

Research Papers/Extended Abstracts

Analysing Feedback of Quality Criteria Awareness Workshop for Academic and Non-Academic Staff in the Faculty of Indigenous Health Sciences and Technology at Gampaha Wickramarachchi University of Indigenous Medicine

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Abstract

Gampaha Wickramarachchi University of Indigenous Medicine (GWUIM), established as Sri Lanka's 16th National University in 2021, includes the Faculty of Indigenous Health Sciences and Technology (FIHST) among its four faculties. By December 2023, FIHST had 850 students enrolled across six-degree programs. In November 2021, the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) was formed to ensure educational quality. Despite this, IQAC-FIHST found both academic and non-academic staff lack awareness of quality assurance practices. To address this, a Quality Criteria Awareness Session was held on December 23, 2023, covering topics such as program management, design, development, and student support. The aims of this workshop were to make all academics and non-academics of the faculty aware of quality criteria for the study program review, discuss examples of evidence needed to collect from each degree program and identify the responsible persons/bodies/mechanism to collect all documents. A self-administrated questionnaire was used for the data collection. The results showed, of the 25 academics, 58% had inadequate and barely adequate knowledge of quality criteria before the workshop, however, after the workshop 74 % of academics had good understanding about quality criteria. Of the 11 non-academics, 63% had inadequate and barely adequate knowledge of quality criteria before the workshop, however, after the workshop 62% of non-academics had good understanding about quality criteria and 38% had adequate knowledge of quality criteria. Participants expressed a desire for further workshops, prioritising topics such as student assessment, outcome-based education, and computer skills. This feedback indicates a positive shift towards fostering a quality-focused educational environment at FIHST, aligning with the Quality Assurance Framework of Sri Lanka's University Grants Commission. Future workshops are recommended to address specific needs, such as paper setting, academic collaboration, and curriculum revision, thereby enhancing the overall quality and effectiveness of educational programs at GWUIM.

Keywords: *Faculty Development, Higher Education, Quality Assurance, Quality Criteria Awareness*

Introduction

Gampaha Wickramarachchi University of Indigenous Medicine (GWUIM) established as the 16th National University of Sri Lanka in 2021. It consists of four faculties as Faculty of Indigenous Medicine (FIM), Faculty of Indigenous Health Sciences and Technology (FIHST), Faculty of Indigenous Social Sciences and Management Studies (FISSMS) and Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS). There are three departments in FIHST; Department of Indigenous Health Sciences (DIHS), Department of Technology (DT) and Department of Indigenous Medical Resources (DIMR). Up to December 2023, there are 850 students (2020/2021, 2021/2022) in the faculty under six degree programs as; Bachelor of Science Honours in Yoga and Parapsychology, Bachelor of Science Honours in Health Tourism and Hospitality Management, Bachelor of Health Science Honours in Biomedical Technology, Bachelor of Health Science Honours in Health Information and Communication Technology, Bachelor of Science Honours in Indigenous Medicinal Resources and Bachelor of Health Science Honours in Indigenous Pharmaceutical Technology (University Grants Commission, Sri Lanka, Academic Year 2020/2021-Admission to undergraduate courses in Universities in Sri Lanka). The faculty has established Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) in 2021 November under Centre of Quality Assurance (CQA) in the University. IQAC-FIHST chaired by the Dean and Assistant Register is the secretary.

The Quality Assurance Agency Council (QAAC) of the University Grants Commission (UGC), Sri Lanka was established in 2007 to review programmes of study offered by various departments of study (Subject Reviews) and the quality of higher education institutions (Institutional Reviews). The Manual for Review of Undergraduate Study Programmes of Sri Lankan Universities and Higher Education Institutions has been developed to provide guidance to universities and other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) who wish to submit their programmes of study for review, under the Quality Assurance Framework of the UGC and the Ministry of Higher Education. There are quality criteria that all institutional members need to know in order to assure the quality of higher education (Gunawardena, 2017). Weerasinghe and Fernando (2017) has identified that quality of academic staff, quality of university facilities, quality of degree programs, quality of university administration, university location and university image affected the overall quality of the education (Weerasinghe and Fernando, 2017).

IQAC-FIHST recognized the significance of the quality assurance, program review and institutional review. As a new university and new faculty, IQAC identified that there is a less awareness about the quality improvement and best practices in higher education among both academic and non-academics. Therefore, IQAC suggested having an initial quality criteria awareness session for all the academics

and non-academics in the faculty in terms of quality assurance in higher education. The aims of this workshop were to increase the awareness about the quality criteria/best practices for the study program review, evidences need to collect from each degree program, and responsible persons/bodies/mechanism to collect all documents among all academics and non-academics of the faculty.

Methodology

Quality Criteria Awareness Session was conducted on December 23rd of 2023 in the faculty by the Director of Quality Assurance cell. Mainly Quality criteria of Programme Management, Programme Design and Development, Human and Physical Resources, Course/Module Design and Development, Teaching and Learning, Learning Environment, Student Support and Progression, Student Assessment and Awards and Innovative and Healthy Practices were discussed. At the end of the workshop, a questionnaire prepared as Google form was distributed. The following questions were asked;

- I. Knowledge of quality criteria before participating in the workshop
- II. Knowledge of quality assurance after attending the workshop.
- III. Would you like to participate in a workshop on quality criterion again?
- IV. If the following workshops are available, please indicate the order in which you would like to attend for academic (Outcome based education and Student-centred learning, best practices, Workshop for SER writing, Introduction to Quality Assurance and Accreditation and Students Assessment and Evaluation ex LMS)
- V. If the following workshops are available, please indicate the order in which you would like to attend for non-academics (Fundamentals of Computer skills, File handling and file system management and Management protocols and work procedures)
- VI. Opinion about the knowledge gained after the workshop
- VII. Any Other suggestions to IQAC-FIHST

Feedbacks received from both academics and non-academics were analysed.

Results and Discussion

There were 25 academics (19 permanent and 7 temporary) and 11 non-academics (6 permanent and 5 temporary) participating for the session. Academics were senior lecturers, probationary lecturers and

temporary demonstrators. All are new lecturers to the academic field. Non-academic staff included Assistant Registrar, Management Assistants, Technical officers, Lab attendants and work aids.

According to the analysis of the questionnaire of academics, 58% had inadequate and barely adequate knowledge of quality criteria before the workshop and after the workshop 74 % of academics had good understanding about quality criteria (Figure 1A). Considering non-academic staff, 63% had inadequate and barely adequate knowledge of quality criteria before the workshop and after the workshop 62 % of non-academics had good understanding about quality criteria and 38% had adequate knowledge of quality criteria (Figure 1B). All the participants were willing to participate in another session of quality criteria. Further they assured that the conducted workshop was really helpful to them to understand the quality criteria as their opinion about the knowledge gained after the workshop. Due to new academics and having less experience of the quality of higher education, all academics and non-academic staff members were willing to be aware of how to maintain the quality of higher education.

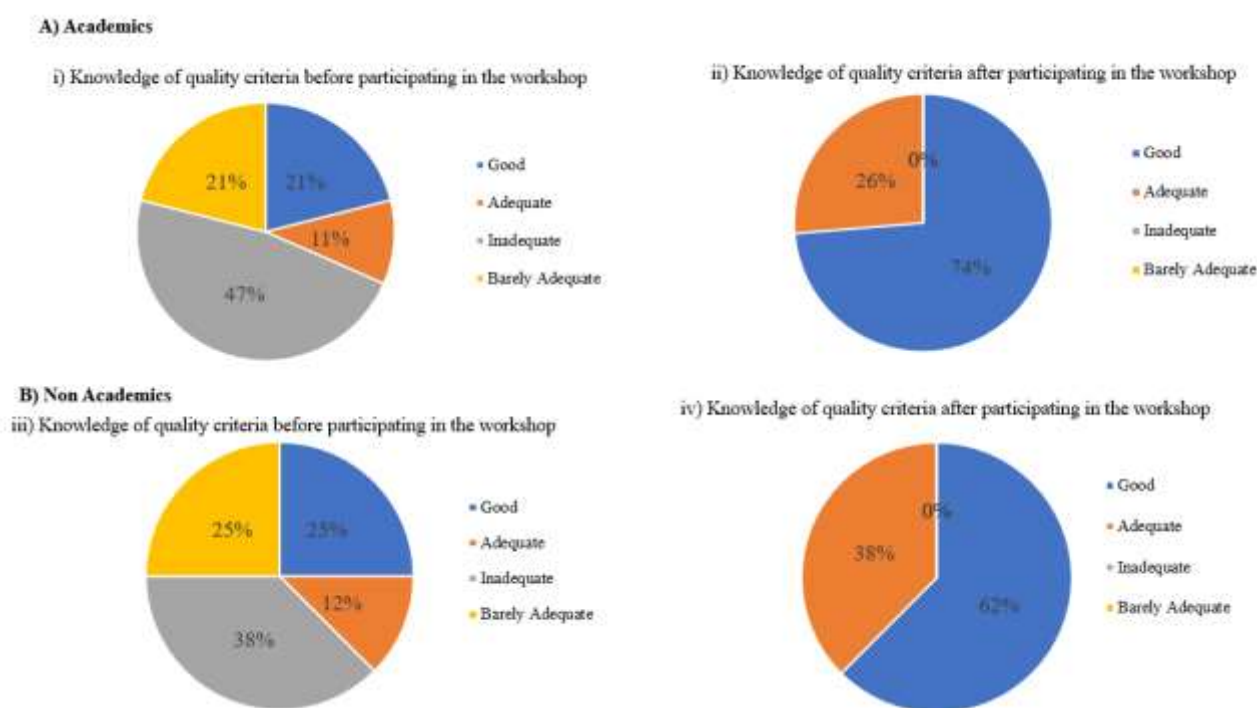


Figure 1: Analysis of feedbacks of questioner before and after the workshop both academics (A) and non-academics (B)

In order to organise the next workshop, their needs were analysed. According to that, 37% of academics gave their priority to student assessment and evaluation workshops (Ex. LMS) and their second propriety lined up in outcome-based education and student centred learning, best practices workshop. It may be due to academics needed to reduce their workload of evaluating Continuous assessment. Considering the non-academics, 50% of them requested to learn the fundamentals of computer skills and 38% management protocols and procedures (Table 1). Further they suggested to

have different workshops to on paper setting, moderation, paper marking workshop, Examination by-laws, regulations and guidelines, workshop on academic collaboration (local & international), how to map learning outcomes, workshops on preparing workload calculations, Lesson plan preparing and how to do curriculum revision. Quality assurance also works best in an environment where the emphasis is on the positive rather than the negative (Lim, 2021). Therefore, these results indicated a positive environment to assure quality of FIHST degree programs.

Further, the improvement in participants' understanding of quality assurance processes will increase the confidence of academics teaching and research. Non-academic staff also acknowledged a deeper understanding of their roles in supporting quality initiatives, aligning with Bennett et al. (2000) who emphasise the necessity of comprehensive training for all staff members.

Table 1: Analysis of feedbacks of questioner for next workshop both academics and non-academics

Category	Workshop	Priority of next workshop (%)
Academic	Outcome based education and Student Center learning, best practices	26
	Workshop for SER writing	16
	Introduction to Quality Assurance and Accreditation	21
	Students Assessment and Evaluation ex. LMS	37
Non-Academic	Fundamentals of Computer skills	50
	File handling and file system management	13
	Management protocols and work procedures	38

However, the study identifies limitations, including varying levels of engagement among participants and resource constraints that hindered the workshop's effectiveness. Additionally, the short-term nature of the workshop may not lead to sustained changes in practice, as noted by Knight & Trowler (2000). While the workshop significantly raised awareness of quality criteria, ongoing professional development and institutional support are essential for lasting impact. Recommendations include the establishment of continuous education programs that incorporate regular follow-up sessions, the integration of quality discussions into departmental meetings, and the utilisation of diverse training formats to enhance engagement and efficacy.

Conclusion

Knowledge of quality criteria of higher education was increased after conducting awareness workshops in both academic and non-academic. They were willing to participate in a quality criteria

workshop and both academic and non-academic requested to organise the student's assessment and evaluation workshop and Fundamental of ICT skill workshop respectively, as their next workshop.

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