

**Peer Team Report on the Assessment and Accreditation**  
**Of**  
**Union Christian College, Alwaye, Kerala.**


**Introduction**

The Union Christian College, Alwaye, is a minority, grant-in-aid institution established in the year 1921 jointly by three different Christian denomination groups. The college is affiliated to Mahatma Gandhi University and fully recognized for funding by the UGC under 2(f) and 12(b) of the UGC Act 1956. The University Act does not provide for autonomy. As an affiliated institution, the College offers 12 UG programmes in English, Malayalam, History, Economics, Psychology, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Polymer Chemistry, Botany, Zoology, and Biological Techniques & Specimen Preparation (a UGC - sponsored vocational course). There are eight PG departments and all of them have been recognized as research centres for Ph.D. programmes. Besides these University affiliated courses, the College offers on its own five Certificate Courses, six Diplomas and one PG Diploma programme through Centres established by the College.

The goals of the College include offering strong academic programmes and imparting social commitment and value orientation to the students.

The College, located in an area of 32 acres of land within the urban limits of Alwaye, has all the essential infra-structural facilities, including academic buildings, library, computer centre, auditorium and seminar halls, sports and play fields, hostels and staff quarters, guest house, a canteen and non-resident student centre, bank, post-office and health centre.

There are 119 teachers on the faculty. Of them only one teacher is temporary and

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is paid by the management. There is a good contingent of 89 non-teaching staff including the administrative and supporting staff working in various Departments; of these, 12 staff members are paid from the management funds. There is a good distribution of male and female members among the teaching as well as non-teaching staff. The college, with a total student strength of 1308 in its various academic programmes, has substantially more number of girls than boys. For instance, in the P.G Programmes, only 10 percent of the students are boys. Also among the residents in the hostels, about 200 are girls, while there are just 13 boys in the boys' hostel.

The peer team consisting of Dr. V. Vasanthi Devi (Chairperson), Dr. Ravikala Kamath and Dr.C. Thangamuthu (members) visited the college from 24<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> of Feb 1999, for assessing the institution for accreditation. Dr. Latha Pillai and Mr. Madukar B.S from the NAAC accompanied and helped the team during its visit.

The team had extensive interactions and discussions with the Principal, management, faculty, staff, students, parents and alumni. They also held interactive discussions with representatives of other statutory organisations / associations on the campus. It visited all the Departments, Centres and facilities. All the relevant documents were examined.

On the basis of the assessment, the evaluation report is presented below under seven criteria as evolved by the NAAC.

#### **Criterion – I : Curricular Aspects**

The college has high academic standards inspite of the constraints imposed by an affiliating system and the restrictive socio-political milieu in which it operates. In addition to the conventional programme options available in any college, many new



curricular initiatives, responding to the needs of the times, have been taken. Among these are the UGC sponsored vocational course of B.Sc. in Biological Techniques and Specimen Preparation and the grant-in-aid course of the University in Polymer Chemistry and the skill developing ancillary courses, a range of diploma courses and the human resource development initiatives taken through the special Institute of Communication and Information Technology, Centre for Cultural and Ecological Studies, Centre for Human Potentials and Community Development, Centre for Applied Sciences, Regional Folklore Centre and the Nodal Centre for Consultancy Services proposed to be shortly set up. The material concerns of skill development and employability along with the humanising and sensitising mission of higher education have been addressed in the wide range of enrichment courses offered. Some of these courses are multidisciplinary and offer varied perspectives to understand reality.

The college has particularly taken efforts to develop linkages with its immediate environment through locality specific courses of wildlife management and nature studies, tribal studies, archaeology, industrial floriculture and regional folklore studies.

It is claimed by the college that the range of programme options available to the college is limited partly because of the restriction on sanction of new teaching posts and programmes and not permitting self financing courses. Within these constraints the college has creditably acquitted itself.

The college has recently taken a step to provide options in the subsidiaries of Mathematics and History for B.A.Economics students. Similar possibilities could be attempted in other programmes.



There is no specific mechanism available for feedback on programmes from employers and society. However as the college is part of a small community, familial and social contacts are kept alive and there is a flow of information through informal channels.

### **Criterion – II: Teaching, Learning and Evaluation**

The teacher is the key to the success of an educational institution. Her professional equipment, pedagogical skills, commitment to her vocation, concern for students, the values she upholds and transmits in her being – these are the determinants of the profile of a college. The records of student performance, other material evidence of departmental work and the extensive interactions the NAAC visiting team had with all sections of the college community indicate that very high standards of teaching- learning are maintained in the college. Teachers are easily accessible to students and parents and very cordial relations with students are maintained and cherished by teachers. An “open house” is scheduled towards the end of every academic year, which is extremely unusual in colleges. The performance of the student is discussed with her and her parents and helpful suggestions for improvement are given.

An innovative evaluation method has been adopted from the current academic year. After admission, students are administered a test. Students who are identified as needing assistance are given special attention. Those who are found to be exceptionally endowed are put through enhancement programmes. They are encouraged to aspire high, offered guidance in course planning and helped through seminars / project work.



Class tests are periodically conducted and progress reports maintained.

Model examinations in theory and practical are conducted in preparation for university examinations.

The Mahatma Gandhi University has recently revised its regulations to introduce continuous internal assessment for 20% of total marks from the year 1998-99. The new scheme is well received by faculty and students. The students are informed of the mechanics of the internal assessment scheme at the beginning of the academic year.

Faculty recruitment is apparently transparent. The committee was informed that the college has never been involved in litigation on recruitment issues.

Faculty development programmes including UGC, FIP, ~~are availed~~ <sup>have benefitted</sup> of only by a few teachers. In every department about half the teachers have only the Master's Degree. It is particularly so in the case of older teachers and women. Teachers need to be motivated towards professional improvement.

Pedagogical methods, too, need modernisation and diversification. The conventional lecture mode seems to be, by and large, the main teaching method adopted. All departments have computers and some have O.H.P s and V.C.R's. Their utilisation, however, seems to be restricted to research purposes and limited occasions.

The technical and clerical staffs are however, trained in computer use. The national / international linkages established by the college are strong.

### **Criterion - III: Research, Consultancy and Extension.**

The promotion and maintenance of research culture is strong in some departments of the College. The faculty members in other departments also may be motivated and initiated into active research.

There is a publication of a multidisciplinary bi-annual research journal "Discourses" by the institution. A considerable number of publications by some of the faculty in science disciplines have appeared in refereed journals.

The record of extension activities in the college, is creditable. The faculty participate in several community oriented activities to provide expertise and consultancy services; Egs: to the Forest Department on Wildlife studies, to local self government agencies on project preparation, to the Department of Archaeology on archaeological conservation, to the Department of agriculture and farmers on soil analysis. Such efforts need to be documented. There is a proposal to set up a nodal unit to co-ordinate consultancy services, which is a welcome initiative. The faculty and college authorities could do well to enhance these strengths that they possess and turn them to advantage for themselves and for the community at large.

A special initiative of the faculty of various departments to extend help for the training of schoolteachers in the neighbourhood is to be appreciated.

The field exposure of the students undergoing some of the extension oriented diploma / certificate programmes is a special feature of this institution. For instance, the Department of Malayalam, as part of its diploma programme in folk lore studies take their students to interior tribal region and facilitate their learning of the local tribal folk lore

#### **Criterion – IV: Infrastructure and Learning Resources**

The college has general infrastructure facilities that have catered to normal functioning of several courses. But there is need to pay due attention to enhancing them in terms of equipments in and maintenance of the laboratories.



The efforts made to introduce computers in most departments is laudable. The girls' hostel ambience and friendly atmosphere reported by the hostelites, is suggestive of positive contribution to student life in the campus. But the avowed distinctive goal / feature of the college to perpetuate holistic education through "Residential Life" seems to have been eroded by the reduction of hostel facilities of the boys. The college may reconsider to revive the same. It is also imperative that the women's hostel and the canteen facilities are improved. There is support for the welfare of the needy students.

Good health services are provided through a full fledged rural mission hospital established by the college management.

The college has good sports facilities including a gymnasium, basket ball and tennis courts. An indoor stadium is being constructed which will add to the strength of the sports infrastructure. However the maintenance of sports facilities deserve better attention.

Some of the buildings are very old. The college may have to consider a massive renovation / replacement with modern amenities.

The library collection seems fairly adequate and is under computerisation. The functioning of the library may be made more user friendly.

The communication network connecting various buildings spread over the sprawling campus may need priority attention.

#### **CRITERION – V: Student Support and Progression**

The alumni association is seen by the peer team as the singularly strong point of the college. The basis for the strong alumni support is rooted in the very genuine sentimental regard that has been evoked and sustained over the years.



A high quality of teacher-student relationship is prevalent. The sentiment articulated by the present and past students indicated a rare mix of academic and socio-emotional togetherness.

An effective machinery to help needy students with financial and other support is available. There is a large number of scholarship supported by endowments and fellowships instituted by many agencies and alumni. This forms a source of fiscal support for the disadvantaged students and also provides incentive for the meritorious students.

The college has established several student based clubs and committees such as debating club, quiz club, <sup>like N.C.C., N.S.S., Nature Action Group.</sup> singing club etc. But the participation of students in cultural activities seems to be limited. This is an area where the college may well initiate efforts for the holistic development of students.

The counselling and placement efforts, currently very implicit, could be formalised as specific welfare related scheme. There is at present, an informal mechanism of career counselling and placement cell. It may be necessary that some professionalism is adopted in these activities.

The college has had a good record of achievements in sports at University and state levels. The women hockey performance has been good. The rich sports infrastructure available in the college, if fully utilised by motivating the potential students, the achievement on the sports field may be enhanced.

The initiative to popularise student assessment of teachers is a noteworthy development. There is reason to believe that it will further enhance the quality of the teaching learning processes.





### Criterion – VI: Organization and Management

In the organizational structure of the management, there is a Standing Council consisting of representatives from the <sup>four</sup> ~~three~~ church denominations, which is vested with policy making power. The actual management and administration of the college are done by the Governing Body of which the Principal is the Member Secretary and the Bursar and the Manager are the other ex-officio members. Besides these three ex-officio members, six members are elected to the Governing Body from among the members and the Standing Council. It may be noted that at least two or three persons in the Governing Body happen to be the faculty members of the college belonging to the church denominations. Further, there is a statutory Staff Council, an advisory body, consisting of all the HODs and two elected teacher representatives (other than HODs). Thus there is some scope for teachers participating in the decision making, through their possible representations in all the three bodies of the management. It has also been observed that the Principal and Bursar (who is also a faculty member) provide an effective link between the teachers and the management.

The Principal's post is for a tenure of five years and there have been instances of the Principal getting back to the Department after completion of his tenure. This concept of Principal as "first-among-the-equals" tends to remove the gap between the Principal and the teachers. It is generally acknowledged that the management structure is quite cohesive and harmonious, genuinely promoting the interests of institution.

The management of the college deserves appreciation for maintaining the academic reputation of the college in terms of faculty recruitment and student admissions. It is gratifying to note that the faculty recruitment and student admission

procedures are transparent and sound. There had never been any monetary consideration whatsoever, as it is widely acclaimed and acknowledged by the students, parents, alumni and faculty.

The resource mobilization, particularly through the munificence of the alumni of the college, is found to be a very distinctive feature of this institution. This is quite evident from various buildings and facilities sponsored by contributions from the alumni and others. The utilization of resources is also found to be equally efficient. A big indoor-stadium currently under construction at an estimated cost of over Rs. 75 lakhs, exclusively out of donations, is indicative of the institutional strength in resource generation.

The management has arranged Computer Training Programmes for the staff. There is a partial computerization of administration. The management facilitates teachers availing the Teacher Fellowship Scheme of the UGC. But it is learnt from the teachers that they face some procedural difficulties in getting clearance from the governmental authorities.

The management and the Principal have taken initiative in getting the Internet / web-site for this college established. Their proposed plan for library automation and computer networking of the various departments of campus deserve appreciation.

The budgeting and auditing procedures as followed by the management are systematic. The Bursar in-charge of budgeting is one of the teachers and the proposals from the individual Departments are processed by the Planning Board of the college, again consisting of teachers. Thus there is a good scope for participation of the teachers in administrative / academic decision making.



There are several teacher-committees in-charge of academic responsibilities of the college, such as Academic Calendar and Attendance, Student Affairs, Examinations, Tutorial Groups, Open House Programmes, Cultural Activities, UGC Assistance, Coordination with Agencies such as AIACHE and UBCHEA. The decentralisation and division of responsibilities among the teachers would enhance their sense of participation.

Above all, the college management has prepared a clear-cut perspective plan for the expansion and strengthening of the college infrastructure, launching of new academic programmes (M.C.A, M.B.A, M.Sc. Statistics, M.A Psychology etc.) and restoring of residential character of the campus by expanding hostel facilities. It is quite imaginative of the college to have thought about a long-term programme of action, with specific time frames for various phases of development.

#### **Criterion – VII: Innovative healthy practices**

The institution has evolved several practices which are generally not found in many institutions. These practices as perceived by the college have helped the institution improve and sustain the academic standards. Some of the significant practices are as follows:

- Different organisational structures in the campus, under the aegis of which, several applied diploma / certificate courses are offered, as extra courses outside the classrooms. The students of the regular stream also have the opportunity to do some of these courses concurrently.



- Open-house programme under which there is a periodical review of student performance by the teacher in the presence of the parents of the concerned students and informal remedial coaching by identifying the weaker students.
- Student assessment of teachers which has been well received by the teachers as well as the students.
- Linkages with national and international agencies (a covenant is to be signed with the Association of Presbyterian Colleges and Universities in USA)
- Publication of a multidisciplinary bi-annual research journal "Discourses" by the institution.
- A considerable number of publications by some of the strong faculty in science disciplines in refereed journals.
- Significant consultancy services provided by some of the faculty members (to Forest Department on wildlife studies, to local self government agencies on project preparation, to the Department of Archaeology on archaeological conservation, to the Department of agriculture and farmers on soil analysis).
- Extension work by the faculty of various departments particularly for the improvement of school teachers in the neighbourhood.
- Special initiatives of the faculty and students (eg: History Department developing a region specific Archaeological Museum).
- Strong thrust on extension activities.
- A good number of scholarships under various fellowships, endowment schemes.



- Peaceful and harmonious existence of students from various religious denominations and political affiliations, with freedom of faith and expression, as exemplified by the campus atmosphere.
- A strong alumni and Parent Teacher Association which have made substantial contributions towards the development of the college infrastructure.
- A full-fledged hospital catering to the health requirements of the faculty and the students.
- A clear vision and perspective plan for the future development of the college including the courses to be started in a phased manner with definite time frame.

## CONCLUSION

The college was born with a vision of academic excellence, value education and strong Christian fellowship. Over the 78 years of its existence, the college has remained, by and large, true to its vision.

The curricular, co-curricular and extension programmes offered in the college indicate a convergence of the multiple goals of higher education. The college has tried to be alive to the educating, sensitising and bonding missions of higher education. A strong alumni association ensures continuity of the institutional mission, and provides moral and financial support to the endeavours of the college.

The interaction with many sections of the college community give a feel of a close knit community, with the management, principal, teachers, students, non-teaching staff, parents and alumni working together in a beautiful partnership.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized first letter followed by a horizontal line and a flourish.

An early objective of a residential institution, throbbing with youthful exuberance, has been eroded and lost as winds of change swept across the institution. Boys' hostels have been closed down, as they became unsustainable for some reason or the other. Today, the management, the faculty and the alumni look back with a sense of loss and propose to revive residential life. There will undoubtedly be a considerable enrichment of life on the campus and this must be given top priority.

The buildings and facilities have suffered the ravages of time. They need modernising and renewal and if necessary replacement. Women's hostels need particular attention.

The teachers need to be trained in modern pedagogical techniques, so that the conventional class room dynamics change. Teachers must be encouraged to internalise a research culture.

New curricular programmes, particularly in the frontier areas must be started. The library must be enriched, modernised, computerised, and made more user-friendly.

Before concluding the report the committee would like to recommend that an institution with such manifest strengths needs to be conferred autonomy for a fuller development of its potentials.

A master plan for the future development of the institution has been drawn up. The college has dared to dream and dream big. The peer team wishes that the college forges the will, collective and committed, to realise the dream.



Dr. V. Vasanthi Devi

(Chairperson)

I accept the above comments and suggestions



Dr. Rajan Vasughese  
Principal



## **National Assessment and Accreditation Council**

An Autonomous Institution of the University Grants Commission  
Bangalore

### **CERTIFICATE OF ACCREDITATION**

*The Executive Committee of the  
National Assessment and Accreditation Council  
on the recommendation of the duly appointed  
Peer Team, is pleased to declare the  
Union Christian College, Always  
an affiliated college of the Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala, as  
**Accredited<sup>1</sup>**  
at the five star level<sup>2</sup>.*



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Date: April 29, 1999

*Alenavam*  
Chairman

1. This certification is valid for a period of 5 years with effect from the assessment academic year 1998-1999.
2. An institutional score (%) in the range of 55-60 denotes one star, 60-65 two stars, 65-70 three stars, 70-75 four stars, and 75 and above five stars (upper limit exclusive).

EC-3-2