



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
HELLENIC REPUBLIC



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Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of:

Primary Level Education

Institution: Democritus University of Thrace

Date: 24 October 2020

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

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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 **Primary Level Education** of the **Democritus University of Thrace** comprised the following three (3) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

- 1. Professor, Leonidas Kyriakides (Chair)**
University of Cyprus

- 2. Associate Professor, Gina Ioannitou Valavanidou**
Université le Mans, France

- 3. Associate Professor, Joanna Katsanis**
University of Arizona

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel (EEAP) used Zoom teleconferencing to conduct online interviews and virtual site meetings with the Department of Primary Education of the Democritus University of Thrace (DUTH), referred to as “Department” hereinafter, from 19-22 of October, 2020. Prior to the visit, the EEAP was provided detailed material of the Department, including the prior External Evaluation Report conducted in 2013 and other evaluation material.

HAHE, via Zoom teleconferencing, gave the EEAP an online orientation and directions for the online site visit. In their briefing, HAHE presented information on HAHE mission, standards and guidelines of the QA accreditation process, and the national framework of HEIs.

During the Accreditation process EEAP met with:

- The Vice-Rector/President of MODIP & the Head of the Department. The latter provided a short overview of the Undergraduate Programme, including history, academic profile, current status, strengths, and possible areas of concern.
- The OMEA & MODIP representatives and discussed the degree of compliance of the Undergraduate Program to the Quality Standards for Accreditation. Also, reviewed student assignments, theses, exam papers & examination material.
- The teaching staff and addressed professional development opportunities, mobility, workload, student evaluations; competence and adequacy of the teaching staff to ensure learning outcomes; the link between teaching and research; teaching staff's involvement in applied research, projects and research activities directly related to the programme; possible areas of weakness.
- Students and addressed student-satisfaction from their study experience and Department/Institution facilities; student input in quality assurance; priority issues concerning student life and welfare.
- Programme graduates and learned of their experience of studying at the Department and their career path*.
- The employers, social partners and discussed relations of the Department with external stakeholders from the private and the public sector.

In addition to the informative meetings with the aforementioned groups of individuals, EEAP was given an on-line tour of the classrooms, lecture halls, libraries, laboratories, and other facilities. The goal of the on-line tour was to evaluate facilities and learning resources and to ascertain whether the learning materials, equipment and facilities are adequate for a successful provision of the programme.

The EEAP conferred amongst them at the end of each day to discuss their observations, assessment, and conclusions regarding the Department and the programme.

**For future consideration HAHE may request Departments to include programme graduates both from recent and distant years. The student graduates we met had all completed studies more than four years ago and were unfamiliar of recent changes in the Department, its academic curriculum and career impact.*

III. Study Programme Profile

The Department of Primary Education of the DUTH was founded in the academic year 1986-7. In 1998 the Department of Primary Education and the Department of Preschool Education were combined to form the School of Educational Sciences in Alexandroupoli. The Department provides a four-year Bachelor program in Education for primary school teachers.

The staff of the Department consists of:

- 20 academic staff (DEP)
- 6 EDIP staff
- 3 ETEP staff
- 4 EEP staff
- 3 contracted instructors ("*simvasiouxoi*")

The undergraduate programme has about 1200 students. Since 2010, the undergraduate programme enrolls 200 students every academic year. In addition, the Department accepts a number of students who need to attain diploma equivalency ("*eksomiosi*"). During the 2019 academic year, 164 such students were accepted. The Department has also 225 graduate students and 57 PHD students. As a result, the ratio of enrolled students per teacher is very high, about 1:50.50, burdening the staff. The Department has a good and satisfactorily maintained infrastructure composed of two buildings, facing each other.

The Curriculum structure of undergraduate studies follows the ECTS system. The studies are structured in 8 semesters with workload of approximately 30 ECTS per semester. The courses consist of:

- 27 compulsory courses
- 15 compulsory elective courses
- 2 free elective courses
- 1 compulsory Practicum (equivalent to 4 courses)
- 2 foreign language courses

Students have the option of completing an undergraduate thesis, which is equivalent to 2 courses.

The objectives of the Department are to provide graduates with both theoretical, methodological and career-specific knowledge and skills to be able to successfully meet the modern working life's demand for competent educators. The Department's goals have been implemented effectively. The Department has three fields in the undergraduate programme: the field of pedagogy and psychology, the field of science and the field of humanities and social science.

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

The quality policy of the undergraduate programme Primary Level Education of the Department of Primary Education of the DUTH is in line with that of the University's. The programme's quality assurance procedures are monitored by the University's Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP). The Quality Assurance Policy aims to support the academic content and scientific

orientation of the undergraduate programme Primary Level Education in accordance with international academic standards and the current legislation. Therefore, there is a policy for improving education, research and innovation, human resources, the structure of the organization, extroversion and mobility and promotion-recognition.

The main dimensions of the Department’s quality assurance policy, which infuse the structure and the organization of the undergraduate program are as follows:

- the promotion of quality and effectiveness of teaching practice
- the promotion of quality research work produced by members of the Department
- the connection of theory and research with teaching practice
- the provision of information on employment opportunities/prospects to graduate students of the Department, through a relevant social networking page.
- the promotion of quality of the Department’s secretarial/administrative domain by informing the Administration of the university about deficiencies and problems and submitting relevant proposals for their improvement.
- the annual review and internal inspection of the programme’s quality assurance system and care for the establishment of a good cooperation of the Department’s team responsible for conducting the evaluation process of the Department (OMEA with MODIP).
- the updating of the website, so that it is always a valid source of information about what is happening in the Department (and about the updated Quality Assurance Policy of the undergraduate program).

The Quality Assurance Policy of the Department of Primary Education is posted on the department’s website and it is published through the Study Guide of the Department, in lectures, workshops and informative events. In this way, it is made accessible to the public.

The EEAP found the quality assurance policy of the Department of Primary Education, as satisfactory and well-focused on all aspects mentioned above. However, the EEAP notes that the specific characteristics of the quality and effectiveness of teaching should be included in the relevant policy. Also, the ways of linking teaching and research should be made clearer. A discussion and exchange of ideas in the department can help the staff members to explicitly define the characteristics of effective teaching and outline a specific policy on this aspect.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The EEAP recommends to the Department to develop a more specific policy in regard to the characteristics of quality of teaching to encourage all staff to implement them. The policy of the Department should identify ways of linking teaching and research. Some teaching staff have already identified interesting ways of establishing such links and it would be helpful if they share them with their colleagues.

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 labor 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 Department follows a well-defined procedure for implementing the University's mission. The Department has designed a course of study that is appropriate and meets universally accepted standards for teacher preparation. The features that are incorporated in the DUTH study guide (2019-20) and the Internal Operation Regulation guide of the same year, include the administrative procedures, the organization of the undergraduate program, the professional development program with special reference to the program of "eksomiosi ptihou" of graduate students, as well as student orientation, subject area objectives, and Erasmus programs. A clear path for student progression is presented in the above documents that incorporate the philosophy and delivery methods of the curriculum, including assessment methods and alignment with the European Course Credits System (E.C.T.S.). The study program includes 240 ECTS and is divided into 8 semesters.

The Department's curriculum was reviewed and revised in 2016, following the Accreditation Committee's suggestions made in 2013. It is up to date with the latest trends in the field of Educational Sciences. The new curriculum has added optional courses for strengthening the

practicum, such as practicum III and IV micro-teaching courses. Following the Accreditation Committee’s suggestions, the Department has also added electives like teaching in multicultural environments and teaching with the new technologies. The Department has also reduced the number of mandatory courses and enriched the number of compulsory courses.

The Department’s laboratories function effectively and promote good practices as they relate to the latest research and theory. Some examples are the laboratory of practicum, the laboratory of environmental research and the laboratory of computer science. The Department considers both the needs of the students and the realities of the labor market. It also identifies practicum school sites where students have the best opportunities to develop the capabilities that will make them employable in the future.

The “*Paratiritirio*” (Committee designed to overview the study program of the Department) is responsible for the annual planning and monitoring of the smooth implementation of the Curriculum. The goal of this committee is to identify changes that need to be made and to make recommendations to the Department Assembly of appropriate actions that need to be undertaken. During our discussions with the stakeholders, external experts and graduates, it was noted that their input is not being taken into account when the course curriculum is revised. The Department gives the students the option instead of taking two courses, to write a thesis based on critical investigation and analysis of a topic within a scientific area that is included in the program modules. Every year approximately 40 students choose this option.

Panel Judgment

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

Panel Recommendations

The EEAP recommends that the Committee of Undergraduate studies takes into account the input of the stakeholders, students and external experts in the review and improvement of the course curriculum.

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 Department's leadership and faculty have delivered a student-centered program of study. The course objectives and activities are consistent with a student-center approach. Students are given opportunities and support to develop personal as well as academic skills. More specifically the seminars, the workshops (*ergastiria*) and the private tutoring lessons (*frontistiria*) that the Department offers to students, help them develop their individual skills. The above activities also help students who have difficulties in mathematics and the Greek language. These activities together with a consulting committee and Department's faculty's personal work, assist students

with special learning difficulties, stress, other mental health issues and/or disabilities, by providing them, among others, with alternative methods of evaluation.

The student satisfaction surveys are administered regularly in every course and are well received by both faculty and students. The surveys provide important feedback and bring continuous improvement to the program. The results of these surveys have been very positive which suggests that students are satisfied with the quality of course content and teaching methods.

The Department's faculty members use cooperative learning techniques that stimulate active and creative participation of students in the learning process. Students are encouraged to work in small groups and to design and present their own lessons for the practicum. The assessment methods and evaluations vary (e.g. final and midterm exams, individual and group projects). It is impressive how effectively the faculty adapted their courses and evaluations methods for online teaching, because of the pandemic. During interviews, the students praised several aspects of the quality of both the delivery and instruction of courses they had to take online due to the Covid19 situation. The Department's faculty communicate regularly with their students through e-class, emails, and other electronically based resources.

There is a formal procedure in place to address situations where students want to contest a grade or file a complaint. Furthermore, all students have an advisor who is available regularly and answers any of their questions. The advisor has the responsibility to guide students through the program requirements.

During the interviews, students indicated that some of the textbooks and learning materials the faculty requires them to study for the courses, are not up to date with the most recent research findings in their field.

Panel Judgement

| Principle 3: Student- centered Learning, Teaching an Assessment | |
|--|---|
| Fully compliant | ✓ |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

Panel Recommendations

The EEAP suggests an external review of the required course textbooks and learning materials given to students.

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

It is obvious to the EEAP that one of the Department's notable strengths is the close collaboration of faculty and students. Students and graduates affirmed the willingness of faculty and staff to support them in their careers and academic pursuits. They are also satisfied with the feedback they have been receiving on their progress.

The EEAP noted that the number of Erasmus incoming and outgoing students is low. Based on interviews with the faculty, it was determined that a variety of issues contributed to both faculty and students' low mobility. These include, inadequate financial support, the limited number of British Universities participating in the programme and faculty workload. Although the low participation rate can be partly attributed to the pandemic the EEAP believes that more effort is needed by all members of the University to promote faculty and students' professional development.

The Department applies the ECTS system across the curriculum. The Diploma Supplement is given automatically once the students have successfully completed all the compulsory courses, the required number of elective compulsory and free selection courses and have also accumulated the total number of 240 ECTS. In addition, the Department has three skilled and capable secretaries who meet the unit's needs.

The EEAP appreciates the improvements that have been made in the quality of the practicum. The practicum is the total of four semesters and begins on the 5th semester. The faculty members who teach the practicum course, supervise students in the school teaching practice and in different public schools of the district. They also prepare the students with the micro-teaching programs they offer, where students prepare a teaching lesson and present it to their classmates and their professors. It seems that the Department has made big steps towards improving the quality of the practicum. They have agreements with private schools, SOS villages,

non-governmental associations, such as ARSIS literacy for unescorted immigrant children, public organizations like *koinoniko Frontistirio*, cultural entities like artistic presentations (theater, music, etc.) and the city’s library. Given the feedback we received during our interview it was clear that all of the above collaborations can be further developed and strengthened.

It is important to note that during these interviews, the students’ comments about staff members were unanimously positive. For example, students expressed satisfaction with the quality of instruction they were receiving. They also liked the variety of course offerings and praised several instructors who they believed promoted critical thinking and effectively linked theory with practice in their classes.

Finally, the “*Synergatis taksis*” optional practicum (participation at a school for a whole year) was highly praised by all students. The EEAP considers this as strong feature of the practicum experience.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The EEAP suggests that the Department takes the necessary steps to increase the collaborations with other universities and provide incentives to faculty and students to participate in the Erasmus mobility projects.
- The EEAP appreciates the improvements that have already been made and recommends that further action will be needed to strengthen the practicum experiences (extend the presence of students at school and diverse the institutions involved).

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 faculty continue to develop academically, and most faculty members have published their research work in international scientific journals. The faculty members of the Department have also participated and organized national and international conferences. However, while they are encouraged to participate in international conferences, there is a lack of adequate financial support for their participation. More specifically, when faculty members participate in conferences that are not funded by a research program or the host institution, the university funding amounts to only 250 euros per year for national conferences, and 400 euros for international conferences. These amounts are less than adequate to support conference participation. Therefore, additional funds need to be devoted for this purpose. However, despite the lack of available funding it is commendable that faculty members put forth personal funds to participate in various conferences every year.

The staff have excellent relations with one another and have established collaborations amongst them. Nevertheless, working conditions are not ideal due to the lack of financial resources and available space.

Some professional development is encouraged by the Department especially through cooperation agreements with foreign universities and research programs within the framework of the ERASMUS+ Mobility Program (for example, bilateral cooperation agreements with universities in France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Cyprus, Bulgaria and Romania). However, more cooperation agreements with more universities in additional countries are needed.

The Department organizes conferences and workshops, which promote the exchange of ideas between academics, as well as the dissemination of scientific knowledge to practitioners and the scientific community. However, extra support to newly appointed teaching staff is needed to help them jump start their research.

Each academic semester, the teaching staff are being evaluated by students through a survey electronically and anonymously (to ensure maximum student participation). The results of this evaluation are given to the staff and improvements are suggested.

Lastly, the Department has a disciplined and transparent approach for recruitment and promotion. Faculty members are recruited and promoted based on meritocratic methods of evaluation. Apart from the minimum criteria required for promotion and/or recruitment (i.e. quality of undergraduate and graduate studies, quantity and quality of research work and teaching experience), the candidates are also ranked based on their scientific expertise and relevance to the subject area of the announced position. Because of these recruitment practices the research interests and qualifications of the faculty are directly related to the objectives of the Undergraduate studies program. It is worth noting that each announced position attracts a plethora of qualified applicants making it easy to recruit high quality candidates.

Panel Judgement

| Principle 5: Teaching Staff | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Fully compliant | ✓ |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

Panel Recommendations

More financial support is needed from the University and the State to facilitate faculty participation in conferences and to provide ground research funding to newly hired faculty.

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

As indicated earlier although the EEAP was not able to inspect in person the facilities, a virtual tour was given of the buildings, laboratories, lecture halls and administrative offices. The campus appears to be comprised of several buildings in an open space that are readily accessible. However, the space is limited in that some faculty have to share offices as well as laboratory space.

In terms of infrastructure, academic faculty expressed the need for additional administrative and technical support. They have many responsibilities and need assistance in effectively demonstrating experiments and classroom projects. At this time, there is limited administrative and technical support to facilitate these activities. Each faculty is left on their own time and resources to carry out administrative and technical duties. Academic faculty are devoted to teaching and to their students. They indicated that administrative responsibilities get in the way of their academic development.

Students reported that professors are readily available outside their teaching hours. They are accessible and provide guidance and support, as well as assistance with career orientation. They have an open-door policy and foster a friendly teaching environment. However, students expressed the need of the Department having more academic faculty that engages in research. The EEAP could see that this will be difficult to attain given the limited available funding supporting faculty research.

Students expressed the need of a greater variety of practical experiences. In addition, they indicated that more emphasis needs to be placed on connecting the theory taught with teaching practice. They praised the diverse course curriculum that has helped them think of possibilities for future specialization.

The EEAP feels that the Department provides excellent direction on how students can pursue postgraduate studies.

The administrative staff were described as being very dedicated and supportive of students.

Excellent relations exist between the Department and the external stakeholders from the private and the public sector. This provides a smooth transition for students who seek additional experiences and practicum training. However, as indicated earlier more such sites need to be identified and made available to students.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- Department's facilities are in need of expansion as it pertains to available space in order to meet personnel demands. Faculty should be given their own offices where they can have privacy to work and meet with students. Faculty should be provided with adequate access to laboratory space to conduct their research work.
- Additional administrative and technical support is needed so that faculty have time to pursue teaching and research development which will ultimately lead to better teaching, learning and student satisfaction.
- A greater variety of practical experiences need to be identified and made available to students.

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 EEAP found that the Department has established quality assurance procedures and collects, among other things, adequate data on students, teaching staff, organization and curriculum structure. Furthermore, the Department has established procedures and collects data that allow examination of demographics, course evaluations, and student progression through the programme. While they collect data on student employability, the EEAP believes that having data on graduates' career paths, to monitor their course in the labor market, will be also valuable.

Students provide, anonymously, quality assessment of individual courses at the end of each course. The evaluation questionnaires include questions related to the given course, faculty teaching quality, workload, use of new technology and learning outcomes.

The student feedback was uniformly positive, and all courses were rated highly. However, as indicated earlier, students noted that many courses did not provide a clear connection between teaching and practice. When asked if they had given this feedback via their anonymous course evaluations, they indicated that they had not. Explaining to students the importance and usefulness of their accurate feedback is crucial to obtain constructive information for future curriculum improvements.

On a yearly basis there is an internal evaluation where student and teaching staff feedback is considered and is used to collaboratively suggest improvements in various areas of academic pursuits in the Department.

Panel Judgement

| Principle 7: Information Management | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Fully compliant | ✓ |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

Panel Recommendations

Educate students of the importance of providing constructive feedback in their course evaluations to better facilitate future curriculum improvements.

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

The EEAP Reviewed the Department's online material and information provided. On their website the Department provides all necessary information about the lectures, faculty, rules and regulations about the coursework and the Department itself. The site is user-friendly and presents information about Departmental activities, offerings and academic structure. These include but are not limited to teaching staff's CVs, information about the various personnel, research options, resources and supportive documentation. This information provides great direction to students as they journey through the program.

The wealth of on-line information leads to greater transparency in the Department's public communications of information about its mission, actions and processes. Evaluation reports and other important documents are available publicly.

The information presented on the Department's website concerns both current and perspective students. As a result, students, through the website, are able to obtain a clear picture of the program's requirements, expectations and opportunities. Also, they can obtain information about future occupational and career possibilities.

Updated CVs for faculty members are published on the website and, in most cases, in both Greek and English. Contact information of faculty and availability is also displayed. Faculty profiles provide information about teaching activities that are clear and up to date.

One issue that needs improvement pertains to the English version of their website. It was not operational. This is important given that the English version is accessible to the global academic community.

Finally, it would be helpful if the Department offered a Quarterly or monthly newsletter where they can present news on seminars and research or teaching activities and events. News and accomplishments of graduates, alumni and faculty can be included. This could function as a conduit between the community and Department.

Panel Judgement

| Principle 8: Public Information | |
|--|---|
| Fully compliant | ✓ |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

Panel Recommendations

- Consider offering a Quarterly or monthly newsletter where the Department can present news on seminars, research or teaching activities and events. This will enable opportunities for interactivity and networking with alumni and the community. It could also function as a means to continuing the engagement of alumni to the program.
- Repair the link for the English version of their website, at least for the pertinent Departmental material.

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 Department is regularly reviewed and revised with the participation of students, faculty members and other stakeholders. The information collected is analyzed and the program is modified according to the new data.

The secretary of MODIP sets the evaluation schedule at the beginning of each academic year and the President of the Department, in collaboration with the coordinator of OMEA, assigns to members of OMEA the preparation of the Department's evaluation report. Once drafted, it is submitted to the President at the end of the academic year. The Assembly of the Department is informed of the results. These are discussed and items are identified and agreed upon for improvement.

For the past four years the Department has made great strides and improvements in their organization and curriculum following the recommendations of the External evaluation report of 2013. For example, they hired faculty specializing in inclusive education which now has a significant presence in the program.

The student evaluations are a major part of the quality monitoring procedure. The educational process is evaluated through questionnaires completed each academic semester and for each course throughout the last eleven years (2008-2009 to currently). By comparing progress over time, these questionnaires provide significant data, that contribute in the improvement of the offered courses. The relative high student participation ensures result quality and guarantees that student opinion is represented. For the last two years, students seem to be familiar with the electronic method of completing these questionnaires.

It should be emphasized that the Department's action plan already includes attempts to provide support for faculty and to strengthen their research. These attempts include the continuous efforts to upgrade educational and research work carried out by faculty, the support of students and faculty staff, the upgrading of technical and operational services, and finally the improvement of its community/social character.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

No recommendations.

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 Department participated in an external evaluation in September 2013. The report of this external evaluation was made public through the Department's website.

The Department has managed to address most of the recommendations made by the HAHE Committee, especially those pertaining to increasing the research activity of the members of the Department (publications in international journals and conferences, participation in funded research programs). The staff members have responded positively to this part of the external evaluation, but there is still room for improving publication activity and funded research projects.

Another noteworthy mention is the significant improvements that the department has made in the development and updating of the academic curriculum.

The Department acknowledged that the external evaluation process can provide valuable recommendations for growth and improvement. Therefore, they may consider participating in additional external evaluation procedures such as the Shanghai Ranking's: Academic Ranking of World Universities and the Global Ranking of Academic Subjects – Education.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The EEAP would like to encourage the Department to consider participating in additional external evaluation procedures.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

- The Department has designed a course of study that is appropriate and meets universally accepted standards for teacher preparation.
- Academic faculty are devoted to teaching and to their students. They are accessible and provide guidance and support, as well as assistance with career orientation. They have an open-door policy and foster a friendly teaching environment.
- Excellent relations exist between the Department and external stakeholders from the private and the public sector.
- The Department has established great quality assurance procedures and collects adequate data on students, teaching staff, organization and curriculum structure.
- Faculty members use cooperative learning techniques that stimulate active and creative participation of students in the learning process. Students are encouraged to work in small groups and to design and present their own lessons for the practicum. The assessment methods and evaluations vary (e.g. final and midterm exams, individual and group projects).
- The Department's website is user-friendly and provides useful information about Departmental activities, offerings and academic structure.

II. Areas of Weakness

- Department's facilities are in need of expansion as it pertains to available space in order to meet personnel demands.
- Additional administrative and technical support is needed so that the faculty could have time to pursue teaching and research development which will ultimately lead to better teaching, learning and student satisfaction.
- The number of Erasmus incoming and outgoing students is low.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

- The EEAP recommends to the Department to develop a more specific policy in regard to the characteristics of quality of teaching to encourage all staff to implement them. The policy of the department should also refer to ways of linking teaching and research.
- Consider conducting an external review of the required course textbooks and learning materials given to the students.
- The EEAP recommends that further action will be needed to strengthen the practicum experiences (extend the presence of students at school and diverse the institutions involved).
- The EEAP suggests that the Department take the necessary steps to increase the collaborations with other universities, and provide incentives to faculty and students to participate in the Erasmus mobility projects.

- More financial support is needed from the University and the State to facilitate faculty participation in conferences and to provide ground research funding to newly hired faculty.
- Department facilities are in need of expansion as it pertains to available space in order to meet personnel demands. Faculty should be given their own offices where they can have privacy to work and meet with students. Faculty should be provided with adequate access to laboratory space to conduct their research work.
- Educate students of the importance of providing constructive feedback in their course evaluations to better facilitate future curriculum improvements.
- Consider offering a Quarterly or monthly newsletter where the Department can present news on seminars, research or teaching activities and events. This will enable opportunities for interactivity and networking with alumni and the community. It could also function as a means to continuing the engagement of alumni to the program.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

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

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: 4, 6

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are: None

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are: None

| Overall Judgement | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Fully compliant | ✓ |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname

Signature

- 1. Professor, Leonidas Kyriakides (Chair)**
University of Cyprus
- 2. Associate Professor, Gina Ioannitou Valavanidou**
Université le Mans, France
- 3. Associate Professor, Joanna Katsanis**
University of Arizona