
External Peer Review Report

Department of Law and Human Rights

University of Asia Pacific

18-20 December 2017

1. Introduction

Quality assurance and continuous improvement in academic programs are very critical to meet the changing needs of the community and society. Self-assessment is the indispensable first step towards quality assurance in education. Recognizing this fact and with the aim of further improvement its academic programs, Department of Law and Human Rights (hereinafter the Department) of University of Asia Pacific (hereinafter the University) completed a self-assessment exercise and organised an external peer review which includes a site visit in December 2017.

The general goals of this exercise were to review and assess the overall arrangements and learning experience of students in the Department in specific and the University in general. This Self-Assessment Report (SAR) is prepared incorporating the concerns of major stakeholders in respect of the quality assurance areas under the guidelines of University Grants Commission of Bangladesh. The audit of the Department was carried out from 18 – 20 December 2017.

The audit panel expresses its appreciation to the University Leadership, Head of the Department, Head of Self-Assessment Committee (SAC), Director and Additional Directors of IQAC, faculty, students, alumni and employers for their cooperation and support provided prior to and during the audit visit. In general the audit proceeded relatively well and the support and commitment of all the staff to the success of the audit is commendable. The panel had the impression that the Department considered audit as an important quality improvement activity and with IQAC, who supported the audit process to ensure a smooth and effective audit.

2. The Department of Law and Human Rights

The Department was established in 2005 with the view to meet the demand for legal education in Bangladesh. Since its incorporation, it offers two programs; the LL.B (Hons) and LL.M (Regular). The overarching vision of the Department is to develop graduates for legal practice and related areas. The current student enrolment is 319 and the total alumni stands at 925 of which 597 are from the undergraduate level and 328 from postgraduate level. The number of teachers is 23 of which 11 are full time and 12 are part time. The Department is supported by 5 non-academic support staff.

3. Panel of Peer Reviewers

The external peer review team (EPRT) comprises of a subject specialist, a local and an international QA specialist. The following are the auditors who functioned as the External Peer Review Team (EPRT) auditors:

(1) Quazi Mahfujul Hoque Supan

Associate Professor

Department of Law

University of Dhaka

(2) Muhammad Mahbubur Rahman (Secretary)

Associate Professor

Department of Law

University of Dhaka

(3) Rozilini M Fernandez-Chung (Chair)

Associate Professor

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus

4. Scope of the Audit

The audit shadows the national requirement as provided in the Self-Assessment Manual (SA Manual) and in accordance to the requirements established by the University Grants Commission of Bangladesh. It covered the following areas, (a) Governance, (b) Curriculum Content, Design and Review, (c) Student Admission, Progress and Achievements, (d) Physical Facilities, (e) Teaching-Learning and Assessment, (f) Student Support Services, (g) Staff and Facilities, (h) Research and Extension, (i) Process Management and Continuous Improvement. The exercise is supported by the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) prepared by the Faculty and an *in situ* audit visit. The on-site audit visit included documentary and systems review, discussions with relevant internal and external stakeholders and university, faculty, and leadership, classroom observation, facilities and resource audits etc.

This report is prepared with the view to support the QA activities in the UAP. It is prepared in the spirit that the university is a nucleus and the vital link between the government, community and industry needs. The Department is encouraged to develop and implement strategies for better collaboration with all three sectors (government, community and industry) to achieve the overall vision and mission of the university and the nation.

The audit methodology adopted for this exercise is appropriate. The use of stakeholder consultations, surveys, interviews in the form of focus group discussions and the analysis of the findings informed the reports. The Department should in the next SAR use more documented evidence and analysis of the same. Information such as student intake and entry level qualification, progression (including exam results analysis), graduate tracer study would have provided excellent snapshots of the Department achieving its vision and that of the University.

5. Audit Outcomes

To ensure academic quality is maintained, the audit reviewed specific documents on governance, staff and students, resources, quality management system, program and graduate recognition. These were verified against the information provided by the Faculty in its Self-Assessment Report including findings of five Stakeholder Surveys.

The following sections contain the findings from the review of the documents, site audit and general observations. The findings highlight specific areas for consideration by the Faculty of Fisheries under the following descriptors:

Commendation	Something that the Department is doing well and should be recognized for.
Affirmation	Something that the Department has started or aspires to achieve that is positive and that the panel encourage should be developed and enhanced.
Recommendation	Something that the Department should give serious consideration to as this highlights a weakness or an opportunity for improvement.

6. Main Findings

6.1. Criteria 1: Governance

6.1.1. Commendation

- (a) UAP operates from a 280,000 sqf, 10-storey purpose built campus in Dhaka.
- (b) There is a clear structure of governance which is in accordance to the national private higher education legislations.

- (c) There is clear ethos of continuous quality improvement in governance with the evidence of reviewing and re-organizing the organogram and in particular the expansion of the role of the Directorate of Students' Welfare.
- (d) The Department has a lean and operational structure sufficient to support quality and good student experience.
- (e) The commitment of University leadership toward quality education and access is clearly demonstrated by their general approach in organizing the institution.
- (f) Program Handbook containing vital information to support student experience is available and the auditors were informed that a new updated version is being published.
- (g) The organization is at the healthy level with lean operations and having 1/3 of its full time staff from the support and admin category while 2/3 are academics. This is in line with international best practices for a university.

6.1.2. Affirmation

- (a) The Distinguish Law Lecturer Series is designed to bring in eminent speakers from the local legal fraternity. Thus it will better reflect the overall philosophy of this lecture series to be renamed as the invitees go beyond lecturers.

6.1.3. Recommendations

- (a) The current name "Department of Law and Human Rights" should be reviewed. While Law may stand on its own as a body of study/scholarship, Human Rights is the right of a human person rather than a body of knowledge.

- (b) The University should consider establishing an advisory board for academic and strategic matters consisting of international and national educational experts/strategist. This will help the university better strategize particularly if moving into internationalization of their qualification and recognition of their graduates beyond Bangladesh.
- (c) Convocation should be held on an annual basis.

6.2. Criteria 2: Curriculum Content, Design and Review

6.2.1. Commendation

- (a) A new curriculum which incorporates general courses, in line with good global practices, is just rolled out to support development of quality graduates.

6.2.2. Affirmation

- (a) There are sufficient information to corroborate the incorporation of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities such as moots, debates, study tour and cultural programs at the Department. However, documents were not cited to show how this supports an outcome based education system.

6.2.3. Recommendation

- (a) The Department should consider the formalization of open book examination as one of the means to develop critical thinking among its students.
- (b) The balance between practice and theory should be reviewed to enable graduates to be better prepared for professional practice.
- (c) Students should be acclimatized to court and official forms, templates and structure so as to better prepare them for professional practice.

- (d) The curriculum should place greater emphasis on soft skills development, such as the skills of learning to learn, writing official letters and emails and communication.
- (e) Book references in the course outlines are bit dated. Moreover, there is lack of reference to materials on domestic jurisdiction. For example, the sample course outline for Law of Evidence incorporated in the SAR refers to only two books: one published from India and one from Bangladesh and that too was published in 1995. Given the fact that the law of evidence in India has undergone massive changes since 1872, heavy reliance on Indian books may be less effective for student learning purposes.
- (f) Student experience can be enhanced by having more practice based learning. One plausible way is to promote the concept of Student Law Office in the Department.
- (g) The curriculum for LLB (Honours) requires a real revisit. The following issues may be considered:
 - i. The curriculum puts too much emphasis on non-legal courses (at least 27 credits). This can be reconsidered to accommodate more legal courses.
 - ii. The curriculum puts less emphasis on procedural laws. This should be reconsidered. Some practice-oriented courses (e.g., Law of Civil Procedure, Law of Criminal Procedure) should be taught over a period of two semesters.
 - iii. More weightage may be given on Land Law, Law of Evidence, and Criminal Law.
 - iv. Some courses (for example: International Trade Law, Gender and Development, Comparative Law of Succession, Comparative Constitutional Law, Human

Rights and Humanitarian Law, Administrative Law, Immigration and Refugee Law, Medical and Drug Law) may be relocated at Masters Level,.

- v. The curriculum should include elective courses.
 - vi. The Department may consider introducing internship as a mandatory component of the curriculum.
 - vii. Clinical legal education may be introduced as a mandatory component of the curriculum.
 - viii. The contents of the course titled 'Conveyancing, Drafting and Professional Ethics' (LAW 463) should include corporate and other forms of drafting.
 - ix. The contents of the course titled 'Comparative Constitutional Law' (LAW 211) should be thoroughly revised. Instead of focusing on constitutional laws of four different countries, the course should focus on thematic areas for a comparative study.
 - x. The contents of the course titled 'Media Law and Cyber Law' (LAW 306) should include (i) digital evidence in Bangladesh, and (ii) digital signature in Bangladesh.
- (h) More practitioners should be engaged as faculties for procedural law courses.

6.3. Criteria 3: Student Admission, Progress and Achievements

6.3.1. Commendation

- (a) The use of entrance test, apart from meeting UGC requirement on student entry, is commendable. Both students and lecturers indicated that this is supportive of the quality mission of the Department.

- (b) The use of fee waiver both on means and merit tests affirms the university's mission to provide access and achieve quality graduates respectively and is highly commendable.
- (c) There is evidence of a working academic support system for the students in the Department.
- (d) Quality of learning outcomes is generally good.

6.3.2. Affirmation

- (a) The Department had introduced a course file mechanism. However, this must be regularly monitored by the Head or his/her representatives to ensure information contained are sufficient and according to the checklist provided at the beginning of the file. Improvement can be made to:
 - i. Consistency/order of materials, for example some files did not have attendance register, others had no learning outcome or some had no reference materials.
 - ii. Proper referring techniques. Faculty must be trained to do this correctly;
 - iii. Faculty must be trained in writing aims and course synopsis;
 - iv. Semester synopsis, containing of highlights such as visits, overall student achievements, and attendance should be provided at the end of the term and a copy should be kept on the first page of the file.

6.3.3. Recommendation

- (a) The Department should have a clear process to identify weak students and track their performance and initiate improvement plan.
- (b) Articulation and credit transfer systems should be formalised to allow for greater transparency and credibility.

6.4. Criteria 4: Physical Facilities

6.4.1. Commendation

- (a) Within the limits of a city campus, the main campus structure and annex on Green Road is suitable to provide student friendly environment to enhance teaching and student experience.
- (b) There is an indoor games room, primary medical facilities and care and sufficiently maintained washrooms on campus.
- (c) Classrooms visited are generally clean and conducive with multi-media facilities and fans available.

6.4.2. Affirmation

- (a) The University is planning to introduce integrated library management software. It is expected that this will contribute to enhancement of students learning experience.
- (b) While classrooms were conducive, one of the classroom visited had wires dangling from the ceiling.
- (c) The team observed fire extinguishers on each floor. However there were no evidence of whether health and safety measures are practiced/regularized; such as fire drills and sprinklers.

6.4.3. Recommendation

- (a) The library facilities can be increased as the current capacity for 180 students cannot adequately support the need of the whole student body.
- (b) The Wi-Fi speed and connectivity can be increased and supported to provide better student experience.
- (c) Online resources, particularly secondary materials such as journals and eBooks, can be increased.

- (d) There is an urgent need for the creation of common space for students learning.
- (e) Library should be better equipped with printing/photocopying facilities.
- (f) The collection of Law resources from jurisdictions other than Bangladesh is rather limited. To encourage comparative analysis and learning, the University should provide more of these books to the students.
- (g) New students should be briefed on the use of library facilities.
- (h) The website of the University should further be developed to include search engine for library resources.
- (i) Library user survey may be carried out regularly to identify frequency of use and sufficiency of resources.

6.5. Criteria 5: Teaching, Learning and Assessment

6.5.1. Commendation

- (a) The Department uses an outcomes based teaching, learning and assessment systems.
- (b) A set of three templates for assessment mapped to Course Learning Outcomes is implemented at the Department. These templates are for setting and moderating examination questions and scrutinizing examination papers.

6.5.2. Affirmation

- (a) The moderation of examination question does not seem effective enough to improve the overall quality of the final examination papers. Training should be arranged for moderators and setters. A joint training will allow all parties to manage expectations better.

- (b) The Distinguish Law Lecturer Series is a good way to update and expose students to external eminent speakers and information. However, it will be good if the outcome for each lectures are identified and evaluation of its mapping and achievement is carried out annually; i.e. how has the series supported students' achievement of learning outcomes.

6.5.3. Recommendation

- (a) Teachers should be provided pedagogical training on a regular basis.
- (b) Evaluation of teachers may be considered just on or before the mid-term tests rather than at the end of the semester as this will help the faculties to improve themselves.
- (c) Students should be briefed on how to evaluate their teachers.
- (d) Examination should be taken anonymously. No names should appear on examination scripts and dissertations.
- (e) There must be regular workload reviews to ensure transparent, fair and balanced (based on experience) distribution of faculties throughout the semesters.
- (f) In the Mid-Term examinations the number allocated for each course is 20 and allocated time is 60 minutes. Since law is an analytical discipline, 60 minutes time seems insufficient. From the audited Mid-Term answer scripts it is evident that a good number of examinees leaving the examination hall with incomplete answers. Hence the time allocated may be reconsidered or the question pattern may be tailored to best suit the time.
- (g) Largely lecturers marked with a tick without indicating the reason for the allocation of marks. It will be a good practice to indicate the rationale for the marks.

(h) Greater care must be given in setting and the overall quality of the examination papers. Below are some of areas for improvement identified:

- i. Examination date is not provided on the question paper;
- ii. Take a more creative approach in assessing students particularly with improved use of technology;
- iii. General quality of questions and language can be further improved;
- iv. Allocation of marks must justify the degree of difficulties;
- v. Consistency in the way in which examination questions are presented; order of questions, structure, headings, divisions of parts can also be further improved;
- vi. There is a lack of coherence regarding allocation of marks among questions and question fragments. While some teachers are breaking down the marks among questions fragments, some are not. Again in some question papers the fragmentation of marks among fragments appeared disproportionate. Also questions in combined courses (for example, Cyber Law and Intellectual Property Law) were not evenly distributed. In two audited semester final question for the course 'Cyber Law and Intellectual Property Law', question(s) from Cyber Law part were missing.
- vii. When using foreign language (Latin or Bangla), the words should be in italics; and
- viii. Use of proper names rather than X, Y or Z should be encouraged.

6.6. Criteria 6: Student Support Services

6.6.1. Commendation

- (a) The portfolio and scope of the Directorate of Students' Welfare has been reviewed to better meet the needs of students and alumni.
- (b) The establishment of a Counseling Centre in July 2017 is welcomed and data show high use by staff and students is encouraging.

6.6.2. Affirmation

- (a) The Directorate of Student Welfare is in the process of appointing female counselors to meet the needs of female staffs and students in the University.

6.6.3. Recommendation

- (a) The change in scope may require a review of the name of the Directorate of Students Welfare.
- (b) Processes for student services should be sufficiently provided and be transparent.
- (c) There is a need to focus on students' communication and career skills.
- (d) Legal career fairs should be organized on a regular basis.

6.7. Criteria 7: Staff and Facilities

6.7.1. Commendation

- (a) The existing faculties are young, committed and ambitious – a good combination in building a robust quality culture within the Department.
- (b) Study leave up to five years is given to teaching staffs once they obtain tenure in their jobs.

- (c) The introduction of ILTS (Improved Learning and Teaching Skills) training for newly appointed faculty members is commendable. The faculties highly rate the need and effectiveness of this training.

6.7.2. Affirmation

- (a) The total number of faculty (including part-time on a full time equivalent measure) is 15. Based on the current number of students, the ratio of 1:21 is within international benchmarks. However, the lack of experience of staff is a major concern and must be arrest soon.
- (b) The University had developed an in-house training scheme called ILTC for new teachers. This training should be extended to others to improve the quality of pedagogy. The training should also include preparing Power Points and classroom management techniques.

6.7.3. Recommendation

- (a) The high turnover of academic staff creates a gap in the experience of remaining staff as currently the majority of them are new and young faculty. This will impact the morale and quality of the overall programs. The University should review its recruitment and retention policies to better manage staff expectation and industry norms. The Department should do everything within its power to create greater comradeship within its faculty members and advise the University accordingly as to its needs.
- (b) The Department should review the teaching loads to provide adequate time for research works.
- (c) The Department may introduce induction training for non-academic staffs.
- (d) The Department should carry out training needs analysis for faculties and non-academic staff and organize training accordingly on a regular basis.

6.8. Criteria 8: Research and Extension

6.8.1. Commendation

- (a) There is a clearly established research culture in the Department, albeit at the infancy stage.

6.8.2. Affirmation

- (a) UAP publishes its *Journal of Law and Policy* which is an external peer reviewed journal. However, the faculty members do not publish articles in this journal. A combination of both internal and external contribution will be recommended.
- (b) Greater support (for example through funding) can be provided to promote research, particularly among the junior faculty members.

6.8.3. Recommendation

- (a) Collaboration with local and international researchers should be formalized and encouraged.
- (b) Faculties should be provided with opportunities to present their research findings with a broader range of external peers.

6.9. Criteria 9: Process Management and Continuous Improvement

6.9.1. Commendation

- (a) There is a general feel for quality improvement within the Department and the University as a whole. Changes seem to be welcomed and managed well.

6.9.2. Affirmation

- (a) Many processes are being automated to better meet student and staff needs.

6.9.3. Recommendation

- (a) There is a need for the University and Department to formalized systems and processes to enable continuous quality improvement. This should be supported by an effective tracking system.

7. Judgment

The judgment unlike the recommendations (which is based on international best practices) is based on the position of the Department. The three auditors prepared the judgment independently to avoid any biasness and the results were averaged to conclude that in the opinion of the EPR team, the Department can be rated as **very good** in its overall QA assessment.

Aspects Reviewed	Numerical Weight
Governance	4.3
Curriculum Design and Review	3.8
Physical Facilities	3.9
Student: Admission Progress and Achievements	3.8
Teaching and Learning	3.8
Assessment of Student Performance	3.5
Student Support Services	3.7
Staff and Facilities	3.8
Research and Extension	3.8

Process Management for Continual Improvement	4.5
Total	39

8. Conclusion

The Self-Assessment Committee (SAC) and the IQAC did a tremendous job in preparing and supporting the audit respectively. The SAR report was well written, though, more evidence could be incorporated to support some statements made. The overall planning and management of the site visit was well prepared and executed. In conclusion, this audit is a success and it is hoped that the Department and the University review the recommendations highlighted in this report and identify short term and long term improvement plans.

9. Auditors' Declaration

We, hereby declare that this External Peer Review Team Report is prepared by us functioning as the External Peer Assessment Review Team for the self-assessment project of the Department of Law and Human Rights, University of Asia Pacific, Bangladesh. The report is produced after having reviewed the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) prepared by the Department, dated 30 November 2017, and a site visit between 18 and 20 December 2017.

Quazi Mahfujul Hoque Supan QA Peer Reviewer Associate Professor Department of Law University of Dhaka qmhsupan@hotmail.com	Muhammad Mahbubur Rahman Subject Matter Specialist Associate Professor Department of Law University of Dhaka mahbublaw2002@gmail.com	Rozilini M Fernandez-Chung International QA Peer Reviewer Associate Professor Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus Rozilini.Fernandez-Chung@nottingham.edu.my