative cultures and traditions reflected through literature.
- fine-tune senses to the aesthetic aspects and excellence of literatures in English.
- develop subject-specific and generic/transferable skills which shall be of benefit in the world of work.
- develop intellectual capacity and pedagogical skills that shall convey the richness and the resources of the subject to future learners and other stakeholders in higher learning.
- provide entry/foundation for multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research and develop quantitative and qualitative research skills.
- foster positive attitudes towards the socio-cultural implications of the subject and recognize its capacity for national/social development and the creation of harmony in hybrid/ pluralistic contexts.

3. EXPECTED SUBJECT-SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE

The aims envisaged shall be seen in relation to the following areas of subject-specific achievement the graduates in English are expected to gain during their respective programmes of study:

- a thorough grasp of the structure of the English language with the ability to distinguish between the varied segments and terminology applicable.
- a comprehensive understanding of the history and development of the English language.
- sophisticated understanding of a wide variety of authors and texts, representative of the canon as well as other literary traditions.
- Intellectual capacity to respond to the complexity of literary traditions/counter-traditions.
- capacity for sensitive assessment of the aesthetic and imaginative aspects of literary works studied.
- sophisticated understanding of non-literary work in diverse fields, theoretical movements and interdisciplinary work.
- a solid grounding in the use of literary and linguistic theory (as applicable to General Linguistics, Applied Linguistics, Psycholinguistics, Sociolinguistics) and thoroughness in the use of critical terminology as applicable to literary genres, texts, contexts and periods of study.
- responsiveness to research on language and literature which enhances the classroom experience while opening up further avenues of inquiry into the areas mastered.
- ability to process bibliographic information as applicable to the study of language/literature and alertness to the accuracy, structure and quality presentation of academic writing.

4. EXPECTED SKILLS AND ATTITUDES

A range of skills and attitudes are expected of graduates in English and these can be classified in the following manner:

4.1 Generic Skills

- develop capacity for critical thinking and applying such in wider contexts and the world of work.
- ability for self-reflection and maturity for reaching sound judgements in a responsible manner.
- problem solving skills as applicable to a variety of contexts and analytical power to reach individual as well as collective conclusions.
- develop communication skills (including skills related to e-learning) which enable competent expression in oral and written communication with a high degree of accuracy and coherence.
- thoroughness in the technicalities and presentation of prose related to specific assignments/report-writing.
- ability to employ current research methods in quantitative and qualitative analysis in diverse studies, along with thoroughness in the use of terminology applicable to research.
- develop IT skills which lead to competence in information processing, retrieval and dissemination, particularly as applicable to e-learning.
- develop organizational skills which involve healthy exchange of ideas and information, leading to collective effort/achievement.
- reach excellence in interpersonal skills necessary in sensitive, intelligent and elegant networking among diverse individuals and groups.

4.2 Subject-specific Skills

- achieve mastery in the use of the four language-related skills- listening, speaking, reading and writing, as applicable to the English language.
- ability to clearly distinguish between the main and sub-genres of the literatures in English in relation to location in literary history and content.
- ability to interpret with subtle discrimination the connotations, denotations and nuances contained in literary works.
- develop awareness of location, depth and application of research on English language and literature accessible through print and electronic retrieval systems.
- skilled use and recording of bibliographic information as applicable to the study of humanities.
- develop receptivity towards the complex interconnection between language and culture.
- develop capacity for problematizing issues and concerns reflected through literature in relation to interaction with the wider society in a variety of contexts.
- versatility in the dissemination of information via English, for the greater good of the populace in multicultural contexts.

4.3 Attitudes

- develop proactive approaches in all areas of the use of the English language as a mode of communication, intellectual and aesthetic expression.
- follow the highest ethical standards as applicable to intellectual property in retrieving, producing, recording and dissemination of information via English.
- develop ability for subtle discrimination between the connotations, denotations, nuances and tones of language as may be applicable to cultures and sub-cultures, so as to avoid any offence in communication towards the sensibilities and susceptibilities of communities and to avoid social faux pas.
- develop awareness that though the English language may be interpreted/used as a source of power of international dimensions, this should never be construed as a device of undue exploitation of individuals/groups.

5. TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

- At the commencement of any tertiary-level programme in English studies, the course objectives and the required standards of language use should be made explicitly clear to students, bearing in mind that for the majority of Sri Lankan students English is a Second Language. Selection tests as well as grading criteria may be administered for the purpose where relevant.
- In conventional as well as non-conventional forms of delivery, constructive alignment of curriculum objectives, teaching methodology and forms of assessment should be envisaged and practiced at all times, so as to ensure the successful conveyance of structural and intellectual content of the study of English to the student.
- Following student-centred approaches in the classroom and allied activities to further the students' grasp/mastery of English should be encouraged.
- It is appropriate that a variety of methods be used, particularly in view of the course units system followed by the Faculties of Arts/Humanities, to ensure effective and interesting interaction between the teacher and the student, bringing out the best in the study of English. Apart from the use of the conventional ex-cathedra approach and the printed text, other devices such as the seminar, role-play, project-work, web-review, e-learning, research and peer-teaching may be drawn in to enrich the delivery of course content.
- Wherever possible, classroom activity in relation to the study of English should be made replicable with regard to the career aspirations and the aspired world of work of students and other stakeholders.
- Teaching and learning English may usefully involve the development of transferable skills in undergraduates to gear them better towards future careers.

6. ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

- formative as well as summative assessment mechanisms should be used for both in-course and end-course evaluation.
- obtaining student feedback midcourse/end-course as a form of teacher-assessment is considered progressive and useful.

- a variety of assessment techniques may be used, particularly as applicable to the study of literature/language:
 - long essay
 - seminar presentations
 - open book tests
 - review of websites
 - peer assessment
 - designing posters
 - role-play
 - project-work
 - field research
 - dissertation
 - internship

7. MAINTAINING STANDARDS

- The following mechanisms may be used in the maintenance of standards applicable to the programmes of study in English at undergraduate level:
 - obtaining external expertise and stakeholder participation in curriculum development
 - obtaining the services of External Examiners
 - enabling exposure to periodic Subject Reviews

8. STUDENTS ATTAINMENT AND BENCHMARK LEVEL (STANDARD)

(a) Threshold Level

The following criteria illustrate the minimum requirements for a student to qualify as a Graduate in English:

- possess an understanding of and competence in the use of the structure of the English language.
- ability to communicate coherently via oral and written expression as a competent user of the English language.
- exposure to a variety of authors and works, representative of different genres and periods and possess an understanding of their contribution to English literature.
- ability to apprise the interests and concerns of literary and non-literary texts through active learning.
- display the ability to appreciate literary works with an aesthetic sense and analyse merits and demerits of such works through comparison.
- engage in criticism with an understanding of literary and linguistic theory and cultivate capacity to view the content of works studied in relation to these.
- capacity and willingness to disseminate knowledge of language and literature through a variety of means in an enthusiastic, responsible manner.

(b) Good Level

The following criteria illustrate the level of excellence expected from a typical Graduate in English:

- display a high level of competence in understanding and use of the structure of the English language.
- ability to communicate fluently through oral and written expression and carry sophisticated rhetorical skills as a versatile user of the English language.
- carry a through grasp of a variety of authors and works, representative of different genres and periods, and the ability to successfully analyse their contribution to English literature and wider society.
- display the ability to evaluate literary works with powers of subtle discrimination and aesthetic sense and analyse merits and demerits of such works through comparison across varied times and locations.
- ability to conceptualize along the broader concerns of literary and non-literary texts through active learning.
- ability to reflect on sociocultural aspects and implications of literary works and to engage in textual analysis that shall enhance receptivity to social movements as located in time.
- capacity to engage in criticism with a through understanding of literary and linguistic theory and willingness to problematize issues and concerns along the content of works studied, with positive responses to alternative views/traditions.
- carry capacity to hypothesize with reference to the content of literary/non-literary texts and allied reading.
- possess maturity and competence to engage in quantitative and qualitative analysis independently in language/literature based research.
- competence and willingness to effectively disseminate language and literature based knowledge through a variety of means, with a vision for social development.

9. ANNEX1. MEMBERSHIP OF THE BENCHMARK GROUP

Mr. J. K. C. Dissanayake	Sabaragamuwa University of SL
Prof. R. Raheem	Open University of Sri Lanka
Prof. Manique Gunasekera	University of Kelaniya
Mr. Rohan Abeywickrama	Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka
Mr. S. Sunthareswaran	University of Jaffna
Ms. Eisha Hewabowela	University of Kelaniya
Dr. Maithree Wickramasingh	University of Kelaniya