



**SUBJECT BENCHMARK STATEMENT**  
**IN**  
**SINHALA**

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

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## CONTENT

	<b>Page No</b>
Foreword	III
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Subject Benchmark Statement – Scope and Purposes	1
1.2 Level of Teaching	1
1.3 Nature and Scope of Sinhala Studies	1
1.4 Scope of Employment of Learners	3
2 Subject Aims	3
3 Subject Knowledge and Understanding	4
4 Skills and Attitudes	5
4.1 Generic Skills	5
4.2 Subject Specific Skills	5
4.3 Transferable Skills	6
4.4 Attitudes	6
5 Teaching and Learning Strategies	7
6 Assessment Strategies	7
7 Maintaining Standards	7
8 Student Attainment and Benchmarking Level	8
9 Annexes	10

## 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

## SINHALA

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Subject Benchmark Statement – Scope and Purposes

This benchmark statement for the subject of Sinhala has been prepared under the Quality Assurance and Accreditation project for the universities of Sri Lanka conducted by the University Grants Commission. The objectives of the statement is to provide general guidelines to the academic community engaged in teaching Sinhala on [a] Core areas of the subject and characteristics of degrees in Sinhala, [b] expected standards for the award of the degrees at General and Honors [special] levels [c] expected attributes and capabilities that the Sinhala graduates should possess, and [d] current and future needs of the country and society at large. It is expected that this subject benchmarking would highlight and ensure maintaining high standards and quality of the degree programs in Sinhala in all national universities. The subject of Sinhala has been one of the most popular subjects in the universities. It is one of the main subjects in all the major universities in Sri Lanka. Students who are keen in creative writing, drama, appreciation of arts and linguistic studies, literary criticism select the special course in Sinhala leading to the Honors degree.

#### 1.2. Level of Teaching:

Sinhala will be taught at the General and Special degree levels in the universities. It is also possible to conduct Certificate and Diploma courses in Sinhala for professionals, foreigners and non Sinhala speaking students. Sinhala can be offered as one of the subjects for the General Degree of three year duration. Special [Honors] Degree in Sinhala is, like all other honors degrees in Humanities, of four year duration. Certificate and Diploma courses aimed at improving comprehension and writing skills in Sinhala may be offered for the students in subjects areas and disciplines such as Medicine, Engineering, Agriculture and Bio sciences.

#### 1.3. The Nature and Scope of Sinhala Studies

The subject of Sinhala is accepted and established as one of the most important and crucial fields of study in humanities, which has enjoyed a prime place in the curriculum of the national universities from the beginning of university education in Sri Lanka. It covers a wide range of areas, most of which bear direct impact and relevance to the life of the people, social interaction, culture, arts and politics of the country. Sinhala studies deal with the acquisition of competence in the language, especially in the skill of writing correct Sinhala, the problems in usage, study and appreciation of literature and arts, critical study of the classical texts, textual criticism, and coping with the new trends and developments in the language due to new trends in society and culture:

- [a] Justification of teaching Sinhala in national universities
- [b] Prospects for research at a higher level

- [c] How to deal with the conflict of the conventional and modern views of the language.
- [d] How to face the challenge of the demands in the job market.
- [e] The use of modern technology /computers and IT facilities in teaching and research in the field of Sinhala in universities.

The study of Sinhala places emphasis on the problems prevailing at school level due to lack of facilities and qualified teachers as well as the incorrect and faulty use of the language in the print and electronic media. Students will be trained to identify and understand the common errors found in modern literary works and journals.

Sinhala will always be treated as one of the few languages in the world with an unparalleled, continuous literary tradition. The rich and wide-ranging themes and forms of the classical literature will be highlighted in some of the course units both at General and Special degree levels. Course units that have been introduced recently will examine the recent developments and features in modern Sinhala prose in creative, academic and scientific writings.

It is important to emphasize the fact that Sinhala is the mother tongue of about 70% of the population. Nevertheless, it is also known to be under threat of extinction in the near future according to some recent surveys. It should be the prime duty of the students to safeguard and protect this language from such threats and remove all obstacles on the path of development. For this purpose it is important to introduce the Sinhala language and its literature to a wider readership in the world. Therefore all the major texts in the classical Sinhala literature should be translated into English and other languages of international importance. It is true that Sinhala is taught in a few foreign universities such as SOAS, University of London and Cornell University to a limited number of students, our aim should be enhancing the existing interest in the international academia in Sinhala studies by publishing books on Sinhala and the translations of classical texts on the web, and attracting more foreign scholars and students to undertake research on subjects related to Sinhala language, literature, culture and the arts of Sri Lanka.

Sinhala has been in the curriculum in our universities since the beginning of university education in the island. We have to make an attempt for collaboration and interaction between the three national language departments involving students in some common subjects such as the literature of the colonial period, regional dialects of Sri Lanka and courses on drama and theatre production. Projects such as theory and practice of translation involving the three national languages, will help achieve the goals of national harmony among communities using those languages. Thus Sinhala scholars can help maintain peace and harmony in Sri Lanka through the medium of language. The development of the subject of Sinhala in our universities could play a major and vital role in realizing these objectives.

The departments of Sinhala deviating from the conventional methods of teaching grammar and history of literature etc. may focus on adopting new methods of teaching the language and grammar introduced by modern linguists and some other related subjects such as Creative writing, Mass Communication, Translation Methods, Playwriting etc. Furthermore, exchange and link programs between the

departments of Sinhala should be planned to create opportunities for undergraduates for winning scholarships and competing in the job market.

#### **1.4. Scope of Employment of Learners**

The Sinhala graduates, especially the Honors graduates with Second Class Upper Division or the First Class degrees can easily find employment in the universities or other institutions of higher education as lecturers or instructors. All the Sinhala graduates, in general, can be employed as teachers in schools. With their excellent skills in the language, the Sinhala graduates can successfully compete in the SLAS examination and find employment in the government sector as A.G.A.s, commissioners and finally as G.A.s. The Sinhala graduates can easily become freelance journalists, successful writers, play wrights, broadcasters, presenters and announcers. In the recent past a number of Sinhala Honors graduates have been employed in the TV centers as presenters, program producers, translators or script writers. Sinhala graduates with additional competence in one or two more languages find employment as translators and interpreters in foreign embassies.

## **2. SUBJECT AIMS**

The broad aims of a Degree program in Sinhala are:

- To provide in-depth knowledge of the Sinhala language covering both grammar and literature appropriate to the degree concerned: Special degree in Sinhala or General degree with Sinhala as the major or one of the subjects.
- To enable students to understand various levels and styles of Sinhala both in the classical and modern literatures and to develop a critical approach to new genres in modern Sinhala literature.
- To train students to read the ancient inscriptions focusing on the ability to decipher the writings, to understand them and to learn the value of the inscriptions as literary, linguistic and historical documents.
- To study the ancient Sinhala *Sanya*, *Getapada*, *Parikatha*- commentaries, paraphrases, exegetical works etc. as important texts for learning the evolution and development of the Sinhala prose.
- To equip students with appropriate tools of analysis to deal with grammatical, linguistic and stylistic problems
- To train students to apply such knowledge in their own writings and encourage them to undertake research and creative writing.
- To train students to investigate further into the hidden treasures in ancient Sinhala literary texts and to undertake critical editions of Sinhala Palm leaf manuscripts and inscriptions.
- To encourage the Sinhala graduates to concentrate on developing a sound and rich literature for children and teenage readers.

- To train the students to engage in in-depth study and research into modern Sinhala lyrics in popular songs and their impact on the language and society.
- To provide training facilities to undertake research into the usage of Sinhala language in diverse genres in the popular culture.
- To encourage the Sinhala graduates to concentrate more on Comparative literature and linguistics rather than undertaking common and parochial research projects.

### 3. SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

A degree course in Sinhala is expected to contain the following components:

- Knowledge of the history and evolution of the language, the sources that have contributed to the development of the Sinhala script as well as the vocabulary through the centuries and the influence of Theravada Buddhism and Buddhist literature in enriching the Sinhala language and culture.
- The development of the vocabulary under the influence of Sanskrit, Pali, Tamil and other Indo-European languages such as Persian, Greek, Arabic, Portuguese, Dutch and English.
- Courses in Sinhala will also aim to provide knowledge in a wide range of related subjects such as grammar, linguistics, poetry, prosody, Sinhala folk literature, and the ancient and modern concepts of literary criticism. A special feature of the courses would be introduction of new subjects geared to the needs of the economic, social and cultural needs and conditions of modern times. Courses such as the following could be included in the curriculum of the subject of Sinhala:
  - Creative writing.
  - Creative writing for children
  - Literary Criticism, both eastern and western
  - Translation methods: theory and Practice
  - Drama and theatre with practical components
  - Colonial and Post-colonial literature
  - Use of Sinhala language in modern fiction and poetry
  - Comparative literature
  - Journalism
  - Tele Drama: story and script writing for Tele dramas and films
  - Study of the use of Sinhala in the print and electronic media
  - The impact of electronic media on modern Sinhala usage
  - Presentation skills- use of modern technology, oratory, compeering etc.
  - Sinhala writing skills.

For a sound knowledge and better understanding of these subjects, practical components may be incorporated into these new courses.

The depth of the subject matter should be decided by the course development teams of respective universities taking into account the nature of the degree program.

## 4. SKILLS AND ATTITUDES

### 4.1. Generic Skills

Students are expected to achieve the following:

- Sound knowledge of Sinhala language and literature
- Ability to think and express themselves clearly in Sinhala
- Excellent communication skills
  - Knowledge and understanding of unique features of the Sinhala language, literature and culture.
  - Writing skills of advanced standards
  - Skills in the correct and appropriate use of the language in critical, analytical and creative writings.
  - Professional skills as teachers, translators, interpreters, presenters, announcers and compeers.

Undergraduate students in Sinhala are expected to inherit certain attributes like cognitive skills [high standards of literacy and aptitude in language learning], skills in communication and creativity. Sinhala degree programs must provide a healthy learning environment and background to encourage and develop such skills.

#### *Cognitive Skills:*

The Degree program in Sinhala should enhance the ability of students to:

- Understand the important trends in the evolution of the language
- Understand the evolution and development of the Sinhala script.
- Understand the similarities and common features of other languages of Indo – European family.
- Identify the unique features in the classical Sinhala language and literature.
- Identify through comparative study the salient features in the styles of major writers – both classical and modern
- Understand deeply the new literary genres of Sinhala.
- Understand concepts and theories of Oriental literary criticism.
- Understand the concepts and theories of Western literary criticism.
- Understand salient features of the Sinhala folk literature.

### 4.2. Subject Specific Skills

- To undertake projects involving writing in Sinhala- academic research or creative.
- Ability to use the knowledge gained through courses on Creative writing and Mass Communication into practice by creative writing such as poetry, drama and fiction.
- To become fully qualified teachers of Sinhala language and literature
- To cultivate a love for the language amongst the younger generation who are fast drifting away from national languages and cultures towards English and other modern languages and popular culture.
- Write reports, research proposals and papers etc. in good and correct Sinhala



- To work independently and innovatively with a genuine Sinhala mindset.
- To undertake responsibilities as social workers or cultural officers

### **4.3 Transferable Skills**

It may not be possible to prove that transferable skills would be developed in a degree program with Sinhala as the major subject component. The kind of skills that the employers look for in a graduate such as computer or management skills obviously cannot be expected in the special degree program in Sinhala. However, writing skills of an advanced level and research practice as well as experience in conducting field surveys the graduates in Sinhala could be developed and equipped with. In a developing country like Sri Lanka, as in developed countries, well trained and knowledgeable journalists, broadcasters and presenters and translators are always in demand. Degree programs in Sinhala could certainly train such talented professionals.

On successful completion of the program, graduates in Sinhala must have acquired the ability to:

- Collect, analyze and interpret data.
- Make use of information technology.
- Write effective and impressive reports in immaculate Sinhala
- Communicate effectively, orally or in writing
- Maintain a balanced knowledge of both classical and modern literary traditions
- Acquire knowledge and familiarity in the styles and vocabulary used by playwrights and lyric writers in Sinhala.
- Think critically about linguistic, social and cultural issues
- Work in state and private sector effectively and be creative and self motivated.

### **4.4 Attitudes**

**Ethical Practices:** The study of Sinhala language, literature and culture builds up ethical attitudes of the students towards society in general and towards life in particular. Obviously the vehicle of the great Sinhala civilization in classical times was the Sinhala language enriched with the essence of Theravada Buddhism. It was this language that was the driving force of the life of the people who were known for the qualities such as bravery, charity, tolerance, genuineness and modesty. The discipline of Sinhala at university level should aim to cultivate such attitudes among the learners. Further the Sinhala graduate would be exemplary citizens, as they would have grasped the spirit of moral teachings embedded in the classical Sinhala literature.

**Proactive approach:** Courses in Sinhala should be prepared in such a way that the graduates would be fully prepared to take proactive decisions. Commitment and dedication to learning and gaining of the expected levels of the courses leading to the Degree in Sinhala should be the hall mark of students. They must be genuinely motivated in grasping the spirit of the subject and develop genuine love for the values rooted in the cultural traditions in the Sinhala language and literature. Sinhala scholars should always have proper understanding and respect for the unique features of the discipline that have been enshrined in its traditions for centuries.

## **5. TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES**

Following Teaching and Learning strategies may be used by the teachers of Sinhala in the universities:

- Lectures- the conventional class room teaching
- Lectures by outside specialists or renowned scholars on invitation.
- Question and answers sessions following lectures
- Student presentations
- Staff presentations
- Use of audio –visual aids
- Field visits to classical sites of cultural significance relevant to the courses
- Visits and participation in folk cultural events
- Seminars on creative writing
- Workshops on drama and theatre
- Visits to media centres
- Self directed and guided research and surveys
- Regular use of the library
- Use of the Internet

## **6. ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES**

Assessment of the undergraduates in Sinhala may be based on expected knowledge and skills relevant to the course of study. It would be desirable to provide the students with feedback wherever it is possible to do so. In the course of a semester a combination of assessment methods could be used. Assessment methods for Sinhala should include the following:

- Formal written examination: Closed and/or Open Book
- MCQs and Quizzes
- Continuous Assessment
- Mid-semester tests
- Individual group assignments
- Tutorials or Term papers
- Group reports
- Field survey reports
- Creative work or drama productions
- Final year Dissertation
- Viva voce Examination

## **7. MAINTAINING STANDARDS**

For the maintenance of standards the departments teaching Sinhala may adopt several methods approved by the Faculty and those specific to the discipline. A good practice in this regard would be the involvement of external moderators of question papers and examiners for second marking of answer scripts. Periodic revision of syllabi and especially the revision and updating of recommended and suggested readings for each

course would also help maintain standards. Use of new assessment methods too may help maintain academic standards. Among other methods, peer observation of teaching and student evaluation may be mentioned.

## 8. STUDENTS ATTAINMENT AND BENCHMARK LEVEL

### *General Degree [Sinhala as a subject]*

The Benchmark levels given below generally apply [a] to General Degree which includes Sinhala as a subject, and [b] to Special Degree in Sinhala. The two levels of achievements identified are as follows:

#### **Threshold Level:**

The minimum acceptable standard or Benchmark to be achieved by a graduate who obtains a second class lower division or a pass.

#### **Good Level:**

This is the expected standard or bench mark level to be gained by a graduate who secures a second class upper division or First Class Honors.

### *B.A General Degree*

<b>Threshold level A graduate should</b>	<b>Good level A graduate should/</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Demonstrate appropriate knowledge of the main features of Sinhala grammar and literature.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Demonstrate in-depth knowledge of Sinhala grammar and be familiar with the problematic issues in grammar</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Demonstrate adequate knowledge of the history and evolution of the language and landmarks in classical literature</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Demonstrate in-depth knowledge in the history and evolution of the language and the landmark texts in classical literature.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Demonstrate a basic knowledge of the major works in the classical Sinhala literature</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Demonstrate excellent understanding of the major literary works of the classical period</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Possess a good knowledge of the diverse genres in the classical Sinhala literature with possible influences from Indian literature</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Possess an in-depth, critical knowledge of the diverse genres and styles in the classical Sinhala literature with a good understanding of the Indian influence</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have developed high standards in writing skills and ability to write in excellent Sinhala.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have developed high standards in writing for various purposes including academic and creative.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Be familiar with the major trends in literary criticism and linguistics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Demonstrate familiarity and understanding of modern literary criticism and trends in modern linguistics.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Demonstrate adequate knowledge in the new trends and genres in modern Sinhala literature</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Demonstrate in-depth knowledge in the new trends and genres in modern Sinhala literature</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Be familiar with modern poetry, fiction and drama</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of the modern Sinhala poetry, fiction and drama</li> </ul>

**B.A. Special Degree in Sinhala.**

<b>Threshold : A graduate should</b>	<b>Good :A graduate should</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Demonstrate basic knowledge of the Sinhala grammar and the history of the Sinhala language.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of the Sinhala grammar and the history of Sinhala language and the characteristics of the colloquial and literary Sinhala</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Demonstrate basic knowledge of the history and evolution of Sinhala lexis and landmarks of the classical Sinhala literature.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Demonstrate excellent knowledge of the history and evolution of Sinhala lexis and landmark texts in the classical Sinhala literature.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Possess a good knowledge of the major works in classical Sinhala literature and their social and cultural significance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Possess an in-depth knowledge of the major works in the classical Sinhala literature and ability to evaluate their social and cultural significance.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Possess good understanding of diverse literary genres both prose and verse in the classical Sinhala literature</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Possess in-depth and analytical knowledge of the diverse literary genres –both prose and verse in the classical Sinhala literature.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Be familiar with the major concepts of aesthetic and literary criticism of India and Sri Lanka</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have an excellent knowledge of the classical Indian and Sri Lankan concepts of aesthetics and literary criticism and their impact on Sinhala writers and poets</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Possess a basic knowledge of the major trends and concepts of Western literary criticism.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Possess in-depth knowledge of the major trends and concepts in the western literary criticism and aesthetics. Be familiar with the work of the modern Sinhala critics.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Possess a basic knowledge of the significance of language in communication and creative writing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Possess an in-depth and practical knowledge of the significance of language in communication and creative writing.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Possess a general knowledge of the new trends and developments in the field of arts, theatre and cinema in Sri Lanka</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Possess an excellent understanding of the new trends and developments in the fields of arts, theatre and cinema in Sri Lanka focusing on the use of Sinhala language in literature, Cinema, theatre and mass media.</li> </ul>

## 9. ANNEX1. MEMBERS OF THE BENCHMARK GROUP

Prof. Udaya Meddegama	University of Peradeniya
Ven. Dr. Kiulegedara Narada	University of Sri Jayewardenepura
Ven. Prof. Angulugaha Dhamminda	University of Ruhuna
Ven. Prof. Kongastenne Ananda	University of Ruhuna
Dr. Angle Kotawalegedare	University of Ruhuna
Prof. P. B. Ekanayake	University of Ruhuna
Prof. Chandrasiri Palliyaguruge	University of Kelaniya
Prof. Jinadasa Danansooriya	University of Kelaniya
Prof. Kulathilake Kumarasinghe	University of Kelaniya
Prof. Somarathne Balasooriya	University of Kelaniya
Prof. L. A. D. Ananda Tissa Kumara	University of Colombo
Prof. A. B. Dissanayake	University of Colombo
Prof. B. K. A. Wickramasinghe	University of Colombo
Prof. Rohini Paranavitana	University of Colombo
Ms. B. K. P. Abeysooriya	Open University of Sri Lanka