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## INAUGURATION OF THE ADVANCED CERTIFICATE PROGRAMME IN LABORATORY TECHNOLOGY

The first ever formal programme to train laboratory technicians by any Sri Lankan university commenced, when Prof. M. T. M. Tiffry, Chairman of the UGC Standing Committee on Science inaugurated the Advanced Certificate Programme in Laboratory Technology Programme (ACLT) on October 27<sup>th</sup> last year at the Open University of Sri Lanka. This programme is offered by the Faculty of Natural Sciences.

In his inaugural address, Prof. Jiffry spoke of the long-standing request by the University Technical Officers union that the university system should provide a formal training course for the career upliftment of University Technical Officers. He thanked the Open University of Sri Lanka for filling the lacuna in the university system and fulfilling a much wanted need in Sri Lanka.

The Vice Chancellor, Prof. N. R. A. Arthenayake in his welcome address referred to the fact that the commencement of this programme was greatly facilitated by the Commonwealth of Learning, which as the co-ordinating body to further open learning and distance education amongst Commonwealth countries, made available distance study material from a private institution in the UK for adaptation and use by South Asian open universities by holding a regional workshop in 1996 at the Indira Gandhi Open University in New Delhi.

Prof. J. N. O. Fernando, Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences, recalled earlier attempts to initiate Certificate / Diploma programmes in laboratory technology and referred to the curriculum prepared by a committee of experts to introduce such a programme through the affiliated university college

system in the early nineties. Although the proposal had the complete backing of the UGC, it died a natural death since no institution within the university system was prepared to give the necessary support

Prof. U. Coomaraswamy, co-ordinator of the programme, in her Vote of Thanks expressed her gratitude and appreciation to all those who had helped and assisted in getting the programme off the ground resulting in the inauguration of the programme. The programme is being initially offered on an experimental scale to 67 University Technical Officers from a number of universities and other higher educational institutions but would subsequently be extended to those employed in research and development laboratories, industrial and service laboratories and school laboratories.

The selected participants were registered immediately after the inauguration and were issued all their study material. The two credit (one academic year) programme will be conducted in English and will incorporate three courses involving Laboratory Techniques in Chemistry, Physics and Biology as well as fourth course in Laboratory Organisation, Management and Safety. For those interested in Engineering and Technology there would be a course in Workshop Training as an alternative to the course on Laboratory Techniques in Biology. There would be a compulsory practical component lasting full 40 days in addition to the print material, day schools, assignments and assignment tests that will enable the students to obtain the necessary academic input for this programme.  
(excerpt from OUSL News Bulletin)

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