



RECOASIA

Regional Cooperation in the field of recognition
among Asian Countries

National Report

SRI LANKA



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Introduction

The present National report was realised in the framework of the project **“RecoAsia – Regional Cooperation in the field of recognition among Asian Countries”**, co-funded by the European Union under the Erasmus+ programme. This National Report represents a first-hand information source about the higher education system and qualification recognition procedures in place in Sri Lanka.

The National Report was drafted by [Ministry of Higher Education and Highways](#) (MoHE), the [University of Ruhuna](#) (UoR) and [Wayamba University of Sri Lanka](#) (WU), under the supervision of [CIMEA](#) (ENIC-NARIC Italy) and [HARNO](#) (ENIC-NARIC Estonia).

This document was finalised on 23rd April 2022; information included in this National Report refers to the period prior to this date.

1. Historical overview of higher education

Education in Sri Lanka has a long history of over 2300 years. The “Mahawamsha” and “Dipawamsha,” the chronicles of Sri Lanka that describe the history of the island from 6th Century BC are evident that an education system based on Buddhist temples and “Pirivenas” (monastic schools) were developed and continued, even today limited to clergy. Sri Lanka was colonised successively by the Portuguese, Dutch and British for several centuries from 1505 to 1948. The modern higher education in Sri Lanka began with the establishment of the Ceylon Medical School in 1870 under the British rule.

1.1 The education system of Sri Lanka

The country’s general (primary and secondary) education as well as higher education were formalised with the establishment of missionary schools by the Portuguese for propagating Roman Catholic religion, by the Dutch through the Dutch Reformed Church, and by the British through more broad-based approach to education compared to the prior colonisers. As a result, like the education systems of other British colonies, Sri Lankan education system found expression within the general framework of British colonialism (Wickramasinghe, 2018). British standard government schools were opened by the British, based on the recommendations of the Colebrooke Commission in 1836. Then, by 1938, late Hon. Dr C.W.W. Kannangara, and the Executive Committee of Education led to establish *Madhya Maha Vidyalayas* (MMV, Central Colleges) that were scattered around the island to provide education to all, free of charge, in the medium of either Sinhala or Tamil.

1.2. Formulation and Expansion of Higher Education in Sri Lanka

With this historical background Sri Lanka has inherited two major traditions of higher education, one going back to the institutions developed by the Buddhist Sangha, and the other derived from the British traditions of the religious and secular Universities. The former tradition has survived to this day in Sri Lanka through the “Pirivenas” or the Institutes of Buddhist education. Two prominent “Pirivenas” at the turn of the twentieth century were the “*Vidyodaya Pirivena*,” at Maligakanda, Colombo, and the “*Vidyalankara Pirivena*” in Kelaniya. The British tradition was introduced towards the end of the nineteenth century (1870), first with a Medical School, and later with a Law College (1874), a School of Agriculture (1884) and the Government Technical College (1893).

The University College in Colombo was set up in 1921 with affiliation to the London University. The college had always been intended to be a steppingstone to a fully-fledged degree-granting university with residential facilities. Later on, in 1942, the University of Ceylon was created in Colombo as the first unitary, residential and autonomous university in Sri Lanka with its seat in Peradeniya, amalgamating Ceylon University College and the Medical College. Sections of the University of Ceylon functioned in Colombo and Peradeniya and were considered as campuses of the same university until 1967. In 1956, following a change of government, and in conformity with its general policy of promoting national languages and culture, it was decided to establish two new universities, by bestowing university status to the “*Vidyodaya*” and “*Vidyalankara*” monastic colleges. Accordingly, as provided in the Vidyodaya University and Vidyalankara University Act No 45 of 1958, these two monastic colleges became two separate universities as Vidyalankara University and Vidyodaya University in 1959.

By the University Act No. 1 of 1972, four universities were came into being — Peradeniya, Colombo, Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara, followed by the Ceylon College of Technology, Katubedda, Moratuwa. They then became five constituent campuses of a single structure – the University of Sri Lanka, with one Vice Chancellor and five Presidents for five campuses.

On 15 July 1974, the sixth campus of the University of Sri Lanka was declared to be established in Jaffna and the extraordinary gazette no. 121/15 was published on 25 July 1974 declaring the opening of the Jaffna Campus. This system prevailed until 1977. Because of weakened university autonomy, a new act was introduced in 1978. Under the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978 all Campuses of the then single University, the University of Sri Lanka was split into six independent, autonomous institutions: University of Peradeniya, University of Colombo, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, University of Kelaniya, University of Moratuwa and University of Jaffna.

This act brought back some of the central features of the Ceylon University Ordinance of 1942 such as the Senate, the Council, and Court. Later, more universities were established under the provisions of the University Act of 1978.

2. Legal framework

The State Universities in Sri Lanka operate within the framework of the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978. The University Grants Commission distributes public money, allocated by the Government for teaching and research to universities and university affiliated institutes. In addition to this Act, a few more separate acts enacted by the Parliament, have established a few more universities and higher education institutes under the Ministry of Education as well as under some selected other Ministries. With the provision stipulated in the Section 25A of the University Act for granting degree awarding status, few higher education institutes were established both in the state sector and the private sector.

1.1. The University Act of 1978 with subsequent amendments

The universities and higher education institutes offering education in Sri Lanka can be grouped into four Blocks, from A to D as shown in the following figure (Figure 1). The highest contributions for delivering higher education in the country are claimed by the Institutes in the Block “A” and Block “C,” the institutes belong to the state sector and non-state or private sector functioning under the University Act of 1978 and subsequent amendments to it. Institutes belongs to the Block “C” privileges the provisions in Section 25 A of the Act while institutes in Block “A” privilege the rest.

The University Act of 1978 has the following basic features.

- Establishment of the University Grants Commission
- Powers, Duties and Functions of the University Grants Commission
- Powers of the Minister to direct the University Grants Commission
- Establishment of Universities, Campuses, University Colleges and an Institute or Centre for Higher Learning. and Recognition of institute or college as an institute or centre for higher learning.
- Powers, Duties and Functions of a University
- The Chancellor and the Officers of Universities
- The Authorities of a University
- Convocation of a University
- Officers and Authorities of a University College, and Their Powers, Duties and Functions



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- Powers of Degree Awarding Institutes
- Appointments to the Staff
- University Services Appeals Board
- Universities Provident Fund
- Financial Provisions
- University Students Union and Other Associations
- Application of the Housing and Town Improvement Ordinance
- Application of The Government Quarters (Recovery of Possession) Act and the State Lands (Recovery of Possession) Act
- General Provisions
- Special Provisions
- Statutes, By-Laws, Regulations and Rules
- Repeal and Transitory Provisions

For more information you may refer to the official website of the University Grants Commission at <https://www.ugc.ac.lk/>.

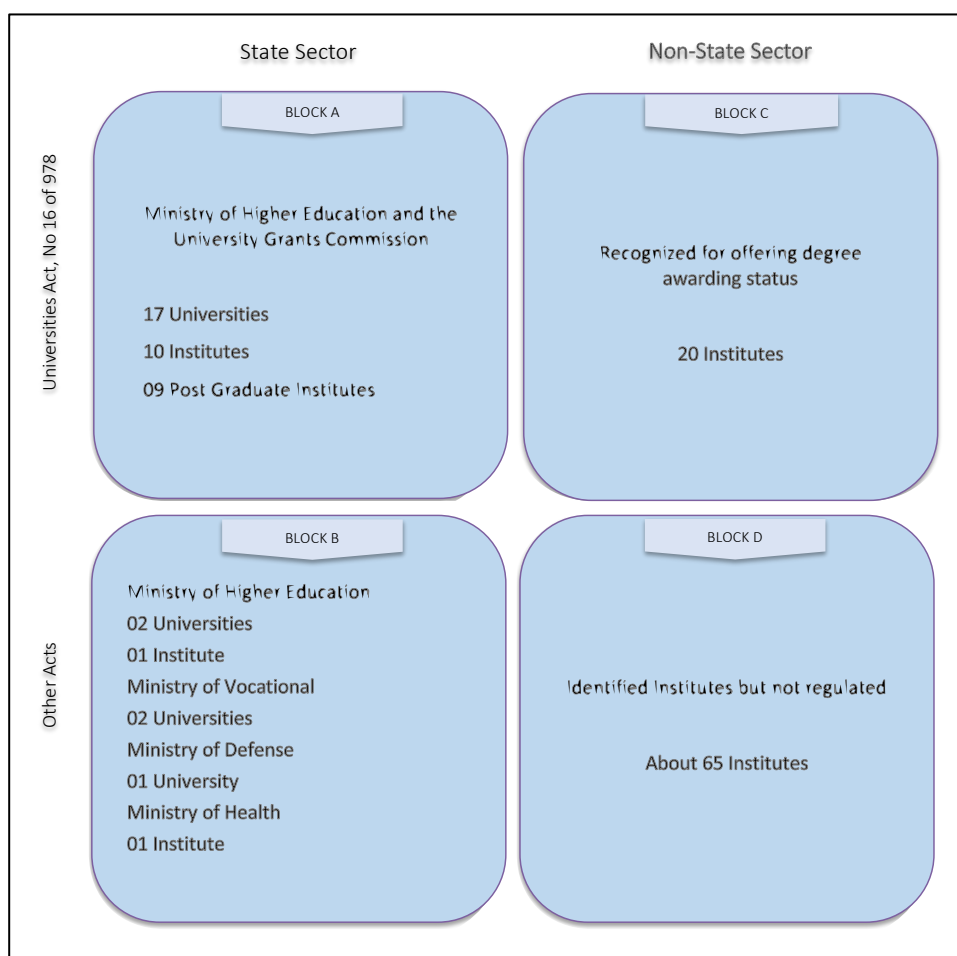


Figure 1. The categories of universities and higher education institutes in Sri Lanka



1.2. Other major Acts of Higher Education

Higher Education Institutes classified under the Block “B” has been established under separate acts of the Parliament. There is a group providing higher education without coming under any act or regulatory body, which is classified under the Block “D” in the above figure.

- Act No 74 of 1981 for establishing and functioning the Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka established especially for training of scholars in the Buddhist Doctrine and Discipline for the purpose of the dissemination of Buddhism and nurturing of Buddhist missionary activities in Sri Lanka and abroad.
- Act No. 26 of 1996 for the establishment and functioning of the Buddhasravaka Bhikku University or Sri Lanka Bhikku University to produce traditional, versatile Theravada scholars who are endowed with textual pragmatic knowledge of the Dhamma by way of comparative studies on Buddhist Philosophy and Eastern and Western languages.
- Act No. 31 of 2014 for the establishment and functioning the Sri Lanka Ocean University to produce the workforce requirement in the areas of fisheries, aquaculture development and value additions, marine engineering, port, and shipping operations.
- UNIVOTEC by the University of Vocational Technology Act Number 31 of 2008, the University of Vocational Technology has the same legal and academic status as any other national university in Sri Lanka.
- General Sir John Kotelawala Defence Academy” by the Parliamentary Act No 68 of 1981 and subsequently it was elevated to university status by the amendment Act No 27 of 1988, thereby empowering it to award Bachelors’ and Postgraduate degrees in Defence Studies
- Act, No. 29 of 1995 for establishing and functioning of the Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technological Education for the purpose of producing workforce resources at the technician level.

1.3. Sri Lanka Qualification Framework (SLQF)

The SLQF is a nationally consistent framework for all higher education qualifications offered in Sri Lanka (UGC, 2015). The SLQF applies to all higher education institutions (HEIs), both public and private, which provide post-secondary education in the country. The framework guides to recognise the volume of learning of students and identify the learning outcomes that are to be achieved by the qualification holders. The SLQF contains twelve levels and the descriptors of each of these levels are comprehensively defined. The volume of learning measured by the number of credits that should be earned by students for each qualification is also given. With the objective of having a uniform system in naming a qualification, the designators and qualifiers of each qualification have been identified in the

SLQF. The abbreviations for each qualification were also identified to maintain uniformity. The purposes and scope, and attributes expected for the award of each qualification, as well as the minimum admission requirements along with progression opportunities are also stated in the SLQF. The SLQF integrates the National Vocational Qualifications Framework (NVQF) developed by the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission and identify the pathways of lateral mobility between the vocational education sector and the higher education sector. The SLQF helps in the recognition of accredited prior learning to facilitate the vertical mobility within the higher education system. With the globalisation of higher education, national qualifications frameworks have been developed in many countries. These have not only helped to evaluate the higher educational qualifications obtained from different countries, but also have facilitated the appropriate international interpretation of national qualification levels. The SLQF also contributes to the evaluation of qualifications obtained from cross border higher education institutions (HEIs) as the levels identified in this framework are based on the learning outcomes of the qualification holders. The SLQF will assist in the evaluation of recognition of qualifications offered by Sri Lankan HEIs and this will be useful to the qualification holders to identify the level of their qualifications. In addition, the SLQF will assist potential employers to know the level of learning and the attributes of a particular qualification holder. The SLQF is useful to the HEIs, both in the state sector and in non-state sector in designing courses, as the minimum level of learning outcomes required for each qualification is indicated by the minimum number of credits that should be earned by a qualification holder. Thus, the SLQF will contribute towards strengthening the quality of higher education qualifications offered by universities and other HEIs in Sri Lanka. The SLQF does not deal with the designing and offering of short-term courses by any HEI that will meet specific learning outcomes. These courses may be of a few months duration and a certificate may be awarded on completion of such courses. Those certificates are not aligned with the qualifications identified in the SLQF. In addition, honorary degrees and certificates of attendance are not included in the SLQF. The honorary doctorate is differentiated from Doctoral degrees in the SLQF. The latest version of the SLQF was approved by the UGC on 17th September 2015 at the 925th Commission meeting and published in December 2015 by the Ministry of Higher Education and this version supersedes all previous versions (First Edition in June 2012, Second Edition in October 2012, and Third Edition in January 2013).

The SLQF also maps the existing levels of National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) followed by the institutes in the Tertiary Education sector and explains the requirement for horizontal mobility between two frameworks as summarised in the following figure (Figure 2).

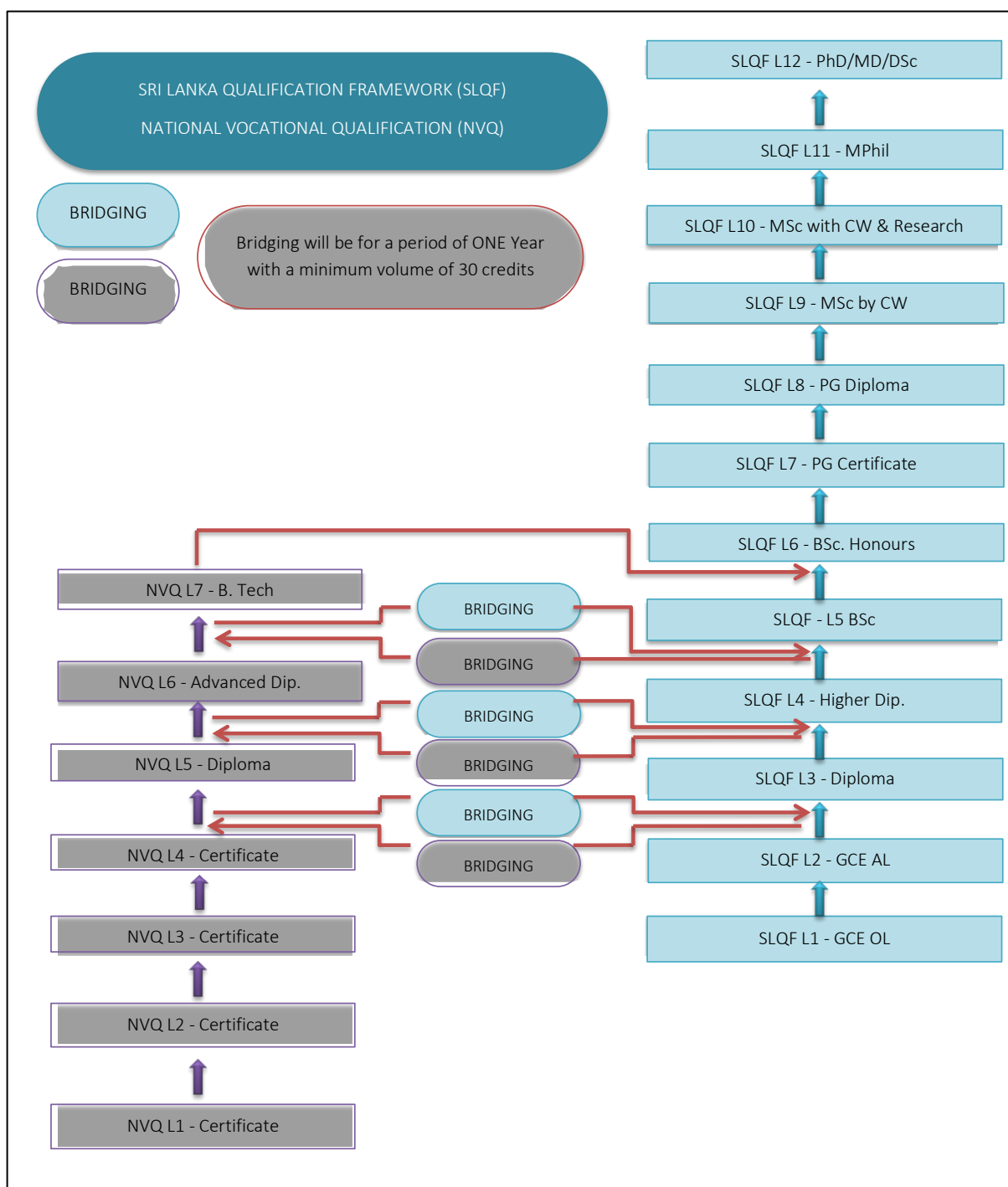


Figure 2. Lateral mobility pathways between the two qualification frameworks, SLQF and NVQF

1.4. Implementation procedure of SLQF to assure the quality of Higher Education

The implementation of SLQF by universities and HEIs across the four categories depends on their governance system. Universities in the “Block A” follow the circulars issued to comply with the SLQF by the UGC. At the initial stage of the implementation of SLQF, all the institutes in “Block A” were guided by the Quality Assurance Council of the UGC, to align all the study programmes with the SLQF, naming qualifications and reviewing curricula accordingly. Centres of Quality Assurance established at each university were given the responsibility to monitor SLQF implementation, and the respective subject Standing Committees were given the task of listing appropriate designators coming under its purview.

The designator is the name given to a qualification which indicates the broad area of study or discipline. The qualifier is the name given to a qualification which indicates the field of specialisation of a qualification. When proposing a new degree programme, contents should match with the Subject Benchmark Statements which describe the nature of study and the academic standards expected of graduates in specific subject areas. When a new study programme is proposed, it needs the clearance from QAC of the UGC, which specifically checks the name and the relevant SBS.

When a new study programme is proposed by a university in “Block B” the Specified Authority (SA) has the power to ensure that such degree programmes are aligned to SLQF requirements. All HEIs in the “Block B” maintain their own Internal Quality Assurance units that monitor the compliance with SLQF.

HEIs in the “Block C” have no regulatory requirement to adhere with SLQF, but all such institutes are required to maintain clarity in the quality of education offered by the institution, in order to maintain their status as responsible non-state higher education institutions that are recognised by the Specified Authority with degree-awarding status. The highest authority for the academic matters of these institutes guides their institutes individually.

3. Higher education governance

3.1. State Universities

Since the opening of the University of Ceylon in Colombo, which was established by the Ceylon University Ordinance No. 20 of 1942 as the first university, more state universities were established in the country: there are currently seventeen state universities in Sri Lanka, including the Open University (Table1). In addition, there are eleven postgraduate institutes affiliated to these universities. All these universities and institutions function under the

purview of the University Grants Commission (UGC), the apex body of the state university system in Sri Lanka which was established on 22nd December 1978 under the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978 (www.ugc.ac.lk). The functions of the UGC are planning and coordination of university education, allocation of funds to HEIs, maintenance of academic standards, regulation of the administration of HEIs and regulation of admission of students to HEIs.

Table 1. List of State Universities in Sri Lanka

University	District	Province	Founded	University Status
University of Colombo	Colombo	Western	01 Jun 1870	01 Jul 1942
Eastern University	Batticaloa	Eastern	01 Aug 1981	26 Sep 1986
University of Jaffna	Jaffna	Northern	01 Aug 1974	01 Jan 1979
University of Kelaniya	Gampaha	Western	1875	1959
University of Moratuwa	Colombo	Western	1966	01 Jan 1979
Open University	Colombo	Western	1978	01 Jan 1979
University of Peradeniya	Kandy	Central	01 Jul 1942	01 Jul 1942
Rajarata University	Anuradhapura	North Central	07 Nov 1995	31 Jan 1996
University of Ruhuna	Matara	Southern	27 Aug 1978	1 Feb 1984
Sabaragamuwa University	Ratnapura	Sabaragamuwa	20 Nov 1991	7 Nov 1995
South Eastern University	Ampara	Eastern	26 Jul 1995	27 Mar 1996
University of Sri Jayewardenepura	Colombo	Western	1873	1958
Uva Wellassa University	Badulla	Uva	01 Jun 2005	01 Jul 2005
University of the Visual and Performing Arts	Colombo	Western	1893	01 Jul 2005
Wayamba University	Kurunegala	North Western	January 1999	17 Aug 1999
Gampaha Wickramarachchi University	Gampaha	Western	1928	30 Oct 2020
University of Vavuniya	Vavuniya	Northern	1991	1 Aug 2021

Besides the above universities, there are six universities which are not under the University Grants Commission (Table 2).

Table 2. Other Government Universities which are established by Acts of Parliament of Sri Lanka

University	District	Province	Founded	Authority
Buddhasravaka Bhiksu University	Anuradhapura	North Central	1996	Ministry of Higher Education
Buddhist and Pali University	Colombo	Western	1982	Ministry of Higher Education
Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technological Education	Colombo	Western	1893	Ministry of Higher Education
General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University	Colombo	Western	2007	Ministry of Defence
University of Vocational Technology	Colombo	Western	2009	Ministry of Higher Education
Ocean University of Sri Lanka	Colombo	Western	2014	Ministry of Skills Development and Vocational Training

In addition, there are another nine recognised institutes affiliated to various Universities offering study programmes at different levels. Below list of postgraduate institutes affiliated to universities are offering postgraduate programmes (Table 3).

Table 3. Postgraduate institutes affiliated to universities

Institute	Affiliation
Postgraduate Institute of Medicine	University of Colombo
Postgraduate Institute of Agriculture	University of Peradeniya
Postgraduate Institute of Pali & Buddhist Studies	University of Kelaniya
Postgraduate Institute of Archaeology	University of Kelaniya
Postgraduate Institute of Management	University of Sri Jayewardenepura
Postgraduate Institute of Science	University of Peradeniya

Postgraduate Institute of English	Open University of Sri Lanka
Postgraduate Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences	University of Peradeniya
Postgraduate Institute of Indigenous Medicine	University of Colombo
Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences	University of Peradeniya
Postgraduate institute of Health Sciences	Ministry of Health
Institute of Human Resource Advancement	University of Colombo
Institute of Indigenous Medicine	University of Colombo
University of Colombo School of Computing	University of Colombo
National Institute of Library and Information Science	University of Colombo
Institute of Technology University of Moratuwa	University of Moratuwa
Institute of Bio-Chemistry, Molecular Biology and Bio Technology	University of Colombo
The National Centre for Advanced Studies in Humanities & Social Sciences	University Grants Commission
Swamy Vipulananda Institute of Aesthetic Studies	Eastern University of Sri Lanka
Institute for Agro-Technology and Rural Sciences	University of Colombo

3.2. Private institutions offering degrees and diplomas

Institutions offering degrees and diplomas outside the purview of the UGC are a recent development in the field of higher education in Sri Lanka. Some of these institutions are affiliated to foreign universities while others are based locally and function independently. Under the Section 25 A of the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978, following institutes have been recognised to award degrees (Table 4).

Table 4. Degree awarding institutes recognised by the University Grants Commission

Institute	District	Province	Founded	Recognised
Sri Lanka International Buddhist Academy	Kandy	Central	2009	22 Feb 2013
Esoft Metro Campus (Private) Limited	Colombo	Western	2009	03 Sep 2019
International College of Business and Technology	Colombo	Western	2000	25 Sep 2020
Sri Lanka Technological Campus	Colombo	Western	2015	02 Dec 2016
Business Management School (Private) Limited	Colombo	Western	2021	01 Jan 2021
Royal Institute Colombo (Private) Limited	Colombo	Western	2021	01 Jan 2021
International Institute of Health Science (Pvt) Ltd	Colombo	Western	2021	11 Jun 2021
Benedict XVI Catholic Institute of Higher Education (Private) Limited	Colombo	Western	2021	23 Mar 2021
International Collage of Business and Technology Limited	Colombo	Western	2021	23 Mar 2021
Institute of Chemistry Ceylon	Colombo	Western	2020	11 Mar 2020

Many of other private universities are franchised institutions operating on behalf of a recognised or unrecognised foreign degree awarding institutions. However, there is no legal entity or a regulating body to monitor the functioning of such institutions. There is no clear government policy towards encouraging local students to get enrolled in recognised institutes.

3.3. Professional Bodies offering Higher Education

Professional qualification system is very broad and diverse in terms of profession and level of the qualification. There are several professional education programmes one can start from the beginner level at any stage without any restriction. CIMA (Chartered Institute of Management Account), CA (Chartered Accountancy), and ACCA (Association of Chartered Certified Accountants) are some such professional qualifications anyone can start from the beginning. Some professional qualifications require a degree before starting to pursue. Entry requirement of MD (Doctor of Medicine) is MBBS (Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery) degree, and similarly Bachelor of Engineering degree is the entry qualification for Charter Engineering. Internationally recognised chartered qualifications such as CIMA, CA, CIMP (Chartered

Institute of Personal Management), CEng (Chartered Engineering), CChem (Chartered Chemist), CPIS (Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply) are recognised in Sri Lanka.

3.4. Academic authority at the University level

According to the University Act No 16 of 1978, the Senate is the academic authority of the university. Senates consist of Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Rector, Deans of Faculty, Heads of Departments, permanent Professors of the university, Librarian and two elected members from each faculty. The important decisions taken in faculty boards (Faculty level decision making body) including programmes offered, changes in curriculum, requirements of degrees and admission policy are implemented with the approval of senate.

Table 5. Salient features of university education in Sri Lanka

Item		2019 ^(b)	2020 ^(c)
1.	Universities (No.) ^(a)	15	15
2.	Other Higher Educational Institutions (No.) ^(a)	20	20
3.	Students (Undergraduates) (No.) ^(d)		
	Universities ^(e)	100,944	106,304
	Institutes	3,724	3,844
	Open University	25,165	26,255
4.	Total Staff (All Universities) (No.)		
	Academic	6,321	6,386
	Non-Academic	13,029	12,962
5.	Student/Teacher Ratio	17.5	18.9
6.	Age Specific Undergraduate Enrolment Ratio (19 - 23 yrs.) ^(d)	7.8	8.2
7.	Progression to University from GCE (A/L)		
	Eligible for University Admission (%)	62.87	62.40

Item		2019 ^(b)	2020 ^(c)
	Admission as a Percentage of Eligible (%)	18.98	22.50 ^(f)
8.	Students Graduated (No.) ^(g)	34,881	n. a
	Basic Degree	24,890	n. a
	Postgraduate Degree	9,991	n. a
9.	New Admission for Basic Degrees (No.) ^(h)	31,902	n. a
10.	Students Eligible to be Admitted to Universities (No.)	167,992	181,144

source: Annual Report 2020, Central Bank of Sri Lanka

- (a) Universities and higher education institutions that come under the purview of University Grants Commission.
- (b) Revised
- (c) Provisional
- (d) Excluding external degree courses
- (e) Excluding Open University
- (f) Estimates
- (g) Including external degrees and Open University
- (h) Excluding external degrees and Open University

Governing Council shall be the executive body and governing authority of the university. Governing Council is an independent body that acts between universities and the external bodies where they are accountable. The members of the Council include Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Rector, Deans of Faculties, two members elected by the senate among its own members and the members appointed by the University Grant Commission. The main functions of the Council include holding and controlling the property of the university, regulating the functions of the university according to the University Act, administering funds, preparing financial estimates, to prepare by laws for its internal activities such as examinations and awarding qualifications etc.,, appointing examiners, appointing board of welfare, entering into contracts on behalf of university, advising on the suspension of positions and exercising all other powers of the university. Governing council prepares long term strategic plan for the universities and monitor their implementation process.

3.5. Funding for higher education

At present, government funds are allocated based on estimates submitted to the General Treasury by the UGC. Then the UGC allocates funds among the universities based on historical records: the previous year's allocation is taken into consideration together with a certain additional percentage. Further, budgeting, and financial management are implemented based on UGC circulars, Financial Circulars, treasury rules etc. Most of the universities depend on the budget allocation of the government, especially for the undergraduate study programmes. Postgraduate and other programmes are self-funded. The salient figures of funding university education are given in the Table 5.

4. Pre-higher education system

4.1. Overview of primary and secondary education

4.1.1. Structure of primary and secondary education

Education in Sri Lanka is state funded and offered free of charge at all levels, including the university level. The government also provides free textbooks to schoolchildren. Literacy rates and educational attainment levels rose steadily after Sri Lanka became an independent nation in 1948, and today the youth literacy rate stands at 97%. The national education policy is formulated on the recommendations of the National Education Commission (NEC) established under an Act of Parliament. The Commission functions under the Presidential Secretariat and it submits its recommendations to the President. The government after consideration of these recommendations declares national policy on education. Educational reforms are formulated based on these policy recommendations.

4.1.2. Early childhood education

Children aged 4 and 5 years attend child centres known as pre-schools. The pre-schools themselves are unregulated and not standardised, they are maintained by local government authorities, community organisations and the private sector. With a lack of technical guidance, they are unable to provide consistency in content or quality across different parts of the country.

4.1.3. General education

Sri Lanka's education structure has five segments: primary, junior secondary, senior secondary, collegiate, and tertiary. The general education span is of 13 years duration from the

age of 6 to the age of 18. At present, education is compulsory from 6 to 14 years old (Grade 1 to 9). Around 93 per cent of students attending school complete grade 9. However, the Ministry of Education strongly advises all students to continue with their studies at least till the G.C.E Ordinary Level (O/L).

4.1.4. Primary education

Primary education starts at the age of 6 and lasts for five years (Grades 1-5) and at the end of this period, there is an optional scholarship examination conducted by the Department of Examinations to award bursaries to deserving children and to select students for placement in prestigious secondary schools.

4.1.5. Junior secondary level education

After primary education, the junior secondary level (referred to as middle school in some schools) lasts for 4 years (Grades 6-9) followed by 2 years (Grades 10-11) of the senior secondary level which is the preparation for the General Certificate of Education (G.C.E) Ordinary Level (O/Ls). At the junior secondary level, the child will begin to learn through a subject based curriculum that replaces the integrated curriculum offered in the primary education. From grade six onwards pupil's work is assessed through different evaluation procedures including written tests and observation of practical work. From grade six onwards students are given the option to study selected subjects in the English medium. They can select any subjects other than History and Religion to study in English if there is a competent teacher in the school.

4.1.6. Senior secondary level education

After completing the four-year junior secondary level at grade 9, students proceed to GCE O/L class at grade ten. This course is of two years duration and at the end the students sit a public examination, the GCE O/L. The curriculum consists of six core subjects and three or four optional subjects selected from several groups of subjects.

Students who are pursuing tertiary education must pass the G.C.E O/Ls to enter the collegiate level to study for other 2 years (grades 12-13) to sit for the G.C.E Advanced Level (A/L). Students who pass in six subjects with first language (Sinhala or Tamil), mathematics and three subjects at credit or higher level in the GCE O/L examination qualify to follow the GCE A/L course. This examination is held at the end of the general education stage at grade 11. Approximately 500,000 school students sit for this examination annually. Approximately 60 per cent of students qualify to proceed to GCE A/L grade.

The GCE AL course is of two years duration and constitutes the final stage of secondary education. The main features of this course are:

- there is an array of subjects from which students are required to select three subjects for study,
- there are four broad streams: Science, Commerce, Arts and Technology and the students are expected to decide the stream in which they wish to pursue their education and select the three subjects accordingly,
- all students should do general English, intended to improve their English language skills and a common general paper to develop generic skills.

Sri Lankan G.C.E (A/L) is comparable to the UK qualification of GCE standard on a subject-for-subject basis. On successful completion of this exam, students can move on to tertiary education, therefore the GCE A/Ls is the university entrance exam in Sri Lanka.

Admission to universities is determined on merit but a district quota is reserved for students coming from educationally disadvantaged districts. Marks obtained at the GCE A/L examination are standardised using the Z- score formulae. The Z-score is calculated by subtracting the raw mark of the subject by the mean mark of the subject, and then dividing by the standard deviation of the marks of the subject. Once you translate Z-score of a student appeared for a given subject it is comparable to the Z-score of another subject, although raw marks cannot be compared. Then, the average Z- Scores of the 3 or 4 subjects of the students is taken as the final Z- Score, which will be used to rank the students in each stream, island-wide and district-wide.

Around 200,000 students sit for this examination and approximately 60% of students reach the pass level but only about 15 per cent of these are selected to enter universities due to the limited number of placements available. Those who fail university admission join other tertiary level institutes in technical and professional areas or formally finish their education and seek jobs.

4.1.7. Examinations

The above mentioned GCE O/L and A/L national examinations and Grade 5 scholarship examinations are conducted by the Department of Examination, a department under the Ministry of education. The responsibility of this department is to certify the educational achievements by using evaluation instruments and techniques in a way that ensure reliability and validity of examinations. According to the Sri Lanka Qualification Framework (SLQF), GCE O/L is placed at SLQF Level 1 and GCE A/L is placed at SLQF Level 2.

4.1.8. Medium of instructions

The medium of instructions in primary and secondary schools is mainly Sinhala or Tamil (local languages). Some schools conduct classes in English medium too. However, it was a practice in some elite schools in the past. General organisation structure of the education system in Sri Lanka is illustrated in Figure 3.

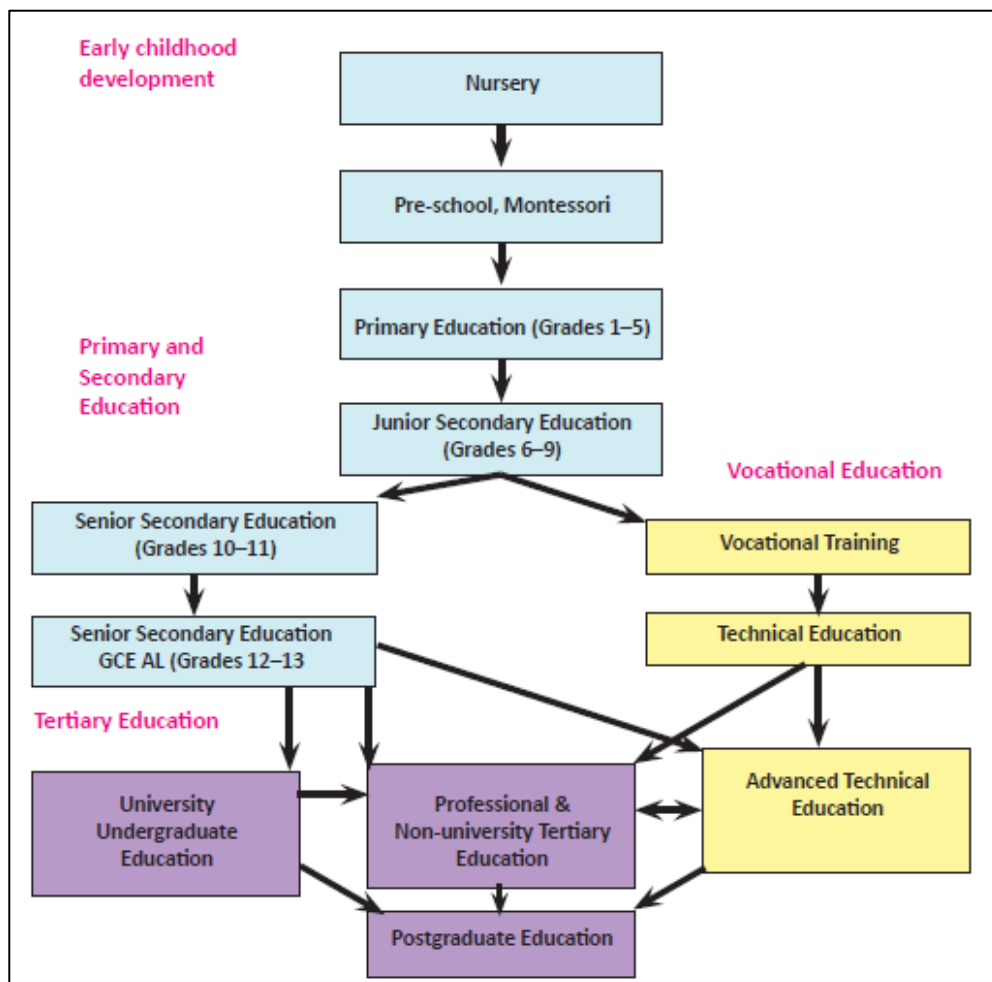


Figure 3. General organisation structure of the education system in Sri Lanka

4.1.9. School system in Sri Lanka

Schools in Sri Lanka are categorised as government schools, private schools, and international schools.

Government schools

Most of the schools in Sri Lanka are maintained by the government as a part of the free education. Currently there are 10,155 government schools with a student population of 4.2 million and 264,781 teachers (Central Bank, 2021, Table 6). The necessary resources to these schools have been supplied. All teachers in schools are appointed and paid by the government. At present the teacher pupil ratio is 1:17. The students are provided with a package of welfare

services which includes free textbooks, school uniforms, midday meals (for selected schools), free health services including dental treatment, scholarships for deserving students and subsidised transport. Children with disabilities are provided with special facilities to ensure equal opportunities.

The government schools are classified by type depending on the terminal grade of the school and the complexity of the courses offered. There are:

- **1AB** schools which have classes up to GCE AL in all subject streams, namely, Science, Arts and Commerce with or without primary sections,
- **1C** schools which have classes up to GCE AL in Arts and Commerce streams with or without primary sections,
- **Type 2** schools which have classes up to GCE OL only,
- **Type 3** schools which are primary schools and terminate at grade five while in a few places they go up to grade eight.

The curriculum offered is approved by the Ministry of Education. With the establishment of the provincial council system in the 1980s the central government handed control of most schools to local governments. However, the old schools which had been around since the colonial times were retained by the central government, creating three types of government schools:

1. National Schools
2. Provincial Schools
3. *Pirivenas* (Schools for Buddhist priests)

National schools

373 national schools come under the direct control of the Ministry of Education and therefore have direct funding from the ministry. Most of these schools were established during the colonial period and therefore are established institutions with better maintained facilities than the average public school. In recent past, newer schools and several central colleges have been upgraded to national schools from time to time, thereby reaching the total number of 373.

Provincial schools

Provincial Schools consists of the vast majority of schools in Sri Lanka. Funded and controlled by the local governments, many of them suffer from relatively poor facilities and shortage of teachers.

Piriven

Piriven are monastic colleges (similar to seminaries) for the education of Buddhist priests. There are 852 Piriven funded and maintained by the Ministry of Education. Young

priests undergo training at these pirivenas prior to their Ordination, and study for GCE O/L and A/L examinations. They may gain entrance to State Universities for higher religious studies.

Non-government schools

- Private schools

Private schools emerged in Sri Lanka, due to the emergence of the upper-middle class during the colonial era. These private schools follow the local curriculum set up by the Ministry of Education in the local language mediums of Sinhala, Tamil, or English. Many of the private schools have access to newer facilities than state run schools. Currently there are 66 Private schools (registered before 1960 and not since then): thirty-three of them are non-fee-levying Assisted Private Schools (also known as semi-government schools), and the remaining thirty-three are fee levying autonomous Private Schools, in addition to the Government Schools.

- International schools

International schools in Sri Lanka are mainly for the children of the expatriate community, charge high tuition fees and can therefore provide good facilities and high standards. However, they are not restricted to the expatriate community, and anyone with the ability and willingness to pay can join these schools. Starting from the late 1980s these schools have no regulation or control by the Ministry of Education as it comes under the Board of Investment (BOI).

Most international schools prepare students for the Edexcel General Certificate of Education (IGCSE) Ordinary, Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and Advanced (A2) Level examinations, which is the most popular qualification. Preparation for Cambridge International Examinations is also offered by a few schools. Both exams are offered under the supervision of the British Council, whereas some schools offer a direct partnership with the examination body in order to improve standards.

Table 5. Salient figures of General Education

Item		2019 ^(a)	2020 ^(b)
1.	Schools (No.)	11,084	11,077
	Government Schools	10,165	10,155
	Primary	3,891	3,891
	Secondary	6,274	6,264
	o/w National Schools	373	373



Item		2019 ^(a)	2020 ^(b)
	Other Schools	919	922
	Schools for Buddhist priests (Perivenas)	801	802
	Private & Special Schools ^(c)	118	120
2.	Students (No.) ^(d)	4,268,039	4,240,433
	Government Schools	4,061,653	4,031,865
	Other Schools	206,386	208,568
	Schools for Buddhist priests (Perivenas)	68,319	69,709
	Private & Special Schools ^(c)	138,067	138,859
	International Schools	140,223	n. a.
3.	Teachers (No.) ^(d)	261,803	264,781
	Government Schools	246,592	249,387
	Other Schools	15,211	15,394
	Schools for Buddhist priests (Perivenas)	7,200	7,221
	Private & Special Schools ^(c)	8,011	8,173
	International Schools	13,568	n. a.
4.	New Admissions (No.) ^(e)	328,632	318,179
5.	Student/Teacher Ratio		
	Government Schools	16	16
	Other Schools	14	14
	International Schools	10	n. a.
6.	Primary Net Enrolment Ratio (Grade 1-5)	91.12	n. a.

Item		2019 ^(a)	2020 ^(b)
7.	Secondary Net Enrolment Ratio (Grade 6-11)	96.62	n. a.
8.	Age Specific Enrolment Ratio (Grade 1-9)	94.77	n. a.
9.	Teachers Training Colleges (No.)	8	8
10.	Teachers Trained during the Year (No.)	2,954	973
11.	National Colleges of Education (No.)	19	19
	Teacher Trainees (No.)	16,237	12,373
	Number passed out during the Year	4,247	3,864

Source: Annual Report 2020, Central Bank of Sri Lanka

- (a) Revised
- (b) Provisional
- (c) Private schools approved by the Government and schools for children with special needs
- (d) This figure excludes international schools which are registered under the Companies Act
- (e) Excluding data from international schools
- (f) Government schools only

4.2. Overview of vocational and technical education

The first technical school in Sri Lanka was established in 1893. Over the past 40 years, institutions engaged in Technical and Vocational Education and Training have grown in number and complexity. Successive governments had concerns on building up a skilled work base, to provide employment and to alleviate poverty. Different institutions and training modalities have been introduced by the state, and through bilateral and multilateral projects.

A large majority of the population acquires skills through working in industry, as well as through the formal apprenticeship scheme of the National Apprenticeship and Industrial Training Authority (NAITA).

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is undertaken by a wide array of institutions in the state and non-state sectors. Almost all leading public sector TVET institutions whose primary function is training operate under the State Ministry of Skills Development, Vocational Education, Research & Innovations (<http://www.skillsmin.gov.lk/>). In addition, many other Ministries and Provincial Councils, through the Departments and Corporations under their purview, undertake training as an associate function. Although

institutional arrangements under ministries have been changed from time to time, Sri Lanka now has a well-established institutional structure.

By the end of 2020, there were 1,239 registered institutions in the TVET sector conducting over 3,400 accredited courses (Central Bank Report, 2021).

a) Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC)

Tertiary and Vocational Education (TVE) Act No. 20 of 1990, established the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission, with a mandate to formulate policy, plan, and coordinate, as well as set standards and regulate the TVET sector for relevance and quality of training. This Act was revised by amendment Act No. 50 of 1999 with the provision of additional powers to the Commission for funding and research.

b) National Institute of Technical Education of Sri Lanka (NITESL)

The National Institute of Technical Education of Sri Lanka (NITESL), established under Act No. 59 of 1998, performs the functions of teacher training and curriculum development activity for the TVET sector, provides training at the certificate and diploma level, and conducts degree level programmes.

c) Public sector training providers with primary responsibility in TVET

- **Department of Technical Education and Training (DTET)** has a network of 38 Technical Colleges with annual enrolment of about 20,000 trainees. Further, nine technical colleges (one in each province) have been upgraded to conduct diploma level courses.
- **National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority (NAITA):** established by Part II of TVE Act No. 20 of 1990, it has island wide network of inspectorate to conduct apprenticeship programmes with annual recruitment capacity of about 20,000 apprentices while operating on three national level institutes. NAITA is the successor of National Apprentice Board (NAB).
- **Vocational Training Authority of Sri Lanka (VTA):** Established by Act No. 12 of 1995, the VTA has a network of approximately 240 training centres with annual enrolment of about 20,000 students. It has a special focus on training youth in rural areas.
- **National Youth Services Council (NYSC):** established in 1970 under the National Youth Services Council Act, NYSC undertakes the training of youth in rural areas as a subsidiary function.
- **Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technical Education (SLIATE):** established by Act No. 29 of 1995, SLIATE provides training towards higher National Diploma and Diploma Level Qualifications and operates under the Ministry of Education. SLIATE has been focusing on fostering Advanced Technical Education at post-secondary level. It is mandated to establish Advanced Technological Institutes (ATI) in every province for technological education. At present it manages and supervises 11 ATIs and 7 ATI Sections. Its Chief

Executive Officer is the Director General while each ATIs and ATI sections are headed by a Director and an Academic Coordinator, respectively.

- **Institute of Technology, University of Moratuwa (ITUM):** established by Ordinance No. 3 of 2000, under the University Act No. 16 of 1978, ITUM primarily conducts the National Diploma in Technology course, which was previously conducted by the Faculty of Engineering of the University of Moratuwa.
- **Ceylon – German Technical Training Institute (CGTTI), presently operating** under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Skills Development, is the main institution for the training of automobile-related technicians.

d) **Training institutions attached to public sector agencies** whose primary responsibility is not training. Some of these institutions are:

- Institute of Construction Training and Development (ICTAD)
- Farm Machinery Training Institute, Department of Agriculture.
- Gem and Jewellery Research and Training Institute
- Ceylon Electricity Board Training Centre
- Sri Lanka Telecom Training Centres
- Sri Lanka Railway Technical Training Centre
- Sri Lanka Port Authority – Mahapola Training Institute
- National Institute of Plantation Management
- National Institute of Health Sciences

e) **Non-state sector training providers**

There is a large number of TVET institutions operating on a fee-levying basis. However, the majority of them are in the IT sector. In addition, there is a widespread network of non-fee levying institutions supported by national and international charities. Academic Educational opportunities are limited to the maximum of 10%-15% of students who successfully complete A/L exams.

4.2.1 The routes of obtaining NVQ certificates

There are two routes to obtain NVQ certificates

1. **By following an TVEC accredited course** (<https://www.tvec.gov.lk/>): students can obtain a NVQ certificate by following a Competency Based Training (CBT) course which is accredited by the TVEC.
2. Through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

If the candidate could prove his/her ability with adequate evidence of his/her competencies pertaining to qualifications stipulated in the National Competency Standards, then the candidate is eligible to obtain NVQ certificate through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Application for RPL assessment should be forwarded to National Apprentice and

Industrial Training Authority (NAITA) or Vocational Training Authority (VTA). The salient figures of tertiary and vocational education and training (TVET) are given in Table 7.

Table 6. The salient figures of tertiary and vocational education and training (TVET)

Item		2019	2020 ^(a)
1.	Registered TVET Institutions (No.) ^(b)	1,290	1,239
	Public	582	570
	Private and Non-Government Organisations	708	669
2.	Total Accredited Courses (No.)	2,691	3,413
	Public	2,099	2,900
	Private and Non-Government Organisations	592	513
3.	Issued NVQ Certificates (No.)	78,007	47,621
	DTET	11,199	8,670
	NAITA	11,387	8,266
	VTA	25,696	15,608
	NYSC	1,933	2,118
	Private	27,792	12,959

Source: Annual Report 2020 (Central Bank of Sri Lanka)

(a) Provisional

(b) As at year end

5. Access to higher education

5.1. Access qualifications

Sri Lanka has been able to provide an equal access to education for a considerable extent. Nevertheless, this widened access does not represent a total provision of equal

educational opportunity. Equality of educational opportunity is often narrowly interpreted as equal access to education, limiting opportunities to equally. However, admission to state universities is highly competitive and the system has several barriers that hinder access of students to higher education. Each year, about 200,000 students sit for the GCE (A/L) examination, and 40 – 60% of them qualify for admission to the universities. However, since the number of available places is limited, less than 30,000 are selected for admission. In A/L examination, over 200,000 students and in O/L examination over 100,000 students get drop-out each year, these students are unable to find a proper channel to acquire a higher-level qualification or gain relevant experience to enter the job market.

As a result, to overcome the above-mentioned situation, the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) has taken necessary steps to introduce the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) System with 7 Levels (Table 8). The NVQ level 7 is equivalent to the Bachelor's degree qualification. Students can enrol into the M.Sc. or any other postgraduate programme after completion the NVQ level 7. Students who have successfully completed NVQ level 5, can enter for the second year in most of the foreign universities where the relevant field is available. The criteria implied to allocate qualifications to the different levels are based on three parameters.

1. Complexity of the process that a qualification holder will carry out
2. Learning demand (difficulty in learning of those processes)
3. Responsibility of the job holder when relevant processes are carried out

Table 7. NVQ qualification categories

NVQ Level	Qualification Category	Description
Level 1	National Certificate	Recognises the acquisition of a core of entry level competencies
Level 2 Level 3 Level 4	National Certificate	Recognises increasing levels of competencies. Level 4 qualification provides for full national craftsmanship.
Level 5 Level 6	National Diploma Higher National Diploma	Recognises increasing level of competencies ranging from technician level to management level

Level 7	Bachelor's degree or equivalent	This level includes planning, re-sourcing & management process
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Entry qualifications for each level of education are described in the SLQF. Admission at undergraduate level to public universities are based solely on the results of the GCE (A/L) examination and the Z-score, which considers the difficulty level of the subjects. Only 6% of the students who sit the examination are admitted to those universities.

In the state sector of higher education, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has the autonomy in financing, staffing (mostly the non-academic) and academic quality standards. Individual universities do not directly control these matters and they could only propose their budget for each year.

Vocational and Technical Schools offer one-to-two-year diploma programmes and are under the Technical and Vocational Commission. Admission requirements are varied according to the programme. National Colleges of Education offer a three-year diploma for teacher training and the entry requirement is three passes at the G.C.E.(A/L) Examination. For Vocational Training there is a large number of training institutes run by the Government as well as the private sector for vocational training, catering to the needs of those who leave the school system at different levels.

Table 8. Entry qualifications for each level of higher education qualifications

SLQF Level & Minimum Admission Requirement Qualification	
Level 5 Bachelor's degree	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General Certificate of Education (Advanced level) or an equivalent qualification. 2. Completion of at least sixty credits of SLQF Levels 3 and 4 with a minimum of thirty credits at SLQF Level 4 or equivalent, or 3. Completion of NVQF level 6 followed by a corresponding cognitive bridging programme of minimum thirty credits, as determined by the academic authority of the HEI concerned, may also be considered as an equivalent qualification for admission in that field of specialisation.
Level 6 Bachelors Honours Degrees	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General Certificate of Education (Advanced level) or an equivalent qualification, or 2. Completion of at least one academic year of study in a Bachelor's degree programme and being selected for bachelor's Honours programme. or



**SLQF Level & Minimum Admission Requirement
Qualification**

	3. Completion of NVQF level 7 as determined by the academic authority of the HEI concerned may also be considered as an equivalent qualification for admission in that field of specialisation.
Level 7 Postgraduate Certificate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Bachelor's degree, (a) including thirty credits in the relevant subject area or (b) with prior learning/work experience equivalent to thirty credits in the relevant subject area, or 2. A qualification in the relevant subject area equivalent to 1(a) or 1(b), or 3. Completion of NVQ level 7, as determined by the academic authority of HEI, may be considered.
Level 8 Postgraduate Diploma	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Bachelor's degree, (a) including thirty credits in the relevant subject area or (b) with prior learning/work experience equivalent to thirty credits in the relevant subject area or 2. A qualification in the relevant subject area equivalent to 1(a) or 1(b), or 3. Completion of NVQ level 7, as determined by the academic authority of HEI, may be considered.
Level 9 Master's degree by Coursework	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Bachelor's degree, (a) including thirty credits in the relevant subject area or (b) with prior learning/work experience equivalent to thirty credits in the relevant subject area or 2. A qualification in the relevant subject area equivalent to 1(a) or 1(b), or 3. Completion of NVQ level 7, as determined by the academic authority of HEI, may be considered.
Level 10 Master's degree	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Bachelor's degree including thirty credits in the relevant subject area, or 2. A qualification of SLQF level 6 or above in the relevant area of study, or 3. A professional qualification equivalent to SLQF level 6 or above, or 4. Completion of NVQ level 7 with a minimum GPA of 3.0 on a scale of 0-4, as determined by the academic authority of HEI, may be considered for admission in that field of specialisation.

SLQF Level & Minimum Admission Requirement Qualification

Level 11 Master of Philosophy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Bachelor's Honours degree of Level 6 with a minimum of thirty credits in the relevant field, or 2. A Bachelor's Honours degree of Level 6 with a minimum of thirty credits in a related field and successful completion of a qualifying examination, or 3. A Bachelor's degree of level 5 with a minimum GPA of 3 on a scale of 0-4 and successful completion of a qualifying examination which will be conducted after completion of thirty credits equivalent to SLQF 6 in the same or related field, or 4. A qualification of SLQF level 7 or above in the relevant field, or level 5. Completion of NVQ Level 7 with a minimum GPA of 3.0 on a scale of 0-4 and successful completion of a qualifying examination which will be conducted after completion of 30 credits equivalent to SLQF level 6 or 7, as determined by the academic authority of HEI, may also be considered for admission to SLQF level 11 in that field of specialisation.
Level 12 Doctoral degree	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Master of Philosophy Degree, or 2. A Master's degree, or 3A Bachelor's Honours Degree of Level 6 with a minimum GPA of 3.0 on a scale of 0-4, with or without a qualifying examination as determined by the academic authority of HEI., or 3. A holder of Bachelor's degree Honours of Level 6 who has registered to follow a MPhil degree may be upgraded to PhD level after a minimum period of one year provided that his/her research competencies are of exceptional merit, or 4. A Bachelor's degree of level 5 with a minimum GPA of 3 in the scale of 0-4 and successful completion of a qualifying examination which will be conducted after completion of 30 credits equivalent to SLQF 6 in the same or related field and register to follow an MPhil degree may be upgraded to PhD level after a minimum period of one year provided that his/her research competencies are of exceptional merit.

The National Vocational Qualifications Framework makes provision for a nationally consistent, technical, and vocational education and training in Sri Lanka relevant to economic and social development, and it follows international standards as well. The National Vocational

Qualifications of Sri Lanka have been formulated based on national competency standards identified by the industry stakeholders. The competency standards include relevant technical and employability competencies. The system awards qualifications at seven levels as given in Table 10.

Table 9. Seven Levels of Qualifications and generalised description of NVQF

Level	Qualification	Generalised Description
Level 1	National Certificate	Recognises the acquisitions of entry level competencies
Level 2 Level 3 Level 4	National Certificate Levels	Recognise increasing levels of competencies. Level 4 qualification provides for full craftsmanship/workmanship.
Level 5 Level 6	National Diploma	Recognise the increasing levels of competencies of technicians including supervision and process management.
Level 7	Bachelor's degree	Recognises the vocational/technological competencies at Bachelor's degree level

The qualifications at different levels have been identified to suit employment requirements of the industry. Vertical mobility upwards through the system is straightforward as seamless progression is facilitated (Figure 4). Lateral entry into the system is possible at certain levels for those who have work experience in an appropriate field and assessed to have Recognised Prior Learning (RPL). Each training institution conduct RPL assessments to consider NVQ qualifications through RPL. The framework progressively includes new qualifications based on national competency standards. It envisaged that over time, many areas of technical and vocational education and training covered by national competency standards.

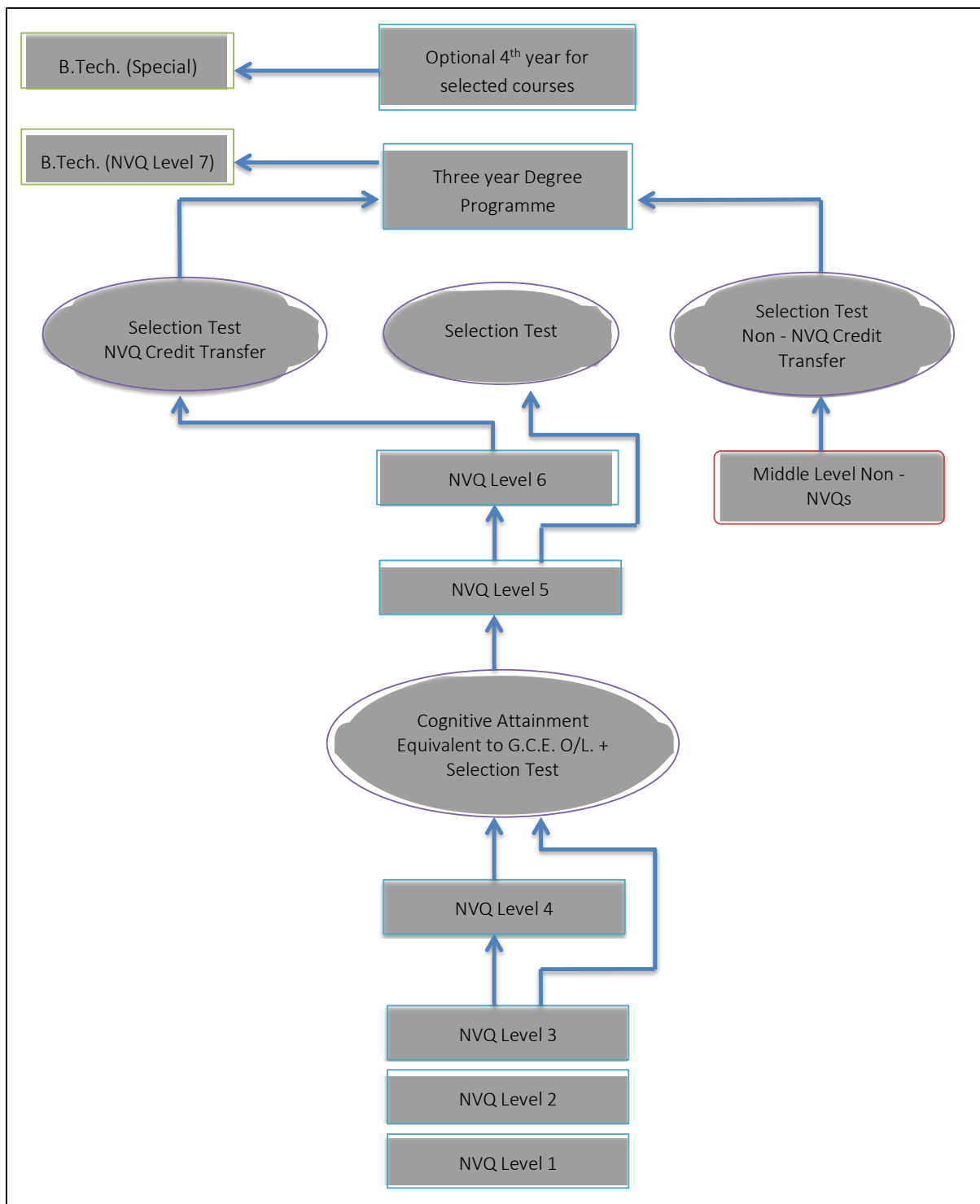


Figure 4. NVQ Framework of Sri Lanka

5.2. Specific admission requirements

Selection of students is done on the base of a rank order on the average Z-Scores obtained by candidates at the GCE Advanced Level to replicate a district basis representation. Only the top ranked students from each district get admission. In the field of Arts, students are selected on the base of merit, and for all the other fields (science, commerce, and technology) only 40% are selected from the national merit list, while the 55% from the district quota calculated according to the population of the district. The remaining 5% is taken from the educationally disadvantaged districts (University Admission Handbook 2019/2020). Apart from that, there are some programmes that examine specific skills in addition to the -score.

Table 10. Study programmes that need specific requirements for admission

Programme and offering university	
1.	Course of study in arts - Sripaale campus of the University of Colombo
2.	Course of study in arts - University of the Visual and performing arts, Colombo
3.	Course of study in arts - Ramanathan Academy of fine arts of the University of Jaffna
4.	Course of study in arts - Swami Vipulananda institute of aesthetic studies of the eastern university
5.	Management and information technology (MIT)- University of Kelaniya
6.	Architecture – University of Moratuwa
7.	Fashion Design and Product development – University of Moratuwa
8.	Landscape architecture – University of Moratuwa
9.	Design – University of Moratuwa
10.	Computer science and technology – University of Uva Wellassa
11.	Entrepreneurship and management – University of Uva Wellassa

Programme and offering university	
12.	Industrial information technology – University of Uva Wellassa
13.	Hospitality, tourism, and event management – University of Uva Wellassa
14.	Physical education – University of Sabaraagamuwa and University of Jaffna
15.	Sports science and management - University Sabaragamuwa
16.	University of Kelaniya
17.	University of Sri Jayawardanapura
18.	Speech and hearing science - University of Kelaniya
19.	Information technology & management - University of Moratuwa
20.	Information systems – University of Colombo School of Computing
21.	Translation studies – University of Kelaniya, University of Sabaragamuwa, University of Jaffna, Eastern University
22.	Film and television studies – University of Kelaniya
23.	Information and communication technology (ICT) - University of Vavuniya and Rajarata University
24.	Financial Engineering – University of Kelaniya

6. Types of higher education institutions

6.1. Universities

Admission at undergraduate level to these public universities is based solely on the results of the G.C.E.(A/L) Examination and the Z-score, which consider the difficulty level of the subjects. Due to the fact that restricted facilities admissions have become extremely competitive, only 6% of the students who sit the examination are admitted to the universities.

Certificate, Diploma, and Bachelor's degree: certificates and diplomas are conferred after one or two years. A Bachelor's degree is earned after three years as a General Degree or after 4 years as a Special Degree. A degree in Medicine is awarded after 5 years of study with an additional year of internship, which is compulsory. Typical degrees: BA/BSc – (General degree) – 3 years, BA/BSc – (Special degree) and Bachelor of Commerce degrees – 4 years, MBBS 5 years, LLB-3years.

Master's degree, M Phil, Postgraduate Diploma: a Master's degree is obtained with two more years of study after Bachelor's degree and has a dissertation in addition to papers on theory. The M. Phil /PhD syllabus consists of research and may go on for 3 years after Master's degree. Postgraduate Diplomas, unless stated otherwise, require one year of study. Typical degrees: MA/MSc/MBA – 2 years, PhD – 3 years after a Master's degree.

6.2. Vocational and Technical Schools

These offer one-to-two-year diploma programmes and are under the Technical and Vocational Commission. Admission requirements differs according to the programme.

6.3. National Colleges of Education

A 3-year diploma for teacher training is offered at these schools and the entry requirement is three passes at the G.C.E.

6.4. Vocational Training

There are also many training institutes run by the Government as well as the private sector for vocational training, catering to the needs of those who leave the school system at different levels

6.5. Professional higher education institutions

There are many local and foreign professional bodies active in Sri Lanka such as the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, the British Computer Society, the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, etc. There are institutions providing entrance to professions such as the Sri Lanka Law College.

7. Higher education programmes and qualifications

In Sri Lanka, secondary education comprises two levels, GCE O/L and GCE A/L. Junior Secondary and Senior Secondary are respectively entry qualifications to tertiary education. Tertiary education or higher education qualifications are offered at universities or degree-granting institutions. Types of various higher education qualifications offered by such institutions are described below together with their entry qualifications.

7.1. Diploma

1. General Certificate of Education (Advanced level) or an equivalent qualification, or
2. A foundation course equivalent to SLQF level 2 after a minimum of 12 years of schooling followed by aptitude test, or
3. Completion of NVQF level 4 or accredited work experience or accredited prior learning followed by a corresponding cognitive bridging programme of minimum 30 credits, as determined by the academic authority of the HEI concerned, may also be considered as equivalent qualification for admission to SLQF level 3 in a particular field of specialisation.

7.2. Higher Diploma

1. General Certificate of Education (Advanced level) or an equivalent qualification and completion of a minimum of 30 credits at SLQF Level 3, or
2. Completion of NVQF level 5 followed by a corresponding cognitive bridging programme of minimum 30 credits, as determined by the academic authority of the HEI concerned, may also be considered as an equivalent qualification in that field of specialisation.

7.3. Bachelor's degree

1. General Certificate of Education (Advanced level) or an equivalent qualification and completion of at least 60 credits of SLQF levels 3 and 4 with a minimum of 30 credits at SLQF Level 4 or equivalent, or

2. Completion of NVQF level 6 followed by a corresponding cognitive bridging programme of minimum 30 credits, as determined by the academic authority of the HEI concerned, may also be considered as an equivalent qualification for admission in that field of specialisation.

7.4. Bachelors Honours Degree

1. General Certificate of Education (Advanced level) or an equivalent qualification, or
2. Completion of at least one academic year of study in a Bachelor's degree programme and being selected for Bachelor's Honours programme, or
3. Completion of NVQF level 7, as determined by the academic authority of the HEI concerned, may also be considered as an equivalent qualification for admission in that field of specialization.

7.5. Postgraduate Certificate

The purpose of this qualification is to enhance the capacity of graduates/holders of professional qualifications to advance their knowledge in a particular field of study. This qualification demands a high level of theoretical engagement and does not involve conducting a research project or an independent study. Any Bachelor's degree with a minimum of 150 credits and a minimum student workload of 7500 notional learning hours, encompassing professional practice spanning over several levels starting from SLQF level 3, and accredited by a recognised Accreditation Agency may be included in SLQF level 7, provided that the final outcome of the qualification meets the descriptors of SLQF level 7

7.6. Postgraduate Diploma

The purpose of this qualification is to enhance the capacity of graduates/holders of professional qualifications to advance their knowledge, and other abilities relevant to areas within a specific field of study or discipline enabling professional advancement. This qualification demands a high level of theoretical engagement. It may not require conducting a research project but requires conducting some independent studies.

7.7. Master's degree by Course Work

The purpose of this qualification is to enhance the capacity of graduates/holders of professional qualifications to advance their knowledge and investigative skills, and other abilities relevant to areas within a specific field of study or discipline enabling conversion into a different discipline/profession, forming the basis for academic advancement or enhancing

the managerial, administrative and technological capacity. This qualification demands a high level of theoretical engagement and guided independent study equivalent to a minimum of 5 credits.

7.8. Master's degree

The purpose of this qualification is to enhance the capacity of graduates/holders of professional qualifications to advance their knowledge and research skills, and other abilities relevant to areas within a specific field of study or discipline preparing graduates for higher degrees and specialised professional employment or enhancing the managerial, administrative and technological capacity. This qualification should be earned by completing course work aggregating to a minimum of 30 credits at SLQF levels 7 to 10 and a research project with notional learning hours totalling to a minimum of 15 credits. The research should be carried out under the guidance of a supervisor holding an equivalent or a higher qualification and should make an original academic contribution to a particular discipline. The candidate should submit a dissertation which is evaluated and accepted.

7.9. Master of Philosophy Degree

The purpose of this qualification is to develop the capacity of a graduate with an advanced knowledge in a specific field of study or discipline, to conduct advanced research, to further embark on higher degrees and specialised professional employment, to enhance professional, managerial, administrative and technological capacities. For an MPhil degree, a candidate is required to carry out high level research under guidance of a person holding equal or higher qualifications and make a significant contribution to a particular discipline or field. The research may be pure discipline based or multidisciplinary. The candidate should submit a thesis incorporating research findings, which is assessed and accepted. The research must satisfy peer review and should merit publication. The candidate may also be required to follow some course work as preparatory work or for value addition to research. However, this course work shall not contribute to the credit accumulated towards the qualification.

7.10. Doctoral degree

The purpose of this qualification is to develop the capacity of a graduate to generate substantive insights in a particular area of study through high quality, original and independent research, and contribute to scholarship, or enhancing professional, managerial, administrative research and technological capacities to enable specialised professional employment at the highest level. For a Doctoral degree, a candidate is required to carry out high level research under the guidance of a supervisor holding a qualification of this SLQF Level or equivalent

(unless in exceptional circumstances that will have to be justified in writing before being appointed as a supervisor) and make a significant and original academic contribution creating new knowledge. The candidate should submit a thesis incorporating research findings which are assessed and accepted. The candidate may also be required to follow some course work as preparatory work or for value addition to research. However, this course work shall not contribute to the credits accumulated towards the qualifications. The research must satisfy peer review and should merit publication. The research may be purely discipline-based or multidisciplinary.

8. Organisation of academic year

Academic year varies per university and can also differ per faculty within a university. The academic year is not synchronised in the University system due to various reasons such as delays in enrolling students, socio-political unrest in the country in the past, student and staff trade union actions and now due to Covid19 pandemic. The academic year is usually divided into two semesters (and occasionally into three trimesters). A semester is often 15 weeks. After each semester, end-semester examinations are held after a few weeks of study leave (preparatory period given to students).

9. Grading and credit system

9.1. Grading scale and system

There is a significant variation in the degree awarding criteria as well as in the structure of the degree programmes conducted by different faculties/universities within the Sri Lankan university system. Having noted that, the University Grants Commission (UGC) decided to formulate a common Credit and Qualification Framework (CQF) for Sri Lankan University System to maintain the consistency and comparability of university level qualifications. Accordingly, the UGC approved Grades and Grade Point Values and Cut-off levels of GPA for Awarding Classes/Passes for all the undergraduate degree programmes conducted within Sri Lankan University System as follows:

Table 11. Grades and Grade Point Values

Degree Programme	Grades and Grade Point Values											
	A+	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	E
All Degrees	4.00	4.00	3.70	3.30	3.00	2.70	2.30	2.00	1.70	1.30	1.00	0.00

Table 12. Cut-off levels of GPA for Awarding Classes/Passes

Degree Programme	Grade Point Average (GPA) for Awarding Classes/Passes			
	First	Second Upper	Second Lower	Pass
All Degrees	3.70	3.30	3.00	2.00

9.2. Credit system

Sri Lanka Qualification Framework (SLQF) has prescribed the volume of learning at each level in terms of credits. In the SLQF credit system, the student workload of a study programme is defined as 1500 notional learning hours per academic year.

The notional learning hours include direct contact hours with teachers and trainers, time spent in self-learning, preparation for assignments, carrying out assignments and assessments. The need to undertake any or all of these will be considered when a credit is being allocated to a course unit or a module, when the syllabus is designed. It is understood that the combination of learning activities may vary from one course unit or module to another.

The minimum number of credits per course unit or module is one. The number of credits per course unit or module should be indicated by whole numbers.

One credit is considered equivalent to fifty notional learning hours for a taught course, laboratory studies course or field studies/clinical work. In case of industrial training, including time allocated for assessments and in case of research, as well as time allocated for literature survey, one credit is considered equivalent to a minimum of one hundred notional hours.

Learning outcomes must be assessed by valid and reliable methods of assessment. Credits must be earned by students after successful completion of the work required and appropriate assessment of learning outcomes.

Every qualification type of Levels 1 - 12 on the SLQF has a credit value allocated to each of its component parts and to the whole qualification (Table 14).

Before SLQF came into effect, a credit was defined by several universities as 15 contact hours of lectures, 30 hours of Laboratory Practical Sessions /Field Practical Sessions / Field Visits or any judicial combination of the above.

Table 13. Minimum volume of learning required for each Level of SLQF

SLQF Level	Qualifications Awarded	Minimum Volume of Learning For the Award
12	Doctor of Philosophy / MD with Board Certification/ Doctor of Letters/ Doctor of Science	Minimum 3 years of fulltime or equivalent time of original research after SLQL 6 or above.
11	Master of Philosophy	Minimum 2 years of fulltime or equivalent time of original research after SLQL 6 or above
10	Masters with course work and a research component	60 credits after SLQL 5 or 6 including a research component of minimum 15 credits
9	Masters by course work	30 credits after SLQL 5 or SLQL 6
8	Postgraduate Diploma	25 credits after SLQL 5 or SLQL 6
7	Postgraduate Certificate	20 credits after SLQL 5 or SLQL 6
6	Bachelors Honours	120 credits after SLQL 2, of which 90 credits after SLQL3, of which 60 credits after SLQL4, of which 30 credits after SLQL5
5	Bachelors	90 credits after SLQL 2, of which 60 credits after SLQL3, of which 30 credits after SLQL4
4	Higher Diploma	60 credits after SLQL 2 of which 30 credits after SLQL3
3	Diploma	30 credits after SLQL 2
2	Advanced Certificate (G C E A/L or equivalent)	
1	Certificate (G C E O/L or equivalent)	

10. Quality assurance and recognition of national qualifications

National Quality Assurance Framework for Higher Education in Sri Lanka: the Quality Assurance & Accreditation Council (QAAC) was established under the University Grants Commission. The national framework for quality assurance in higher education in Sri Lanka has five important elements:

1. Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework
2. Subject Benchmark Statements
3. Codes of Practice
4. Internal Quality Assurance
5. External Quality Assurance

10.1. The Sri Lanka Qualification Framework (SLQF)

The Sri Lanka Qualification Framework (SLQF) is a nationally consistent framework for all higher education qualifications which was first published in 2012 and subsequently revised in 2015. The SLQF 2015 comprises twelve levels and each of these levels are comprehensively defined. SLQF 2015 also integrates the National Vocational Qualification Framework (NVQF) developed by the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission and the pathways of lateral mobility between the vocational and higher education sectors are identified. For more details about the SLQF please refer to the Annex X.

10.2. Subject Benchmark Statements

Subject Benchmark Statements are policy documents which describe the nature of study and the academic standards expected from graduates in specific subject areas. 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. The QAC-UGC has formulated fifty benchmarks in different disciplines, which have been the foundation for more than seven hundred undergraduate degree programmes offered by seventeen state universities.

10.3. Codes of Practice

The Codes of Practice consist of academic procedures which provide a reference point for all universities, covering the main aspects of academic standards and the quality of education. Some of the codes developed by the QAC-UGC are on Assessment of Students,

Career Guidance, External Assessors, Postgraduate Research Programmes, Programme Approval, Monitoring and Review, Student Support and Guidance, Staff Development, Student Feedback, Peer Observation, External Degrees, and Academic Accountability for Academic Staff.

10.4. Internal Quality Assurance

In 2015, the UGC issued a Circular Letter that required every university under its purview to establish an Internal Quality Assurance Unit (IQAU) to plan, develop, implement, and monitor quality assurance activities within the institution, as well as to liaise with the Quality Assurance Council of the UGC with respect to external quality assurance activities (Figure 5). Following significant progress in implementation of the recommendations contained in the 2015 Circular, the UGC issued another in 2019, to further strengthen the quality of the educational experience offered to its' students by any university.

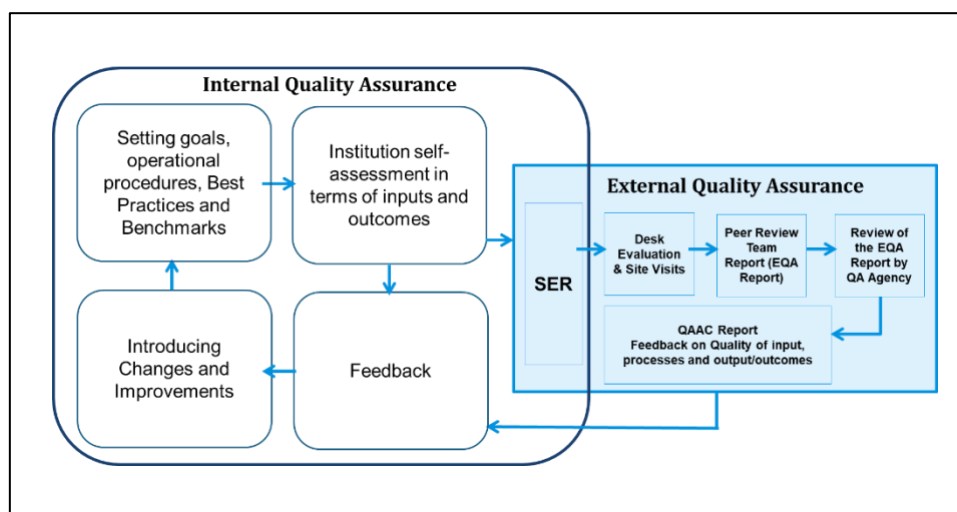


Figure 5. Functional link between internal and external reviews (from UGC, 2015)

10.5. External Quality Assurance

External Quality Assurance (EQA) serves three main purposes.

1. Improvement: to maintain and improve the performance quality of higher education institutions.
2. Accountability: to provide accountability to society for the use of public funds.
3. Compliance and control: to ensure that higher education institutions do what governments want them to do.

There are two levels of EQAs, Institutional level review (IR) and Programme level review (PR). Institutional review analyses and tests the effectiveness of an institution's processes for

managing and assuring the quality of academic activities undertaken by the University. It evaluates the extent to which internal quality assurance schemes can be relied upon to maintain the quality of provision of educational programmes over time. Programme review evaluates the quality of a student's learning experience at the level of a programme of study. Programme review refers to evaluation of a programme of study offered singly or jointly by a department. Subject reviews were carried out during the first cycle of external reviews in Sri Lanka, whereas the focus shifted to programme reviews in the second cycle.

Regardless of the level of the review, the process has three distinct phases: preparation (a) by the university and (b) by the review team; (c) the review visit, the review report and process prior to publication. The outcome of external review is a published report, which is meant to inform the institution and external parties of the findings of the review and to provide a reference point to support and guide staff in their continuing quality assurance activities. The report gives an overall judgment on the reviewers' assessment of the performance of the institution or programme in relation to the agreed criteria and standards. It also provides a statement on the level of accomplishment of the institution or programme, with commendations and recommendations to encourage further excellence and/or improvement based on the grade achieved.

The review process involves the following activities to ascertain the authenticity of the claims made in the SER.

- Scrutinising recorded evidence
- Meetings and discussions with staff and students, alumni, and other stakeholders
- Observation of teaching-learning and research sessions, learning resources and facilities
- Debriefing

The review is expected to provide a concise account of the peer review process, the findings of the review, documents perused, analysis of the evidence provided, facilities available, teaching-learning and research activities observed, issues identified, and discussions held. The report will conclude with the Review Team's reflections and conclusions on the level of accomplishment by the Institution/Programme about the quality and standard that has been reviewed. In addition, the report will indicate the degree of compliance with SLQF guidelines at the relevant level. The report will also include commendations on the accomplishments by institute/programme and recommendations for quality enhancement.

11. Verification of qualifications

At present, qualifications issued by any institute are verified from the same institutes that issued the qualification, by writing to them. There is no standard mechanism developed for verification of qualifications.

12. International and foreign higher education providers in Sri Lanka

The capacity of State Universities is limited and have a monopoly on the awarding of degrees that keeps tens of thousands of qualified school leavers out of the university system each year. Because of that, considering the benefits accruing to the qualified school leavers, opportunity to enrol for a foreign degree programme locally is an excellent start. The government encourage such education institutions to operate under strict guidelines ensuring the entry requirements, curricular, quality and consistency.

While foreign universities are currently prohibited from establishing standalone campuses in Sri Lanka, there are 57 private institutions offering undergraduate and graduate degrees in collaboration with 15 foreign partners, according to the Minister for Higher Education. For that a separate section, Non-state Higher Education division was established at the Ministry of Education.

13. Recognition of foreign qualifications

The recognition of qualifications awarded by higher education institutions that are based outside Sri Lanka's state sector has becoming increasingly problematic. Many factors have contributed to this situation: the globalisation of higher education, academic and professional mobility, increasing diversification in qualifications and in education providers, as well as the changes brought about by the development of innovative technologies for distance learning.

The convention applicable to Sri Lanka is the Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education, declared in Tokyo in 2011 (the Tokyo Declaration). An invitation has been extended to Sri Lanka by UNESCO, to become a signatory to this convention. There have been some preliminary discussions in the Ministry of Higher Education about it, but the main challenge that Sri Lanka faces in becoming a signatory to this convention is the need to establish a National Information Centre, in order to enable the fulfilment of Articles VIII.3 (Each Party shall take adequate measures for the development and maintenance of a national information centre that will provide higher education information)

as well as Article VIII.1 (which sets out more details of the type of information that should be provided).

This concept paper sets out an outline of the tasks to be fulfilled by a national recognition and information centre of the type envisaged in the Tokyo Convention and the resources that will be required to run such a centre.

13.1. Tasks to be fulfilled by the proposed centre

The tasks to be fulfilled by a national recognition and information centre for higher education would be as follows:

- Provide adequate and reliable information on qualifications, education systems, and recognition procedures to individual holders of qualifications, higher education institutions and other stakeholders
- Provide information, advice, or formal decisions on the recognition of qualifications based on their assessment by applying explicit criteria and procedures
- Provide information to holders of foreign qualifications on their rights regarding recognition; serve as the main information point at national level on the recognition of higher education qualifications, as well as qualifications giving access to higher education
- Cooperate with other information centres, higher education institutions, their networks, and other relevant actors in the national context
- Contribute, as appropriate, to the development of higher education policies and regulations at national and regional level in recognition and, as relevant, related areas
- Participate in the elaboration and/or dissemination of publications and other information material on its own education system and contribute to publications, surveys, comparative studies, and other research activities undertaken by UNESCO and other international organisations
- Collect and regularly update information on education systems, qualifications frameworks, foreign qualifications and their comparability to the qualifications offered by Sri Lankan universities, legislation on recognition of qualifications and quality assurance, officially recognised and/or accredited/evaluated institutions, access requirements
- Cooperate with other organisations working in the field of qualification recognition in other countries
- Gather and regularly update information on the national education system.

Type of information to be provided by the centre

- Legal basis and description of Sri Lanka's education system
- Lists of recognised and accredited higher education institutions and programmes in Sri Lanka
- Quality Assurance related information pertinent to the Sri Lankan higher education system
- Details of the Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework
- General description of the functions of the QAC-UGC and the Non-State Division of the Ministry of Higher Education, about evaluation and accreditation of HEIs
- Description of the national procedure for academic recognition of foreign qualifications
- Information on the national procedures for professional recognition of foreign qualifications
- Description of the assessment methodology; processing time and delays; rights and possibilities for appeal

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Annex 1. Educational System of Sri Lanka



Figure 6. Educational System of Sri Lanka (Source: Word Education Services)

Annex 2. Key national documents referred

Sri Lanka Qualification Framework

https://www.ugc.ac.lk/attachments/1156_SLQF_2016_en.pdf

National Vocational Qualifications Framework of Sri Lanka – Operations Manual

https://www.tvec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/NVQ_Operation_Manual_2021_new.pdf

Sri Lanka Universities Act

https://www.ugc.ac.lk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=49&Itemid=195&lang=en

Annex 3. Useful links

Department of Examination: <https://www.doenets.lk/>

Department of Technical Education and Training: <http://dtet.gov.lk/en/>

Eastern University, Sri Lanka: <http://www.esn.ac.lk/>

Gampaha Wickramarachchi University of Indigenous Medicine: <http://gwu.ac.lk/>

Ministry of Education: <https://moe.gov.lk/>

National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority: <http://www.naita.gov.lk/>

Quality Assurance Council of UGC: <https://www.eugc.ac.lk/qac/>

Rajarata University of Sri Lanka: <http://www.rjt.ac.lk/>

Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka: <http://www.sab.ac.lk/>

South Eastern University of Sri Lanka: <http://www.seu.ac.lk/>

State Ministry of Skills Development, Vocational Education, Research & Innovations: <http://www.skillsmin.gov.lk/>

Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission: <https://www.tvec.gov.lk/>

The Open University of Sri Lanka: <http://www.ou.ac.lk/>

University Grants Commission: <https://www.ugc.ac.lk/>

University of Colombo: <http://www.cmb.ac.lk/>

University of Jaffna: <http://www.jfn.ac.lk/>



University of Kelaniya: <http://www.kln.ac.lk/>

University of Moratuwa: <https://uom.lk>

University of Peradeniya: <http://www.pdn.ac.lk/>

University of Ruhuna: <http://www.ruh.ac.lk/>

University of Sri Jayewardenepura: <http://www.sjp.ac.lk/>

University of the Visual & Performing Arts: <http://www.vpa.ac.lk/>

University of Vavuniya: <http://www.vau.ac.lk/>

University of Vocational Technology: <http://univotec.ac.lk/>

Uva Wellassa University of Sri Lanka: <http://www.uwu.ac.lk/>

Wayamba University of Sri Lanka: <http://www.wyb.ac.lk/>

