



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
HELLENIC REPUBLIC



**Εθνική Αρχή
Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης**
Hellenic Authority
for Higher Education

Αριστείδου 1 & Ευριπίδου 2 • 10559 Αθήνα | 1 Aristidou str. & 2 Evripidou str. • 10559 Athens, Greece
T. +30 210 9220 944 • **F.** +30 210 9220 143 • **E.** secretariat@ethaee.gr • www.ethaee.gr

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of:

Medicine

Institution: Democritus University of Thrace

Date: 23 November 2020



Επιχειρησιακό Πρόγραμμα
Ανάπτυξη Ανθρώπινου Δυναμικού,
Εκπαίδευση και Διά Βίου Μάθηση
Με τη συγχρηματοδότηση της Ελλάδας και της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης



Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the Undergraduate Study Programme of **Medicine** of the **Democritus University of Thrace** for the purposes of granting accreditation

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part A: Background and Context of the Review	4
I. The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel.....	4
II. Review Procedure and Documentation	5
III. Study Programme Profile.....	6
Part B: Compliance with the Principles	7
Principle 1: Academic Unit Policy for Quality Assurance	7
Principle 2: Design and Approval of Programmes	10
Principle 3: Student- centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment.....	12
Principle 4: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification.....	15
Principle 5: Teaching Staff.....	17
Principle 6: Learning Resources and Student Support.....	18
Principle 7: Information Management	20
Principle 8: Public Information.....	22
Principle 9: On-going Monitoring and Periodic Internal Review of Programmes	23
Principle 10: Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programmes.....	25
Part C: Conclusions	27
I. Features of Good Practice.....	27
II. Areas of Weakness	27
III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions.....	28
IV. Summary & Overall Assessment	29

PART A: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE REVIEW

I. The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

The Panel responsible for the Accreditation Review of the Undergraduate Study Programme of **Medicine** of the **Democritus University of Thrace** comprised the following four (4) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

1. Professor Aristidis Veves (Chair)

Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center / Harvard
Medical School, United States of America

2. Professor Emeritus Nicandros Bouras

King's College London, United Kingdom

3. Thanos Tzounopoulos PhD

Endowed Professor and Vice Chair of Research of
Otolaryngology, Director of Pittsburgh Hearing
Research center, Department of Otolaryngology, School
of Medicine, University of Pittsburgh, United States of
America

4. Andreas Papandroudīs, MD, PhD

Member of Panhellenic Medical Association, Consultant
Ophthalmic Surgeon, Greece

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

The review procedures were performed via online zoom meetings due to the limitations imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Although it was unanimously thought that an in-person visit would be preferred, as it would allow more contact and personal acquaintance, it was nonetheless assumed that the online meetings were an appropriate and satisfactory alternative and that all required work was performed efficiently without any major hiccups.

The EEAP received emails well in advance containing adequate and appropriate information regarding the schedule of the meeting and also information about the medical school. This information included all required documents regarding the standards for quality accreditation, quality indicators, programs of teaching and the policy for quality, and data regarding quality measurements from 2015 to present. Overall, the provided information was complete, and well organized presented.

The virtual meetings took place on November 18-23, 2020. On November 18, EEAP had a teleconference with members of HAHE during which there was a presentation regarding the scope and the procedures of academic accreditation of study programs in Greece. The following two days, November 19 and 20, there were teleconferences with faculty, stakeholders, students, alumni and other persons associated with the program under review. This included meetings with Prof. Zoe Gavriilidou, Vice-Rector/President of MODIP of the Democritus University of Thrace and Prof. Michail Pitiakoudis, Head of the Department, OMEA and MODIP members, teaching staff, students, graduates, employees and social partners. The virtual visit was completed with the debriefing meeting with OMEA and MODIP members during which the main findings were discussed.

The EEAP was impressed by the quality of the presentations, the sincerity of the discussion and the willingness of all members to engage in an open and constructive dialogue. It was unanimously thought that this very positive attitude resulted in a very and thorough and accurate evaluation of the program. The EEAP was particularly impressed by the community- and team-like spirit among the faculty, students and alumni. The School has created a strong feeling of belonging to mentors and mentees that is manifested by the high quality of training. Overall, the EEAP believes that the officials from the program under review made a very strong effort towards a frank and collegial approach.

III. Study Programme Profile

The Medicine Undergraduate Programme of the Democritus University of Thrace was established in 1977 but started accepting students in 1984. In early 2000s, the new Medical School facilities and the new Academic Hospital were established. The study duration is six years and the graduates are awarded a Diploma in Medicine (Ptychion Iatrikis). There are currently 111 faculty members and 1048 undergraduate students. The faculty is well-trained and a large number of them have previous training and working experience from foreign universities. The students are accepted after nationwide competitive exam testing. This meritocratic process assures the selection of highly capable candidates who are equipped with all required knowledge that allows them to follow the didactic program.

There have been 2476 graduates so far. There are no problems of employment and the graduates are currently working in the Greek National Health System, in private practice or have migrated to other countries where they work as medical doctors. The success of the graduates is a strong testament to the high quality of training provided by that Medical School.

In place of an insight visit, a video was available to the EEAP regarding the facilities of the Medical School. The consensus of the EEAP was that the facilities were impressive as they are modern and contain state-of-the-art equipment.

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

Principle 1: Academic Unit Policy for Quality Assurance

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD APPLY A QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY AS PART OF THEIR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT. THIS POLICY SHOULD EXPAND AND BE AIMED (WITH THE COLLABORATION OF EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS) AT ALL INSTITUTION'S AREAS OF ACTIVITY, AND PARTICULARLY AT THE FULFILMENT OF QUALITY REQUIREMENTS OF UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES. THIS POLICY SHOULD BE PUBLISHED AND IMPLEMENTED BY ALL STAKEHOLDERS.

The quality assurance policy of the academic unit is in line with the Institutional policy on quality, and is included in a published statement that is implemented by all stakeholders. It focuses on the achievement of special objectives related to the quality assurance of study programmes offered by the academic unit.

The quality policy statement of the academic unit includes its commitment to implement a quality policy that will promote the academic profile and orientation of the programme, its purpose and field of study; it will realise the programme's strategic goals and it will determine the means and ways for attaining them; it will implement the appropriate quality procedures, aiming at the programme's continuous improvement.

In particular, in order to carry out this policy, the academic unit commits itself to put into practice quality procedures that will demonstrate:

- a) the suitability of the structure and organization of the curriculum;*
- b) the pursuit of learning outcomes and qualifications in accordance with the European and the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education;*
- c) the promotion of the quality and effectiveness of teaching;*
- d) the appropriateness of the qualifications of the teaching staff;*
- e) the enhancement of the quality and quantity of the research output among faculty members of the academic unit;*
- f) ways for linking teaching and research;*
- g) the level of demand for qualifications acquired by graduates, in the labour market;*
- h) the quality of support services such as the administrative services, the Library, and the student welfare office;*
- i) the conduct of an annual review and an internal audit of the quality assurance system of the undergraduate programme(s) offered, as well as the collaboration of the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) with the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU).*

Study Programme Compliance

- a) The structure of the curriculum follows the traditional didactic pathway according to which physiology is first taught followed by pathophysiology and finally by clinical practice in the six year. The School is currently planning an updated curriculum, which will be hybrid of the traditional and the modern one, that advocates system-based teaching that combines physiology and pathophysiology right from the start of the

medical school. The curriculum will be placed on the modern aspects of training and also the available resources in the Medical School.

- b) The current teaching is appropriate and in accordance with the European and the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education. The teaching includes lessons in the whole class and also practical training in the labs. The school has state-of-the-art facilities and the students have the opportunity to have very good hands-on experience.
- c) The quality of the teaching is verified through internal audits and evaluations by the students. Although a small number of students submit evaluations, something that is not uncommon or unusual, the results of the evaluations were and did not indicate any major problem.
- d) The School makes considerable efforts to train the teaching staff for more affecting teaching.
- e) Although this is a rather small medical school with limited faculty members, there is adequate research production, both in quantity and quality. The number of published papers by the faculty in the quality of the journals that are being published is satisfactory. It is also very encouraging that there is important funding that has been secured by the faculty from competitive tenders including industry and very prestigious organizations. The close association and collaboration with the School of Molecular Biology is a major factor that promotes quality research and is recommended that continues and even encouraged further.
- f) One common issue that the EEAP heard from the faculty, current students and graduates was that there is a great and intensive effort to involve medical students in research projects. Although not all students are involved, something that is not surprising, the general impression is that students are really welcome to participate and that this participation is very beneficial from them as they gain ample experience and also serve as co-authors in published papers.
- g) The Panel had the opportunity to meet with graduates from the School who have already finished their postgraduate training and are in clinical practice or they are currently involved in various residence programs both at Greece and abroad. It was very encouraging to see that the graduates were very proud of having completed their training in the School and felt very confident in competing with colleagues from various medical schools either in Greece or abroad. It was a consensus among them that the school had provided them all, or at least almost all, the required theoretical and practical experience so they can pursue the career goals without any handicaps. As with all current Greek medical graduates, a considerable number of them immigrates abroad, something that is beneficial for them but may be harmful for their country in the long run. Nonetheless, one positive thing is that the graduates can easily find jobs of their preference and as a result there is no concern regarding their integration in the labor market.
- h) The school has impressive library facilities and resources and a comprehensive program for the students welfare. It was the impression of the Panel that students have satisfactory access to these facilities and there is adequate use of them. Nonetheless, there were some concerns that were presented to the EEAP regarding the competence of administrative services.
- i) The procedures regarding annual review and internal audit are appropriate. In addition, the collaboration of the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) with the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) was judged to be appropriate.

Panel Judgement

Principle 1: Institution Policy for Quality Assurance	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

Overall, the quality of teaching was determined to be of high standards and meeting European and National requirements. The main problem that was raised on several times was the lack of appropriate administrative support to the students. The school representatives presented a plan to improve the situation and this was thought appropriate by the panel.

Principle 2: Design and Approval of Programmes

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD DEVELOP THEIR UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES FOLLOWING A DEFINED WRITTEN PROCESS WHICH WILL INVOLVE THE PARTICIPANTS, INFORMATION SOURCES AND THE APPROVAL COMMITTEES FOR THE PROGRAMME. THE OBJECTIVES, THE EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES, THE INTENDED PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND THE WAYS TO ACHIEVE THEM ARE SET OUT IN THE PROGRAMME DESIGN. THE ABOVE DETAILS AS WELL AS INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAMME'S STRUCTURE ARE PUBLISHED IN THE STUDENT GUIDE.

Academic units develop their programmes following a well-defined procedure. The academic profile and orientation of the programme, the objectives, the subject areas, the structure and organisation, the expected learning outcomes and the intended professional qualifications according to the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education are described at this stage. The approval or revision process for programmes includes a check of compliance with the basic requirements described in the Standards, on behalf of the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU).

Furthermore, the programme design should take into consideration the following:

- *the Institutional strategy*
- *the active participation of students*
- *the experience of external stakeholders from the labour market*
- *the smooth progression of students throughout the stages of the programme*
- *the anticipated student workload according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System*
- *the option to provide work experience to the students*
- *the linking of teaching and research*
- *the relevant regulatory framework and the official procedure for the approval of the programme by the Institution*

Study Programme Compliance

The main institutional strategy is to train medical doctors who, upon qualification, will be ready to efficiently follow postgraduate training in clinical and research programs. To this end, the institution has developed a curriculum, which is currently under review and considerable modification. Nonetheless, the institutional strategy is appropriate and able to achieve its main strategic aims.

The participation of students is at a high level. The fact that this is a small school that allows personal contact, it is located in a nice campus and in a city that does not offer many other diversions to the students are also beneficial factors as they allow the students to focus on their studies and spend a large portion of the time in campus.

Although the majority of the students leaves the area to continue their careers in other parts of Greece or abroad, and a number of students remains in the area and contribute to the provision of health care to the local population. Furthermore, the various research programs, especially in collaboration with other schools of the University contribute significantly to the local community.

A satisfactory number of the students complete their studies in time. However, as is the case in other Greek Universities, there is a considerable number of the students who lag behind and

extend the duration of their studies for levels that seem unacceptable to international standards. The school representatives pointed out that the delay to graduate in time is not related to students' social-economic problems. The impression of the EEAP is that presents a general problem in Greek universities that should be addressed by central government intervention.

The anticipated student workload is appropriate.

Work experience is mainly provided through practical teaching both in preclinical and clinical levels. This is in conjunction with the effort to link teaching and research, as mentioned in the previous principal. Overall, the experience provided to the students seemed appropriate although there are areas of improvement which are mentioned in following principles.

There were no concerns regarding the regulatory framework and the procedures for the approval of the program by the Institution.

Panel Judgement

Principle 2: Design and Approval of Programmes	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The development of the new curriculum should be completed according to the plans. There should be great effort to implement it in well-designed phases so does not result in major disruption of the educational process.

There should be a more intensified effort to identify students who are struggling and lag behind in their studies. This should be followed by appropriate help so they can complete their studies in time. In case students need an individualized program, something that will allow them to dedicate some of their time to other obligations, such as work to support or take care of their families, efforts should be made to be available to them. This can be best done through the student advocate program.

Principle 3: Student- centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES ARE DELIVERED IN A WAY THAT ENCOURAGES STUDENTS TO TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN CREATING THE LEARNING PROCESS. THE ASSESSMENT METHODS SHOULD REFLECT THIS APPROACH.

Student-centred learning and teaching plays an important role in stimulating students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in the learning process. The above entail continuous consideration of the programme's delivery and the assessment of the related outcomes.

The student-centred learning and teaching process

- *respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths;*
- *considers and uses different modes of delivery, where appropriate;*
- *flexibly uses a variety of pedagogical methods;*
- *regularly evaluates and adjusts the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods aiming at improvement;*
- *regularly evaluates the quality and effectiveness of teaching, as documented especially through student surveys;*
- *reinforces the student's sense of autonomy, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teaching staff;*
- *promotes mutual respect in the student - teacher relationship;*
- *applies appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints.*

In addition :

- *the academic staff are familiar with the existing examination system and methods and are supported in developing their own skills in this field;*
- *the assessment criteria and methods are published in advance;*
- *the assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary is linked to advice on the learning process;*
- *student assessment is conducted by more than one examiner, where possible;*
- *the regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances;*
- *assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures;*
- *a formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*

Study Programme Compliance

The EEAP found that this principle is covered adequately by the Institution. All the taught subjects have been decided by the Studies Programme Committee, under the supervision of Educational Service of the Institution. A student-centered learning and teaching process was confirmed. All the details are known to the students as they start their studies and they are publicized in the electronic Studies' Guide.

Teaching includes lectures in the whole class and practical training in small student groups. Lectures take place in the auditorium which is equipped with computer and video-assisted devices. Practical training takes place in the various laboratories of the school. Additionally,

there is an electronic class, where every student can find a variety of information about each subject, suggestions for references and books to study, announcements and notifications by the faculty members, etc.

The students have the opportunity to evaluate the teaching as a whole (teacher, subject, teaching method) through anonymous surveys that are conducted electronically, usually in every semester, where the student may answer in closed-loop questions and also to write comments and suggestions. These surveys serve for feedback to the faculty for making the appropriate changes. They can also be used for the Prize for exceptional teaching activity that is given to very few faculty members of the University each year.

The main student assessment methods are written exams, including multiple-choice questions and oral exams usually at the end of each semester. Oral exams are usually the normal way of assessment for students that have learning difficulties. An evaluation of knowledge and skills that students have gained occurs both during preclinical and clinical years, in classes and patient wards and in labs as well.

A formal appeal procedure exists if a student is not satisfied with the exam results, the teaching or any other issues, sending a complaint to the General Assembly of the Faculty (either in person, or in groups or by their elected representatives). Additionally, the student may ask to be examined by another Faculty member should he/she fail to pass the exam in three consecutive exam periods. Usually, the student has the opportunity to take an exam twice a year.

In the Institution, there is a Service for handling all the student issues and assisting students with learning disabilities, diversities, psychological issues, etc. In addition, when a student has any problem can bring it to the “Counselling and Access Structure” (Δομή Συμβουλευτικής και Προσβασιμότητας).

The Student Advisor structure has been decided but not in full action yet. This structure will give an additional opportunity for the students to be assisted in every aspect of their student and social life.

In general, the Institution is compliant with the principle of student-centered learning as there is a variety of teaching and assessment methods, which are evaluated regularly and changes are done accordingly. In addition, there is a formal way for appeals and structures to help and assist students with problems of any kind or disabilities.

Panel Judgement

Principle 3: Student- centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

Possible improvements could be introduced to improve the “teaching level”, adopting formal procedures for theoretical and practical training of faculty members (“Train the Trainers”). A

small number of the students takes part voluntarily in the teaching evaluations. Methods that can increase the participation should be explored.

Principle 4: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD DEVELOP AND APPLY PUBLISHED REGULATIONS COVERING ALL ASPECTS AND PHASES OF STUDIES (ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION).

Institutions and academic units need to put in place both processes and tools to collect, manage and act on information regarding student progression.

Procedures concerning the award and recognition of higher education degrees, the duration of studies, rules ensuring students progression, terms and conditions for student mobility should be based on the institutional study regulations. Appropriate recognition procedures rely on institutional practice for recognition of credits among various European academic departments and Institutions, in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

Graduation represents the culmination of the students' study period. Students need to receive documentation explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed (Diploma Supplement).

Study Programme Compliance

The majority of students are admitted after successful results in Pan-Hellenic exams, taken after completing the General Lyceum high school. A smaller percentage of students are accepted after success in exams available to minority students, students graduating from Technological high schools, Greek students coming from high schools abroad, or students with health issues. A small number is also accepted through transfer from other medical schools or through specific exams for graduates from other academic schools.

A welcome reception and Induction take place each new academic year. The **Studies' guide** is presented, which has all the necessary information for the whole study period, all the subjects, tasks and targets of the students and the Medical school. This includes additional information for students with any kind of learning difficulties.

The Undergraduate program is covered in 6 years (3 preclinical and 3 clinical) or 12 academic semesters. After completing all the studies, each student has gained 360 ECTS (12 X 30 for each semester), recognized mutually in all European countries.

The **Study Advisor**, a new academic structure, follows each student's progression. Most of the students (over 75 %) complete their studies in 6-years' time. However, there is a small percentage that graduate in 7 or more years. This is a general problem in all Greek Universities, as there are no obstacles for a student to proceed in his/her studies, although he/she may have not passed all the subjects of the previous semester of studies.

Students' mobility generally is encouraged. However, the EEAP noticed that the number of students moving to study abroad for 1-2 semesters, through Erasmus program, is very low (0,12 %). This was not clarified if it is upon a distribution of very few posts offered by the University to Medical School, due to low budget, or the students seem to be reluctant to participate in such programs. The target of the faculty to double this number in the coming years, seems to be very moderate and should be improved.

The ECTS are applied equally across the curriculum in all 6 years, with different contribution of each subject, up on the hours that is taught.

Upon completion of the studies, along with Diploma (Ptychion Iatrikes) a Diploma Supplement is given, describing in details all the subjects that the Graduate has passed (Compulsory and Compulsory after selection), the marks achieved, and all other necessary details, in accordance with common European instructions.

Practical training is taking place in all study period, either through practical skills and labs in preclinical years, or in clinical years in outpatient clinics and in the wards for inpatients. Students are strongly encouraged to participate in clinical skills.

In the last year, as internship, all students participate in clinical training in a successive way in five Departments (Medical Pathology, Surgery, Gynecology, Neurology and Pediatrics). This is the highest level and final clinical practice they get before graduation and start offering their medical services as doctors.

Undergraduate students suggested that a “Clinical skills/competences’ list on basic medical clinical skills could be introduced in Undergraduate educational program. The students should be able to prove, after completion of the required tasks that they have acquired the necessary skills and competencies.

Participation in research programs is promoted by all staff members, according to students’ and past graduates’ opinions. However, the percentage of students’ contribution to research is still low (5 %). This could increase offering equal opportunities for all the students, although not all students have the same interest in research programs.

Panel Judgement

Principle 4: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

Efforts should be done for a closer monitoring of the successful completion of studies, throughout the whole six-year study period and official notice could be given to students that lack in performance, at regular times.

The Faculty should take appropriate measures to increase the mobility of students in programs such as Erasmus. Measures could be taken to increase the number of students participating in research projects and assure that there will be equal chances and opportunities for all the students. EEAP welcomes the actions in strategic target 2, set by the Faculty in this field.

Emergency Care or First Aids could be introduced including basic medical skills competences.

Principle 5: Teaching Staff

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ASSURE THEMSELVES OF THE QUALIFICATIONS AND COMPETENCE OF THE TEACHING STAFF. THEY SHOULD APPLY FAIR AND TRANSPARENT PROCESSES FOR THE RECRUITMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEACHING STAFF.

The Institutions and their academic units have a major responsibility as to the standard of their teaching staff providing them with a supportive environment that promotes the advancement of their scientific work. In particular, the academic unit should:

- *set up and follow clear, transparent and fair processes for the recruitment of properly qualified staff and offer them conditions of employment that recognize the importance of teaching and research;*
- *offer opportunities and promote the professional development of the teaching staff;*
- *encourage scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research;*
- *encourage innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies;*
- *promote the increase of the volume and quality of the research output within the academic unit;*
- *follow quality assurance processes for all staff members (with respect to attendance requirements, performance, self-assessment, training etc.);*
- *develop policies to attract highly qualified academic staff.*

Study Programme Compliance

The standards of academic staff are satisfactory and in accordance with National, European and International requirements for qualifications and experience. The promotion of academic staff is regulated by the Central Government and there for there is a very limited involvement by the School. We were told some facilities have added their own additional requirements.

There are adequate opportunities for promotion and the professional development of the teaching staff.

Innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies is encouraged as well as strengthening the links between education and research.

Panel Judgement

Principle 5: Teaching Staff	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

It is advisable that more efforts are made to increase the volume and quality of the research output. The School should remain vigilant to develop policies to attract highly qualified academic staff externally and not only from existing staff. A more systematic way to train the teaching staff will be beneficial.

Principle 6: Learning Resources and Student Support

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE ADEQUATE FUNDING TO COVER TEACHING AND LEARNING NEEDS. THEY SHOULD –ON THE ONE HAND– PROVIDE SATISFACTORY INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES FOR LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORT AND –ON THE OTHER HAND– FACILITATE DIRECT ACCESS TO THEM BY ESTABLISHING INTERNAL RULES TO THIS END (E.G. LECTURE ROOMS, LABORATORIES, LIBRARIES, NETWORKS, BOARDING, CAREER AND SOCIAL POLICY SERVICES ETC.).

Institutions and their academic units must have sufficient funding and means to support learning and academic activity in general, so that they can offer to students the best possible level of studies. The above means could include facilities such as libraries, study rooms, educational and scientific equipment, information and communications services, support or counselling services.

When allocating the available resources, the needs of all students must be taken into consideration (e.g. whether they are full-time or part-time students, employed or international students, students with disabilities) and the shift towards student-centred learning and the adoption of flexible modes of learning and teaching. Support activities and facilities may be organised in various ways, depending on the institutional context. However, the internal quality assurance ensures that all resources are appropriate, adequate, and accessible, and that students are informed about the services available to them.

In delivering support services the role of support and administrative staff is crucial and therefore they need to be qualified and have opportunities to develop their competences.

Study Programme Compliance

The School has an impressive wide range of learning facilities including libraries, study rooms, educational and scientific equipment, information and communications services, support services. The EEAP was impressed by the function of the “counselling and accessibility” (Συμβουλευτική και Προβασιμότητα) service that is easily available to students and has been operated in a truly professional way. This includes online individual and group counselling and support to students who face difficulties with their studies, intrapersonal and social life as well as psychosomatic problems and mental health issues. There has been considerable reduction in numbers of teaching staff mostly of not replacing or delaying filling in vacancies particularly at the time of austerity in the Country. Issues of not adequate or even dysfunctional administrative support were raised by students.

Panel Judgement

Principle 6: Learning Resources and Student Support	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

Though this a matter of the Central Government, nevertheless ways to fulfill vacancies of teaching staff should be explored. A review of the administration services will be advisable, and the EEAP was reassured that there is such intention.

Principle 7: Information Management

INSTITUTIONS BEAR FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR COLLECTING, ANALYSING AND USING INFORMATION, AIMED AT THE EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT OF UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES OF STUDY AND RELATED ACTIVITIES, IN AN INTEGRATED, EFFECTIVE AND EASILY ACCESSIBLE WAY.

Institutions are expected to establish and operate an information system for the management and monitoring of data concerning students, teaching staff, course structure and organisation, teaching and provision of services to students as well as to the academic community.

Reliable data is essential for accurate information and for decision making, as well as for identifying areas of smooth operation and areas for improvement. Effective procedures for collecting and analysing information on study programmes and other activities feed data into the internal system of quality assurance.

The information gathered depends, to some extent, on the type and mission of the Institution. The following are of interest:

- *key performance indicators*
- *student population profile*
- *student progression, success and drop-out rates*
- *student satisfaction with their programme(s)*
- *availability of learning resources and student support*
- *career paths of graduates*

A number of methods may be used for collecting information. It is important that students and staff are involved in providing and analyzing information and planning follow-up activities.

Study Programme Compliance

The School of Medicine has established procedures for the collection of data regarding: student body, teaching methods, student progression, employability and career paths of graduates. These mechanisms are described in detail in the proposal for accreditation. The systems and methods that are used include gathering of information from the administrative personnel (Γραμματεία της Σχολής) to be used for determining students with special needs so that the educational and exam schedule and process are modified accordingly.

The main body of students are selected through a highly competitive national examination. Since the Medical School of Thrace has one of the highest entry requirements amongst all undergraduate programmes, these students represent some of the brightest pupils nationally coming through the secondary education system. Unfortunately, the extremely talented cohort is diluted and overinflated by additional entries through some opaque criteria.

Student progression is very satisfactory, graduation rate is high, within the expected time frame and drop-out rates are extremely low. Student's satisfaction surveys are regularly solicited. This information is appropriately communicated towards improvement (see Principle 9, On-going Monitoring and Periodic Internal Review of Programmes, for more details on internal mechanisms assessing the comments of the students and how they are handled).

Overall, there is satisfactory representation of men and women in the School of Medicine

The School provides adequate facilities for preclinical and clinical training, although some improvement can be achieved on administrative support of the faculty and students. Sometime students perform administrative work, which is not acceptable. The school has to solve this problem

Following discussions with students from senior years and alumni, it appears that a considerable number of graduates opt to complete their residency training in other countries abroad, mainly in the EU. Without a doubt this is unfortunate for the Greek medical system, it is nevertheless a very valuable resource for the career path of the graduates. Hopefully, internationally trained graduates can bring back knowledge, expertise and networking when and if conditions allow their return to Greece.

Following discussions with alumni, it became clear that alumni highly respect the school and feel connected. There is a community and family-like ambiance. The School is to be commended for generating a truly team- and community-based feeling

Panel Judgement

Principle 7: Information Management	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

Establishing a formal way of communication with alumni and graduates who work abroad through a dedicated mechanism can enhance visibility, networking and fund-raising efforts. A conference every two years where alumni present their work and brainstorm for the mission and the strategy of the institutions was suggested.

Principle 8: Public Information

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD PUBLISH INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR TEACHING AND ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES WHICH IS CLEAR, ACCURATE, OBJECTIVE, UP-TO-DATE AND READILY ACCESSIBLE.

Information on Institution's activities is useful for prospective and current students, graduates, other stakeholders and the public.

Therefore, institutions and their academic units provide information about their activities, including the programmes they offer, the intended learning outcomes, the qualifications awarded, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to their students, as well as graduate employment information.

Study Programme Compliance

A wide range of information on institution's activities is provided to prospective and current students, graduates, other stakeholders and the public. There is an impressive array of activities including programs for special groups of prisoners, people with drugs dependency problems, support to local organisations and groups offering cultural and social support programmes etc.

Panel Judgement

Principle 8: Public Information	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

Continue the current activities and expand further with stronger involvement and presence in the local communities. Efforts should be made to reach out the ethnic groups and minorities including the Muslim minorities located in Thrace area.

Principle 9: On-going Monitoring and Periodic Internal Review of Programmes

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE IN PLACE AN INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM FOR THE AUDIT AND ANNUAL INTERNAL REVIEW OF THEIR PROGRAMMES, SO AS TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES SET FOR THEM, THROUGH MONITORING AND AMENDMENTS, WITH A VIEW TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT. ANY ACTIONS TAKEN IN THE ABOVE CONTEXT SHOULD BE COMMUNICATED TO ALL PARTIES CONCERNED.

Regular monitoring, review and revision of study programmes aim to maintain the level of educational provision and to create a supportive and effective learning environment for students.

The above comprise the evaluation of:

- *the content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up to date;*
- *the changing needs of society;*
- *the students' workload, progression and completion;*
- *the effectiveness of the procedures for the assessment of students;*
- *the students' expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme;*
- *the learning environment, support services and their fitness for purpose for the programme*

Programmes are reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders. The information collected is analysed and the programme is adapted to ensure that it is up-to-date. Revised programme specifications are published.

Study Programme Compliance

The Medical School of Thrace has established ongoing monitoring and yearly internal review mechanisms to ensure compliance and excellence of the undergraduate program. Notably, in response to the external evaluation committee review performed in 2011, the Medical School of Thrace has introduced internal reviewing mechanisms ensuring that the objectives of each course and of the general curriculum are evaluated and updated regularly.

The Medical School of Thrace established processes and committees to ensure internal evaluation of the undergraduate curriculum. The committee on the curriculum of the Undergraduate program collaborates with the Committee of the Internal Evaluation, which, in turn, operates based on the guidelines of the Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency. These committees collaborate with the educators for determining and updating periodically the content of the compulsory and elective courses. Recommendations from the student evaluations are also considered.

The Medical School of Thrace has performed great progress in establishing internal review mechanisms for ensuring quality via feedback-based assessment and subsequent corrective modifications.

The committee greatly appreciated the effort and the progress, but also noted the lack of an efficient internal mechanism with advisory and corrective power to ensure high level functioning of administrative support. Interviews with students and alumni revealed that certain administrative tasks including uploading of e-classes and functions of Γραμματεία are not functioning properly. This is an important concern that can and should be urgently addressed.

We were impressed by the maturity, attitude, intellect, enthusiasm and drive of the students and alumni we interviewed. The Medical School of Thrace has exceptional students who would further enhance their training via these corrective actions.

Panel Judgement

Principle 9: On-going Monitoring and Periodic Internal Review of Programmes	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

Urgent implementation of measures to ensure proper function of Grammatia (Γραμματεία) and administrative functions and support. The internal reviewing and corrective mechanisms required for this process need to become more efficient.

Principle 10: Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programmes

PROGRAMMES SHOULD REGULARLY UNDERGO EVALUATION BY COMMITTEES OF EXTERNAL EXPERTS SET BY HAHE, AIMING AT ACCREDITATION. THE TERM OF VALIDITY OF THE ACCREDITATION IS DETERMINED BY HAHE.

HAHE is responsible for administrating the programme accreditation process which is realised as an external evaluation procedure, and implemented by a committee of independent experts. HAHE grants accreditation of programmes, with a specific term of validity, following to which revision is required. The accreditation of the quality of the programmes acts as a means of verification of the compliance of the programme with the template's requirements, and as a catalyst for improvement, while opening new perspectives towards the international standing of the awarded degrees.

Both academic units and institutions participate in the regular external quality assurance process, while respecting the requirements of the legislative framework in which they operate.

The quality assurance, in this case the accreditation, is an on-going process that does not end with the external feedback, or report or its follow-up process within the Institution. Therefore, Institutions and their academic units ensure that the progress made since the last external quality assurance activity is taken into consideration when preparing for the next one.

Study Programme Compliance

The Medical School of Thrace has already undergone an external review in 2011. This review was administered by the Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency. In fact, one of the members of the current EEAP were also members of the 2011 evaluation committee. The Panel is pleased to report that the Medical School of Thrace has been very responsive to the previous external review. Namely, they developed an overall vision and strategic plan for the improvement of the educational mission with identifiable objectives as well as an overall culture of quality assurance.

The majority of academic faculty and all members of staff are fully aware of the importance of the external review and its contribution to improvement. Moreover, the stakeholders of the program, such as representatives from Local Diabetes and Kidney Disease Patients Group, the Regional Research and Innovation Council, and regional (Evros) Medical Association, were productively engaged in the external review.

In summary, the accreditation committee was impressed with the responsiveness to the previous review and with the level of organization and preparedness for the current review.

Panel Judgement

Principle 10: Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programmes	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The School is clearly on the right path. We encourage them to continue their efforts to ensure that this mentality is fully embedded across all faculty and administrative staff.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

The overall EEAP impression was that the school successfully fulfills its mission in training medical doctors who are fully capable of progressing to postgraduate training and finally providing adequate health care to their patients.

The committee noted the following major strengths:

- Excellent infrastructure that includes fairly new preclinical and clinical buildings, library and other required resources.
- High quality faculty that it's dedicated to its mission. Interfaculty relationships were appropriate, create a friendly and collegial environment. This resulted in faculty high moral.
- High quality incoming students. Excellent relationship between faculty and students that resulted in promoting a very personal environment and a strong community feeling.
- Appropriate theoretical and practical teaching and evaluation practices.
- Strong efforts by the faculty to involve students in research activities.
- Satisfactory connection of the school with the society not only of Alexandroupolis but also the broader society of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace.
- Satisfactory research efforts that include not only industry-sponsored activities but also research funding from highly competitive sources, such as the European Horizon program.
- Appropriate efforts to modernize the curriculum the format in such way that accommodates current international practice and local reality and resources.
- Very satisfactory response to criticism raised during the previous School external evaluation in 2011.

II. Areas of Weakness

- The size of faculty has been reduced as a result of the current financial crisis. Although it is well understood that this is not under the control of the School but it is a general problem in all Greek Universities and is under the control of the Greek government, EEAP strongly encourages the expansion of the faculty, at least, to the pre-crisis level.
- Further to the above, a better collaboration is recommended between the School and the government so the number of the yearly accepted students should be determined by the School according the available.
- Improvements should be made in the School Administration that will facilitate and enhance student training.
- A small portion of students extends its studies beyond the normal six-year duration. Efforts should be made to identify and help the students at the early stages of their lagging behind and help them to accelerate their study efforts.
- The portion of students involved in research can be increased via stronger effort of advertising possibilities, encouraging anticipation and rewarding participating skills

- Research activities are satisfactory, but more emphasis on innovation and high impact might be helpful.
- Limited connection of the school with the industry and research institutes.
- Limited communication with alumni.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

Recommendations have already been made in the specific area of weaknesses that were noted above. In addition, EEAP submits the following general recommendations:

- Enhancing the efforts to train faculty regarding teaching and familiarize them with modern techniques that are currently practiced in leading universities.
- Transparent criteria and milestones for faculty promotion. Although this topic is mainly governed by the central government guidelines, EEAP believes that there should be changes that will allow criteria to be developed at local level. These criteria should heavily appreciate success in securing funding from competitive and prestigious sources, such as European Horizon programs or while regarding philanthropic organizations.
- A stronger collaborative effort should be established with doctors working at the National Health System at the Alexandroupolis Hospital. This can include more participation of the NHS doctors in teaching, practical training and research activities.
- Additional efforts should be made regarding the opening to the general society. These efforts can include collaboration with the local industry, other local nonprofit organization and participation in the school and the management of local health-related problems. Also close collaboration with regional (Evros) Medical Association, where all doctors of the Faculty and NHS are registered.
- Further to the above, there should be a stronger interdepartmental collaboration with other departments or Schools of the University of Thrace. The very successful collaboration with the School of Molecular Biology can be used as a template for such endeavors. Such a collaboration has the potential to lead to highly innovative research projects that can help a major impact not only in the local society but the national economy as well.
- Formalized communication with the excellent alumni would be beneficial for the visibility, strategic planning and fund raising of the school. A meeting every two years where the alumni are invited to speak and interact with the faculty and students could serve such function.
- Modifications in Education program and curriculum in order to adopt the suggestions for new subjects and medical skills and specific measures to increase the mobility of students through Erasmus and other exchange programmes.
- Finally, although it is realized that the collaboration of the central government is required, EEAP strongly believes that it would be highly beneficial to make strong effort to recruit faculty from existing minorities to a satisfactory representative level. Such a representation will greatly enhance the image of the school not only in the local community but also in the international arena.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: None

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are: None

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are: None

Overall Judgement	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname

Signature

1. Professor Aristidis Veves (Chair)

Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center / Harvard
Medical School, United States of America

2. Professor Emeritus Nicandros Bouras

King's College London, United Kingdom

3. Thanos Tzounopoulos PhD

Endowed Professor and Vice Chair of Research of
Otolaryngology, Director of Pittsburgh Hearing
Research center, Department of Otolaryngology, School
of Medicine, University of Pittsburgh, United States of
America

4. Andreas Papandroudis, MD, PhD

Member of Panhellenic Medical Association,
Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, Greece