



ΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ

HELLENIC REPUBLIC

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ΑΡΧΗ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ
ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ
ΣΤΗΝ ΑΝΩΤΑΤΗ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗ

HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE AND
ACCREDITATION AGENCY

FINAL
EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT
19 NOVEMBER 2013

DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURAL ENGINEERING

DEMOCRITUS UNIVERSITY OF THRACE



European Union
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OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME
EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING
investing in knowledge society
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION & RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS, CULTURE & SPORTS
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External Evaluation Committee

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURAL ENGINEERING of the DEMOCRITUS UNIVERSITY OF THRACE consisted of the following five (5) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by the HQAA in accordance with Law 3374/2005:

1. Professor & Dean Emeritus Nicholas Patricios (President)
University of Miami, U.S.A

2. Professor Marialena Nikolopoulou
University of Kent, U.K.

3. Professor Alexander Koutamanis
Delft University of Technology, Netherland

4. Associate Professor Christos Antonakis Hadjichristos
University of Cyprus, Cyprus

5. Professor Thomas Panagopoulos
University of Algarve, Portugal

Introduction

I. The External Evaluation Procedure

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) visited the Department of Architectural Engineering, Democritus University of Thrace at Xanthi on October 21, 22 and 23, 2013. On the evening of the 21st the EEC met with the Vice Rector of Student and External Affairs, Professor George Kosta. On the morning of the 22nd the EEC were unable to proceed to the building of the Department as it had been seized and occupied by students as a protest against the evaluation of the Department. The EEC was taken, instead, to a hotel on the outskirts of the city where the meetings for that day and the following day took place. The EEC, thus, was unable to visit any of the Department's facilities during the site visit.

During the day of the 22nd the Chairman of the Department, Professor Vasileos Profillidis, made a PowerPoint presentation that included information on architectural studies in the Department. He was followed by individual faculty members whose PowerPoint presentations covered the teaching sectors of the Department. The brief address by the Vice Rector for Student and External Affairs was interrupted when approximately twenty students entered the meeting room unexpectedly to state their case and hand out a one-page statement from the Student Council of Xanthi Polytechnic. The students left after about half an hour. On the 23rd the EEC met separately with the 4 administrative and 2 technical staff, the 9 Associate Professors, the 7 Assistant Professors and one Lecturer, and interviewed a group of 5 undergraduate students, 2 doctoral students, and one alumna. Due to the student protest the EEC was unable to meet with any other group of students. A final meeting was held with all the faculty members, including the Chairman of the Department, which concluded with a brief exit address by the EEC Coordinator.

The primary documents examined by the EEC were the Internal Evaluation Phase A report dated December 2009 for the 2009-2010 academic year and the Internal Evaluation Supplementary report dated September 2013 for the 2012-2013 academic year; these were provided via the HQA before the visit to Xanthi. During the visit the EEC received a collection of material including a catalogue of Diploma Student Lectures dated December 2011; a catalogue of Diploma Projects dated December 2011; and a publication documenting graphically 25 student projects for the years 2009-2010.

II. The Internal Evaluation Procedure

The quantity and quality of the written material provided was adequate for the evaluation. Due to the student protest and occupation of the Department's building the EEC was unable to view first hand student design work for each of the five years of study, work produced in any of the non-design courses, or doctoral dissertations. Limited examples of student work were displayed in the faculty's PowerPoint presentations. The EEC review of student work was thus curtailed.

The Department largely met the objectives of the internal evaluation process. The documentation was incomplete as the results of the student questionnaires were not reported, nor were there full details of faculty publications, research projects, professional practice, prizes and awards, and professional project citations provided.

There was a lack of detailed information on faculty research activities. Some additional information was subsequently provided as was a comprehensive list of specific computer software and equipment used in teaching and research. Although requested well before the site visit there were no meetings arranged between the EEC and local professional organizations, working architects, and alumni. Towards the end of the first day of the site visit the EEC requested that meetings be arranged for the following day with the administrative and technical staff, associate and assistant professors and lecturers, as well as with doctoral candidates and graduates. As described above the meetings did take place.

The faculty and staff overall accepted and participated in the Quality Assurance procedures by the Department and cooperated fully. The EEC found a collegial atmosphere exists among the faculty. Except for the few students mentioned above the students as a body did not accept or participate in the Quality Assurance procedures.

The first draft of this external evaluation report was completed by the EEC in Athens on October 24 and 25.

A. Curriculum

To be filled separately for each undergraduate, graduate and doctoral programme.

APPROACH

- *What are the goals and objectives of the Curriculum? What is the plan for achieving them?*
The curriculum is firmly based on an established Greek tradition that aims to produce professional architects capable of solving a wide number of problems with constancy and coherence.
- *How were the objectives decided? Which factors were taken into account? Were they set against appropriate standards? Did the unit consult other stakeholders?*
The objectives were developed on the basis of the original curriculum structure of the Department at the moment of its foundation in 1999 and following that in a bottom-up, evolutionary fashion. In recent years there was a reduction in the number of courses from 104 in 1999 to 73 in 2012 (required for graduation from 88 to 64).
- *Is the curriculum consistent with the objectives of the Curriculum and the requirements of the society?*
By virtue of the manner of its development, the curriculum follows closely the decided objectives. With respect to societal requirements, it addresses primarily the prerequisites and specifications for being admitted as a licensed architect. Current social issues in the built environment, e.g. sustainability, are not adequately addressed.
- *How was the curriculum decided? Were all constituents of the Department, including students and other stakeholders, consulted?*
The curriculum was decided in the General Meetings of the Department, on the basis of proposals by faculty members.
- *Has the unit set a procedure for the revision of the curriculum?*
Consistently with the evolutionary, bottom-up fashion of curriculum development, the Department has been adapting it by deciding on specific courses in the above manner.

IMPLEMENTATION

- *How effectively is the Department's goal implemented by the curriculum?*
 The education of a student into a generalist professional architect is the core of the curriculum not only by means of a strong sequence of design projects but also by the strong design component of other courses (e.g. Οικοδομική – Building Construction).
- *How does the curriculum compare with appropriate, universally accepted standards for the specific area of study?*
 Most courses focus on a small range of design issues and subjects; housing and cultural buildings, and the fine arts courses take up a disproportionate amount of the curriculum. Offices and workplaces are virtually non-existent. From a didactic viewpoint, most courses aim at the development of general synthetic skills, leaving issues such as sustainability, briefing (programming), office and project management largely unaddressed. Urban and landscape design are reduced to the building level in larger complexes, while digital design is almost absent from the curriculum.
- *Is the structure of the curriculum rational and clearly articulated?*
 The structure of the curriculum is consistent with its objectives and clearly organized into thematic sequences of courses with some interconnections. On the other hand, it results in high concentrations of design courses in the same semester (up to four), as well as into a high degree of overlap (mostly thematically) and repetition (methodologically). Moreover, the number of credits (ECTS) per course is quite variable.
- *Is the curriculum coherent and functional?*
 The combination of the design-oriented approach, and overlaps and repetition render the curriculum less coherent and less functional (result into a high workload in many semesters). There is little flexibility and no opportunities to take courses outside the Department.
- *Is the subject for each course appropriate and the time offered sufficient?*
 The subjects of courses offered by the Department are appropriate for the curriculum and the decided objectives but they fail to provide full coverage of current topics in architecture (e.g. notable lack of workplaces). Concerning time, small courses (2 ECTS) are too compact to allow for adequate treatment of many subjects, while the Department's design-oriented approach can be problematic even for courses of 4 ECTS because of the workload it causes.
- *Does the Department have the necessary resources and appropriately qualified and trained staff to implement the curriculum?*
 The Department consists primarily of architects capable of guiding the design activities of students. There are few specialists on relevant technical subjects or computer-aided design. It should be noted that the Department is entitled to four more faculty.

RESULTS

- *How well is the implementation achieving the Department's predefined goals and objectives?*

The educational and methodological goals and objectives of the Department are achieved but at the expense of efficiency and scope: both teachers and students are confronted with a heavy workload, and there are few possibilities for approaches and subjects outside the limited field addressed by the curriculum.

- *If not, why is it so? How is this problem dealt with?*

There are reported on-going discussions within the Department concerning curriculum refinement and further development but these follow the bottom-up path of curriculum evolution so far, moreover in an introvert manner that appears to accept the labour-intensive, time-consuming aspects of teaching and exclude new subjects and issues.

- *Does the Department understand why and how it achieved or failed to achieve these results?*

The Department is accustomed to slow development in the curriculum and its inefficiencies. The lack of clear academic leadership and coherence in the Department does not allow for evaluation and radical rethinking of priorities and approaches.

IMPROVEMENT

- *Does the Department know how the Curriculum should be improved?*

There is considerable reluctance to reconsider the didactic approach and methodological principles of the curriculum. This means few opportunities for new technologies, methods and subjects. On the other hand, with clear academic leadership the Department should have the potential to consolidate existing thematic redundancy and develop new components that will expand the scope of the existing curriculum thematically.

- *Which improvements does the Department plan to introduce?*

The improvements currently under consideration by the Department follow the established pattern of bottom-up partial revision. These can have beneficial effects on single courses but the overall structure and goals of the curriculum would be little affected. A more significant but for the moment unfortunately abandoned development concerns a graduate (Master's) course on heritage and conservation. This could improve the focus and character of the Department but at the same time also affect negatively the implementation and redevelopment of the current curriculum due to the lack of human and other resources, and the lack of coherence and efficiency in the Department.

B. Teaching

APPROACH:

Does the Department have a defined pedagogic policy with regard to teaching approach and methodology?

Please comment on :

- *Teaching methods used*
 - The studio courses use the widely practised method where the student, or groups of students if it is a group project, meet with the instructor and discuss the student work at different stages, usually every week.
 - A kit of parts ("model") is used in the teaching of first-year studio in order to introduce the students to basic architectural terms and concepts.
 - An emphasis on a rational design methodology is taught.
 - Some courses use digital social media to create a network of relationships with other institutions, groups or individuals.
 - At least one course uses cutting edge technology to carry out research which is incorporated into teaching.
 - Some courses take advantage of the region's unique characteristics in order to introduce context into their teaching methodology
 - Some of the supporting courses aspire to introduce students to the topic from an architectural point of interest.
 - There is an emphasis on model building as a design tool.
 - A number of invited lectures have been delivered from practitioners and academics from other universities in Greece.
 - The two summer workshops provide important educational experience outside the classroom.
- *Teaching staff/ student ratio*
 - The existing situation regarding this topic does not make a general and overarching assessment easy. With 17 permanent and 27 adjunct faculties (for 465 students studying for 5 years + 222 students beyond the 5th period) 687 students, what first needs to be assessed is the system that allows for the high intensity within courses and the stretching of the 5-year program to eight and more years.
- *Teacher/student collaboration*
 - Both students and faculty claim to have a warm and family-like relationship between them when it comes to teaching. The informal and the casual seem to be characteristic of their relationship. There is no evidence from either side of any serious problems regarding this arrangement, except for some cases when faculty leave the Department leaving the student responsible to find another supervisor for the Thesis project, consequently losing a considerable amount of time.
 - The fact that a large proportion of the faculty live in another distant city and come into town to teach has been mentioned as something that does not cause serious problems but does require more coordination regarding meetings.

- *Adequacy of means and resources*
 - Students feel that the facilities for printing and plotting in the Department are not sufficient since plotters are not always working and even if they do, the quality of the product is low.
 - According to national policy, books are assigned but only one for each module is provided free by the Department each semester.
 - The studios are used until late at night but no security is provided, there is no place for the students to buy something to eat or drink while there is no free university transport to the city at such late hours.
- *Use of information technologies*
 - Some of the teachers mentioned the use of e-class as an important tool in their teaching.
 - Students seem to lack information regarding access to electronic libraries and databases. Access to these resources reportedly suffers interruptions.
- *Examination system*
 - The work in studio courses is evaluated at different stages of the semester but the formal, final and decisive grade is given at the end, after the student has presented and handed in the final project. No written exam is included in the evaluation.
 - Theory and other supporting courses tend to come up with the final grade by adding the grade awarded to the student on different exercises during the semester, each given a different weight.

IMPLEMENTATION

Please comment on:

- *Quality of teaching procedures*
 - The friendly environment between teachers and students may be positive in many respects but it also leads to inefficient use of time.
- *Quality and adequacy of teaching materials and resources. Quality of course material. Is it brought up to date?*
 - In a couple of cases the teaching materials and resources are up to date, but in main areas such as design studios and urban design there may be a lack of reflectively self-assessing the methodologies as well as the resources used. No material or resource is innocent or divorced from the ideology that produces or uses it, irrespective of whether the teacher using it is conscious of it. An emphasis on Modernism was strongly felt not only in the way the teaching methodology was explained but also in the sample of works presented as representative of the student work produced in the design studios. The detected formal uniformity in the student work may be due to unconscious conservatisms on form rather than a more critical, non-formalistic methodology that allows for each project to uniquely respond to its context and its peculiarities.
 - Furthermore, in some cases understanding is through the transfer of information rather than allowing the students to search and experiment.

- The fact that most design work is done in groups formed by the students themselves, with each group usually given the same grade, may be an iniquitous practice.
- The practice of linking courses between semesters and even years sometimes through the use of the product of the first course as the starting material for the course that follows, may at first glance seem logical and even beneficial. However, there is a risk the student may carry mistakes through, getting bored with the use of the same context and missing out on the opportunity to transfer and try his/her evolving design methodology in a new context.
- *Linking of research with teaching*
 - Apart from a couple of cases, research does not seem to be strongly linked with teaching.
- *Mobility of academic staff and students*
 - A number of students (around 10 each year) are taking advantage of the Erasmus program to visit other universities. There seems to be limited mobility of academic staff.
- *Evaluation by the students of (a) the teaching and (b) the course content and study material/resources*
 - The detailed evaluation questionnaires were in the documents provided to the EEC but the results were not made available.
 - The verbal comments by the few students the EEC was allowed to meet were overall positive about the content as well as the teaching of courses.

RESULTS

Please comment on:

- *Efficacy of teaching.*
 - Teaching, especially in design, can be characterized as effective with respect to the goals stated by the teachers. However, judging from the few student interviews and faculty presentations, the process tends to produce uniform modernist designs.
 - While the use of Adjunct faculty is common in architecture schools the current lack of clear contractual responsibility affects teaching.
- *Discrepancies in the success/failure percentage between courses and how they are justified.*
 - Courses such as those on structures seem to have a higher failure percentage than other courses, a common phenomenon in many architecture schools.
- *Differences between students in (a) the time to graduation, and (b) final degree grades.*
 - While a small number manages to finish the program in six years, only one year more than expected, most students take more than eight. This seems to be an accepted norm not only by the students but by the teachers in the Department as well.
- *Whether the Department understands the reasons of such positive or negative results?*
 - While the Department acknowledges the problems generated by such phenomena, it seems not only to tolerate it but also support the culture responsible for it. The main reason given for such acceptance is that the students want to do the best they can with their Thesis projects. Consequently, the research and design phases of the Thesis project are completed in around three years rather than one, overburdening the teachers who nevertheless complain of overworking.
 - The implications regarding the uniformity in the formal identity of the produced student work are not acknowledged by the faculty.
 - Inefficiency in teaching is not linked to lack of structure.
 - The Department consciously continues the friendly relationship with students.

IMPROVEMENT

- *Does the Department propose methods and ways for improvement? What initiatives does it take in this direction?*
 - There seems to be an ability on the part of the Department to evaluate the role of other agents (the ministry and the government in providing them with financial and other resources) but such ability seems comparatively much weaker when assessing their own role in the creation of the problems detected. Consequently, there is yet no coordinated plan of action to tackle the situation.

C. Research

For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate levels, if necessary.

APPROACH

The Department demonstrates activity in research with a number of publications (peer-reviewed and others) as well as presentations in conferences, and involvement in research projects with national and international funding.

However, there is no formal policy or objectives in research. Due to the heavy teaching load of the faculty, there is no formal approach of the Department to promote and support research. Given this framework, the EEC endorses the faculty's efforts to develop their research and external collaborations.

There was limited evidence of engagement with the professional community outside the university on research and consultancy projects for the benefits of the community; and this within a very small number of faculty.

As far as post-graduate activities are concerned, currently there are 57 PhD candidates; 35 active and 22 pending registration. Four PhDs have already been completed. The two candidates we spoke to were appreciative of their supervisory committee. An important threat is the relative disengagement of the PhD candidates from the Department in terms of research, teaching and overall activities. This may be partly due to lack of funds but also due to the lack of a clear structure for the activities of the candidates, as well as the facilities and services available to them.

IMPLEMENTATION and RESULTS

Some of the research carried out is acknowledged and visible outside the Department. This is apparent from the number of citations (the internal evaluation report shows 414 citations), prizes in competitions and some successful research applications for funding from external competitive sources.

The majority of faculty has published in national journals and conferences.

A small number of faculty have received funding from external sources, such as EU Tempus, Interreg, Petra and THALIS programmes, as well as national and international agencies. Most of the funding received has been from internal sources (e.g. University, TSMEDE funds, etc.).

For architecture schools, relationships with practice are an important issue and therefore these are examined separately. Similarly to most schools of architecture, a large proportion of faculty members as well as PhD candidates are active in practice. They include prize-winning architects with a significant track record as well as younger promising designers. Both architects and artists in the Department regularly participate in exhibitions nationally and internationally.

There are many citations of work in practice by members of the Department (110 in the national press and 10 internationally according to the faculty CVs provided to the EEC). Furthermore, members of the Department have been awarded prizes in national and international competitions (15 first, 6 second and 3 third in national competitions; 1 first, 4 second and 1 third in international competitions).

The faculty has participated in various exhibitions around the country and internationally.

The research infrastructure in terms of software and equipment is considered adequate.

IMPROVEMENT

Currently, the Department does not have a policy, framework or main objectives for research development.

The faculty is eager to develop research activities further but they are conscious that they are overstretched with teaching, which is an important obstacle. Furthermore, they are aware that the wider financial situation of Greece means that it is unlikely they will receive additional funds from the Ministry of Education, while the continuously diminishing funds from TSMEDE for support to the Department may be nonexistent in a short period of time.

D. All Other Services

For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate levels, if necessary.

APPROACH

The organization, experience and number of staff are adequate in the **Department Office**. The Department has a positive view of services to the academic community. The faculty was dedicated and clearly did their best to accommodate student needs. The Department office is open to the students for four hours, which is sufficient for the student needs. Also it is starting to use e-governance tools, which will make it more efficient. Overall, **administration services and student support** seems good under the circumstances. The space used for the Department's administration is very small and without space for keeping archives. The secretaries provide information posted in detail in the internet, as referred to the EEC by the secretaries. The University system provides a psychologist and support for student counseling. The Department does not provide academic advising.

The library of the University is in a building of 4450 m² outside the city, sharing its space with the Department of Architecture and the Department of Production and Management. The Department has its own library, which is managed by students. The Laboratories of the Department have their own library (consisting of books on permanent loan from the Department library) for immediate use by the students. The EEC was not allowed to visit the building and does not have an opinion on the number and variety of books and journals in relation to Department's need. There is Internet access to electronic journals and databases.

The quality of **the Department's webpage** is basic, without details but easy to navigate. Teachers have implemented some independent webpages for their own courses. These are well done and deserve credit; meanwhile there is no uniformity and no coherence in the webpages relating to activities and the presentation of the Department.

The plotter and photocopy **equipment** are out of service for long time because the technician who manages them works for the Department only for two days per week.

There are reported problems with the **cleaning** of studio spaces and that the **roof** of the building is **leaking**.

Interaction with practice through specific seminars and workshops has already been pursued with considerable success, for example seminars that took place in the city's Museum of Folklore History.

It should be noted that the EEC did not have the opportunity to **visit** the Department accommodation, nor ask a sufficient number of students if they are satisfied with the services provided. Views expressed here are based on information submitted and the few interviews conducted, which nevertheless were consistent and complementary.

IMPROVEMENTS

The students would greatly benefit from easy access to all campus facilities, preferably in all four campuses of the University. The Department is located about 2 kilometers from the city and needs continuous bus service. The University offers bus service free of charge but not during the late night hours that is usual for the students of architecture most of the year.

Outreach of the Department to the Community can be greatly strengthened. Events such as the ones organized so far can become more regular, enhancing student-faculty-staff connections and engagement, as well as promoting outreach to the community.

Collaboration with social, cultural and production organizations

No significant collaboration with social, cultural and production organizations was found. The Department should develop initiatives for wide collaboration and enhance the importance of architecture to the local society.

The two restoration workshops deserve merit and should be encouraged by the Department.

E. Strategic Planning, Perspectives for Improvement and Dealing with Potential Inhibiting Factors

For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate levels, if necessary.

Please, comment on the Department's:

- *Potential inhibiting factors at State, Institutional and Departmental level, and proposals on ways to overcome them.*

The current economic situation in the country is not conducive to adding the necessary physical and faculty resources to the Department. The Department's lack of two Full Professors inhibits its independence. Current progress in achieving this number augurs well for the Department. The faculty's adherence to the traditional Greek model in teaching prevents the necessary changes needed for the Department to conform to international standards. The absence of faculty interchange with other Departments of architecture, particularly outside Greece, inhibits new thinking in the Department. The Department has good contacts with alumni but this should be formalized in the form of an alumni association. There is also a need to formulate links with local organizations and the architectural profession.

- *Short-, medium- and long-term goals.*

There is a lack of vision for the Department. It would seem the educational objective is to produce "professional architects" but there are conflicting statements that the Department's objective is also to educate students to become future academics, scholars, researchers, and builders. Clarity on the educational objective is necessary.

- *Plan and actions for improvement by the Department/Academic Unit and long-term actions proposed by the Department.*

The sole explicit plan and action for improvement by the Department is to introduce a program in postgraduate studies. This should be included in a comprehensive action plan for the Department to deal with the academic, research, facilities and support issues that currently exist.

F. Final Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC

For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate levels, if necessary.

CURRICULUM

The curriculum is adequate within the framework of the Department's own goals and objectives, and in relation to an established perception of the architectural profession in Greece. However, it does not reflect changes in the profession (especially following the credit crunch) or other recent and emerging socio-technological challenges (ranging from digital design to the management of building stock). Most problems relate to the structure and content of the curriculum: there are too many overlapping courses, often short in duration but long in ambition, defining together a limited thematic and methodological scope; there is too much attention for certain building types and a prescriptive attitude to architectural composition. With much care and effort by the teachers, as well as earnest toil and perseverance by the students, the results achieved meet the standards expected in architectural education – but at the expense of other activities, notably research and experimentation in education. The contribution of the Space Composition (Μικροπεριβάλλον) courses is highly questionable, as they are merely replicating sub-problems of other courses (and should therefore be treated in those courses), while Building Construction (Οικοδομική) courses fail to address technical matters in a detailed and comprehensive manner (becoming minor design exercises with a technical justification).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Department needs to decide on the qualities of its output: the profile of its graduates in relation to Greek and international conditions. Currently the Department appears to favour a generalist profile (BA, BArch) that can lead to practice in Greece but also to further study and specialization, often abroad. Despite the current trend towards early and direct specialization, such a profile agrees both with the capacities of the Department and educational tendencies in Greece. It could therefore form a short and medium-term goal that could be achieved without radical changes in the composition and direction of the Department.

What does require radical change is the structure of the curriculum. The current courses need to be analysed into goals and skills, and then recombined in a top-down manner that reduces the number of courses and normalizes credits (ECTS) into a few basic categories (e.g. courses of 12, 6 and 3 credits or 10 and 5), consolidating subjects and allowing room for innovation and experimentation. It is critical that the goals of these new courses are correlated with the general goals underlying the output profile of the curriculum as a whole. The Department should take advantage of the opportunity to introduce new subjects that will align it with wider international developments, notably sustainable architecture, advanced computational design, landscape design and introduction to professional practice.

The new curriculum must also be correlated with the human resources of the Department but in a non-deterministic manner, i.e. not by reducing the subjects and courses to the capacities of available faculty but by allowing each faculty member to work in the area of their specialization in a focused, compact manner that also permits closer relationships with research. Care should be taken that the human resources are not overextended or overexposed either by the number and subject of courses or by the didactic method.

In order to protect the members of the Department and simultaneously enrich the curriculum, it should be possible to cooperate with other Departments of the Democritus University, which can contribute specialized technical knowledge that flanks and enriches architectural designing (e.g. lighting design, environmental engineering, resource management, advanced construction design). In this manner, the Department can operate efficiently with its limited resources and improve its cooperation with other specializations – also in research.

Finally, a matter of urgency of Democritus University is the expansion of the faculty of the Department with the missing four positions. It would provide not merely a quantitative improvement but also opportunities to introduce the new subjects the curriculum is currently lacking.

TEACHING

The design courses can promote the concept of realistic and efficient design and still become less prescriptive, reinforcing creativity and experimentation. The rather top-down model can become more horizontal, allowing for a more active student role and contribution regarding the direction, formal or other, that the design takes. Furthermore, the overemphasis on model building as a design tool needs to be supplemented by drawing, while the more object driven methodology should strengthen the role played by site analysis, programming as well as conceptual thinking. The existing formal procedure on student grade appeals needs to be applied. Grade improvements of the final grade should be discouraged.

The role of already available teaching aids, electronic and other can be strengthened further. Such a development can contribute in tackling the problem of space shortage, lack of time, distant instructors during half the week and the repetition of dialogues due to the number of students. The use of software as a design tool can also be strengthened.

The PhD candidates are scattered and not efficiently informed about resources and potential opportunities in collaborations in research projects and/or teaching. A package with all the information regarding the available resources, procedure etc. can be prepared and given to every new PhD candidate. The number of PhD candidates should be reconsidered with respect to faculty workload and lack of resources.

The procedure for appointing adjunct faculty needs to be clarified, including the qualifications such a position requires.

The mentioned on-going relationship of the Department with alumni can be strengthened further making it more of an organic aspect of the life of the Department with benefits for both sides.

RESEARCH

The Department needs to develop a vision concerning research, leading to a structured and coherent approach that will provide an identity to the Department and will enhance its research output not only in terms of numbers but most importantly in terms of reach and significance.

Appropriate internal policies, supported by the University, will also need to be put in place to cultivate an encouraging atmosphere for research activities to take place.

The Department may want to consider developing a work allocation model, taking into account the individual member's activities and responsibilities. Such a model should take into account, for example, the number of existing teaching modules and contact hours with the students, supervision of theses and PhD candidates, administrative roles, involvement with research projects, etc. In this model, time for research should be allocated and allowed to vary depending on one's activities and various responsibilities in a transparent way. Allowing faculty to take sabbatical or other research leave should also be implemented.

The faculty should also be encouraged to publish in international peer-reviewed journals, listed in international databases, to increase their international exposure.

It is also advised that the Department make use of its position and unique strengths in terms of faculty expertise, infrastructure, as well as geographical position to enhance its identity, research profile and activities.

In relation to the PhD candidates, it is advised to: (i) provide a more structured framework for their work and (ii) enhance the sense of a postgraduate community for the researchers. Greater involvement with external research projects would attract funds to actively support the researchers.

The development of a PhD handbook would further enhance this framework. Structured activities could include organising training activities depending on the needs of a researcher (e.g. on the use of a specific software, equipment, methodologies, etc.), introduction of regular seminars by the candidates on progress of their work at regular intervals, submission of progress reports, etc. Collaboration with different Departments could also be explored.

The candidates should also be encouraged to participate in international conferences to enhance their skills and abilities.

Finally, members of the Department should aim to use the clusters of expertise to provide critical mass that will enable them to become more competitive and participate in larger research proposals. They should become more proactive to establish further collaborations with other Departments within the University, as well as other universities in Greece and internationally. Collaborations with practice and other industrial sources should also be explored.

OTHER SERVICES

The Department should repair the photocopier, plotter and other equipment using outsourcing and not keep waiting for a University technician to be hired. As Democritus University is located in campuses in four cities, it is improbable that every campus will even manage to be self-sufficient in terms of support.

There should be a studio policy that requires students to take responsibility for maintaining the cleanliness of the studio spaces.

It is highly recommended that detailed course outlines, objectives and outcomes are posted and updated regularly on the Department's webpage.

GENERAL

The Department should construct a document that states the **Department vision** and strategy for a four-year period, formalizing policies and strategies to cover teaching, research and human resource development.

There should be **outreach** that can involve student engagement in volunteer activities associated with urban revitalization, urban redevelopment design, ecotourism-related design, restoration of historic buildings or other activities in the field of architecture. There is considerable potential in Xanthi and the Thrace region with its abundance of protected natural resources and historical sites.

The **cultural diversity of the Thrace region** should be addressed by the Department and taken more into consideration.

The Department should enter into **International Networks** related to architecture subjects.

The Department should encourage **faculty visits** to other universities to gain an improved perspective on standards and educational techniques elsewhere.

It is recommended that an **Alumni Council** (Advisory Board) is organized in order to promote links between the Department of Architectural Engineering and graduates, so as to encourage feedback, contribute to publicity concerning the Department, create new opportunities for practice, share experiences, and improve and develop the curriculum. It is also important to bring students in contact with **enterprises** of their profession.

The Department should establish a channel of communication and promotion of the Department's activities and student work with the support of the **Prefecture**. Inviting high officials to Departmental events would bring the Department and the Prefecture closer to the mutual benefit of both.

The EEC has the **impression that there is a need for a re-evaluation of the student association body targets**, with the need to increase student responsibility and sharing of crisis situation challenges. The student body could focus on the issues related to the Department and to their situation in Xanthi. Also, the students face a challenge of considering the opportunities of intervening in a positive way in the cultural and social life of Xanthi as a body, through its representatives or just by creating a platform for the creative output of the students.

There is need to strengthen the Department requiring additional **faculty positions** with doctoral degree in the scientific areas that are missing in the Department, and through this pave the path for more research and increase the capability towards the creation of a post-graduate course (Master's program).

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

For the Department of Architectural Engineering at the Democritus University of Thrace to continue its viable academic and research activities the EEC stresses the following recommendations (in summary form):

- The Department should increase the number of full professors to two so as to allow for its independence.
- The Department should fill the four vacant faculty positions.
- The Department should restructure the curriculum.
- The Department should be provided with its own building to give the Department not only functional space but also a physical identity.

ADDENDUM

Additional information provided by the Department on receipt of
the EEC's Draft Report dated 30 October 2013



DEMOCRITUS UNIVERSITY OF THRACE
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE
THE CHAIRMAN
UNIVERSITY CAMPUS, KIMMERIA,
67100 XANTHI

November 11, 2013

Our reference:

**The Hellenic Quality Assurance
and Accreditation Quality Agency**
Attention: Professor N. Patrikios
44 Syngrou Ave., 11742 Athens

Subject: Your letter of 31/10/2013 (your reference 2706) and the attached Draft External Evaluation Report.

Dear Chairman,

I thank you for your time and efforts to accomplish evaluation for the Department of Architecture of Democritus University of Thrace.

I have the honour to submit you some additional information for your draft evaluation report that could eventually be useful for you at the finalization of your report.

Apparently, both me and the staff of the Department of Architecture remain at your disposition for any additional information (or whatever) that could be useful for your work.

Sincerely yours

The Chairman of the Department
Professor V. Profillidis

Suggestions of addenda that can be considered for the External Evaluation Report

- **Page 5** (Introduction)

- Only 5% of the students responded to the questionnaires in the context of the Internal Evaluation procedure. This constitutes a very poor sample so as to draw any kind of results.

- **Page 7** (Curriculum)

- Office building subjects are being treated in the 3rd year (Building Construction); Commercial complex uses are being treated in the 5th semester (Architectural design); Educational schemes are treated in the 6th semester (Architectural design); A variety of workspaces as well as a special emphasis on briefing are among the focal points of the Architectural and Urban Design studio course of the 9th semester; Proper landscape issues are being treated in 3rd-4th semesters (Landscape design); Open, public urban milieus and urban sea-fronts are being treated in 7th -8th semesters (Urban design) and in the 9th semester ("Location, Planning and construction").

- **Page 8** (Results, end of paragraph)

The principal reason for this, in spite of the fact that the actual Chairman and all the involved parts (academic stuff, students etc.) agreed in 2009 – 2010 on a Master Plan for the Department, is the fact that every professor is considered by the legislation to be the central and only factor to decide upon his research activities.

- **Page 12** (Teaching)

- The great majority of the students accomplish their study within 7-8 years at most. A limited number of students surpassing 8 years form a considerably limited group of special cases, known to the faculty and managed accordingly. However, by 2015, the study period shall not exceed 7 years, according to recent legal frames.

- **Page 13** (Approach, end of paragraph)

It is to outline, however, that following an initiative of the actual Chairman of the Department, since 2010 and all two years, Ph.D. candidates do present publicly during two days the evolution of their research, their findings and achievements etc.

- **Page 17** (Strategic Planning)

- It should be reminded that at least 70% of the Department's alumni are successfully engaged as professional architects, both in Greece and abroad. Besides, the Department considers as its obligation to encourage gifted students to proceed with further post-graduate studies.

- **Page 17** (end)

However other plans are made preparation: summer workshops, establishment of a permanent link with the architectural market etc.

- **Page 19** (middle)

Such cooperations were, however, very difficult to realize following the legislation until 2011-2012, since there was strong reluctance from other Departments and at the same time a practical impossibility to push or press them to cooperate.