

HEC 2008 CURRICULUM OF ENGLISH BS (4 YEAR)

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The Curriculum Revision Committee of the HEC has published a revised curriculum for the study of English at higher education institutions in Pakistan in a BS 4 year and MS 2 year program. The committee included prominent names such as that of Dr. Fauzia Shamim and Dr. Farhan Ebadat Yar Khan and was guided by Dr. Raiz-u-Haq Tariq member Academics HEC. The panelists took a bold initiative in order to revive and redesign programs offered at the bachelors and masters level in the fields of English Literature and English Linguistics. Indeed there was a dire need for these programs to be redesigned and revamped in order to make the students meet 21st century challenges.

In the introduction the committee states the aims and objectives of the program. The aim of the program is to “encourage learners to read and analyze critically a wide range of texts” and “to orient the learners to various traditions of writing/speech in English”. There is also a long list of objectives. These objectives state that the learner would be able to “display substantial proficiency in oral and written English, and demonstrate knowledge of core linguistics and literature concepts and their various applications” (p.10). In terms of aims and objectives the committee could not give us anything new. These are the same aims and objectives which even the old curriculum was geared to achieving.

The development of complete programs of BS (4 year) and MS (2 year) in linguistics is quite commendable; in fact it should be considered a giant leap. Previously linguistics used to merely stem from English literature and it was only in the final

year of M.A. that the students would be allowed to take up linguistics. The new curriculum would allow the students to go through a full six year linguistics program, hence allowing them to brush their skills as prospective experts of the English language. However, the author feels that graduates in linguistics would technically be qualified to teach English language only and not literature. It may be noted that the graduates of the previous program (old curriculum) used to have a taste of English literature at least for a year (in the case of M.A. students), hence enabling them to somehow manage to teach both language and literature. The author feels that both the programs could have been enriched by making the students of either program take up a few courses of either literature or linguistics. The previous curriculum offered a course of TESL (Teaching of English as a Second Language) at the M.A. literature level, which enabled students to have a hands on experience of teaching the English language.

The introduction of a masters' degree in Applied Linguistics (MS 2 years) is indeed a welcome addition. This is likely to contribute to the effectiveness of English language teaching. Graduates of this program would surely be able to better meet the current issues of English language teaching and they would be able to base their teaching on modern lines.

There is no doubt that the program looks great on paper, however, the problems arising while implementing it are yet to be seen. Research thesis is a welcoming addition to the new program. The concerned department will have to work hard in order to provide proper research facilities for students; this may include setting up of a proper computer laboratory. The same could be said for other courses offered in the linguistics program. A proper, well equipped, and modern language laboratory would be the need of the hour. The language laboratory of the English department at the University of Karachi, during the author's student life, used to be terrible.

The introduction of mandatory internship for the students is also a bold initiative. However, one sincerely hopes that the internship would not merely be treated as a subject to be taught in the classroom. The author hopes that the students would

be able to get some practical experience by working in the field of their choice.

A surprise omission from the old curriculum is that of Practical Criticism. It was a very practical course and the students were able to learn various techniques to identify and critically analyze various texts from literature. The course also enabled the students to appreciate and critically analyze poetry. The author feels that the absence of this course would greatly affect the quality of graduates of literature. All said and done, the curriculum leaves a lot to be desired as it has bypassed Chaucer's Canterbury Tales and Wordsworth's Prelude at the MS level and this is to say the least.