



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
HELLENIC REPUBLIC



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**Accreditation Report
for the Undergraduate Study Programme
(Integrated Master) of:**

Architecture

Institution: Democritus University of Thrace

Date: 27 February 2021

Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the Undergraduate Study Programme (Integrated Master) of **Architecture** 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 (Integrated Master) of **Architecture** 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 Loukas Kalisperis, (Chair),**
Pennsylvania State University, University Park,
Pennsylvania, USA
- 2. Ms. Anna-Maria Giarenti,**
Member of the Technical Chamber of Greece,
Athens, Greece
- 3. Professor Yiorgos Hadjichristou,**
University of Nicosia, Nicosia, Cyprus
- 4. Professor Marios C. Phocas,**
University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel reviewed the material submitted by the Department of **Architecture** of the **Democritus University of Thrace (DUTH)** in advance of its *virtual visit* (via tele-conference) and *virtual* briefing. The Director and staff of HAHE briefed the members of the Panel on its mission and standards, as well as the guidelines for the review process and the national framework of the higher education institution in Greece. The Panel met, in private, to discuss the program review report for the Department of **Architecture** of the **Democritus University of Thrace**, allocate tasks and list of issues for the site *virtual visit*.

The visit was conducted via online conference meetings (Zoom) due to COVID-19 travel restrictions and was conducted from 23 February 2021, till 25 February 2021. The Panel wrote the report in the following days (25-28 February 2021) through collaborative meetings, held via the Zoom platform. The Panel would like to express its deep appreciation for the efforts that the University, Department, faculty, staff, students, alumni and HAHE took on in order for the *virtual visit* to be a productive and effective experience. Although the Panel was able to collect enough information for an understanding of the program, the *virtual visit* was not as effective and rewarding as an in-person evaluation.

The Panel met initially with the Department Chair and the Vice Rector of Academic Affairs of the Democritus University of Thrace, on 23 February 2021, for an in-depth introductory meeting where initial presentations of the University and the Department took place. The Department Chair and the Vice Rector of Academic Affairs gave an overview of the institution and the Department, regarding its history, vision, mission, current status, strengths, and academic profile. Further presentations provided useful information about the Department's strengths and areas of concern. The morning meetings continued with an in-depth presentation by representatives of the Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP) and the Internal Evaluation Group (OMEA), followed by comprehensive discussion with all MODIP & OMEA members, during which the Panel received additional information about the program, the various activities of the Department regarding the curriculum, faculty and staff, student body, and research activities. The Panel received further documentation and supporting material related to the presentations given by MODIP & OMEA that facilitated their discussions. The Panel reflected on the discussions and prepared for the subsequent sessions of the '*virtual visit*', during which it met with faculty members and student representatives. During this meeting the Panel was given the opportunity to ask detailed questions, in order to better facilitate the Panel's understanding of the curriculum, internal evaluation review process, adequacy of resources and possible areas of strengths and weaknesses. The students provided the members of the Panel with valuable information about their study experience, curriculum, and campus facilities. They discussed their priority issues concerning student life, mobility, research, and career opportunities. The students were very hospitable, enthusiastic and helpful. They conducted themselves admirably and were excellent ambassadors of a good educational Institution.

The first day of the *virtual visit* was concluded with a brief meeting of the Panel, in order to evaluate the accomplishments of the day and plan the activities and meetings of the following day.

The second day, 24 February 2021, started with a PowerPoint tour of the facilities and a very brief discussion followed, in order to address any Panel members' questions. Following the brief virtual tour of the facilities, the Panel teleconferenced with graduates of the Department in order to assess their experience and identify how well their studies are serving them in their current work environment. The second day of the *virtual visit* was continued with a meeting with employers, social partners, and external stakeholders, representing impressive professional organizations, enterprises, and local authorities. During the meetings the Panel was able to hear their experiences either during their studies at the Democritus University of Thrace, Department of Architecture and/or their relations with **DUTH-Architecture**, as well as aiming to address the readiness of the graduates for the market and identify areas of cooperation between the Department and employers. All participants spoke enthusiastically of the Department and their affiliation with it. It was evident that the Institution is held in a very high regard by its Alumni and external stakeholders.

The second day of the *virtual visit* concluded with an extensive discussion between the Panel and the faculty working on the Program Review Report, MODIP & OMEA, and the Vice-Rector, in which a quick summary of the visit was also discussed. During the meeting the Panel was able to further clarify several key points and engage in a very detailed discussion on the curriculum and facilities. The Panel received additional information about the Department, administrative, buildings and resources, library, external relations and the electronic systems for student satisfaction and student records. Additional impromptu meetings with the Chair of OMEA and the Department Head took place on 25 & 26 February 2021, in order to clarify certain points of the very details and comprehensive presentations and request additional information, which were promptly provided.

The Panel met via tele-conference, for the remainder of the "virtual visit", in order to complete the report and submit it to HAHE on Saturday, 27 February 2021.

In closing, the Panel would like to express our sincere gratitude for the excellent support, hospitality and openness that we encountered during our *virtual visit*.

III. Study Programme Profile

The program of **Architecture** at the **Democritus University of Thrace** was established in 1999. This is a 5-year integrated Master's undergraduate program, in which students are required to complete a total of 50 courses (44 required and 6 elective) along with the completion of the Diploma Thesis and a Research Project (*Lecture-Διάλεξη*). Most students also complete a Practical Training experience and some course outside of the Department's offerings. The program has an equivalency of 300 ECTS not including the Practical Training and any courses' credits completed outside of the Department's offerings. Students do not identify any concentration areas in which they select their elective courses and or complete their thesis in similar thematic areas. The Department has developed a curriculum, in which all years of study are very structured. Course syllabi are available for all courses taught online in the web page of the Department. Students are given the opportunity to evaluate the courses they attend.

Graduates of the program obtain the title of Architectural Engineer and can become members of the Technical Chamber of Greece (TEE). Graduates can be employed in both the private and public sector and most of the graduates have been successfully placed in both sectors after their graduation, in addition to completing post-graduate studies, either in Greece or overseas. Throughout the academic year, seminars and lectures are held with professionals working in the field that provide additional information and exposure to different work environments. The Practical Training, although not required, provides graduates with an opportunity to explore job prospects, gain some work experience and make contacts. The Department supports diverse student educational experiences through the Erasmus+ program, with a number of students participating in this program over the last few years.

There are 17 faculty members that support the educational and research activities of the program and most have doctoral degrees from Institutions abroad or in Greece. Additionally, there is only one *special teaching staff member* (ΕΔΙΠ). An issue of impending concern is the ability to replace those that have already or are going to retire in the near future to ensure continuity of the program. Additionally, a point of concern is the disproportionately very small number of *special teaching staff members* (ΕΔΙΠ) members and the total absence of *Technical Support staff* (ΕΤΕΠ). The Department has a commendable number of publications and some limited research activities, both in projects and funds. The Department was evaluated in 2013 through an External Evaluation Committee and some of the recommendations of the report have been addressed or are in the process of been addressed.

The Department is considered a medium to small academic entity, where there are 745 undergraduate students, 67 doctoral candidates and 4 others in a post-doctorate engagement, with ratio of students to faculty of 41,4 to 44,0. This is considered very high as the average ratio in many European countries is 12/15 students per faculty in studio courses.

Both the current students and the alumni spoke very highly about the **heroic** devotion of time and energy invested by their instructors, with them extending the teaching hours long after the official completion of the meeting period for each course, which safeguards the high level of the course quality. It is imperative that the central University administration understands the different teaching requirements that are embedded in architectural education and the increased resources that are needed, in order to successfully complete an architectural

education. The Panel highly appreciates this devotion, but it notes that this can be detrimental in the development of the research, which will further help in the definition of the Department's identity.

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 realize 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 Department of Architecture has instituted a quality assurance body of faculty members that is responsible for reviewing the quality of the structure and organization of the program of studies, internationalization issues, the teaching and research activities based on quantifiable measures, the services support, the students' participation in evaluation procedures and the operation of the Department, the transparency of activities and decisions, and the public presence of the program and the Department.

The quality assurance body monitors the operation of the program on a regular and annual basis. The identity of the program has not been clearly defined and discussions should be

undertaken by the faculty on the development of the program's identity and orientation. The program is primarily an architecture design-based curriculum geared towards the professional preparation of the future architect with minimal references to the theory and history, new technologies and environmental aspects of the profession and the multidisciplinary nature of architectural education and research. The suggestion of the November 2013 *External Evaluation Report* for the Department to formulate a clear and distinct "*vision and strategy formalizing policies and strategies to cover teaching, research and human resource development*" has not been fully articulated and implemented. Initial revisions in the program of studies were made after the 2013 external evaluation, primarily in the significant reduction of the number of required courses for the completion of the program. The program was further adapted to the EU directive 2005/36/EC article 46, and in 2018, with the Masters integration within the 5 years Diploma. In parallel, the program has been monitored through participation of the Department in the European Association of Architectural Education (EAAE) and the Erasmus program of academic staff and students' mobility.

In particular, following the external evaluation of the program, the revisions of the program of studies that were made, are the reduction of the number of courses, mainly through consolidation of individual lecture and laboratory-based courses, the introduction of courses addressing issues of new media and technologies and the redefinition of the students' workload in each course. Although the quality assurance body and the faculty as a whole seemed to support the existing identity of the program as formulated above, the Panel believes that this identity is presently not adequately and convincingly reflected in the structure of the program of studies. At the same time the program needs to account for the broader contemporary context of the discipline, including areas of theory, social and environmental sustainability, research by design, inter- and transdisciplinary activities in teaching and research. Presently, the sequence of the main courses on architectural design are clearly defined with regard to the contents, levels of advancement and pedagogical objectives. Nevertheless, the individual courses in each semester do not necessarily act synergistically to the main courses of architectural design. This influences the efficiency of the educational process by the students and the workload of both, students and design instructors. In addition, the practical internship and free electives from outside the Department should count within the required 300 ECTS to complete the program of studies. Finally, there is no distinct structure of the 5 years program of studies with regard to the core of compulsory courses and the formulation of a last stage of studies accounting for the integrated Master's component. In enhancing the program's identity, the Panel believes that a general and balanced education in Architecture should be provided in the first three years, as well as an advanced component and possible concentration of the students' education in the final two years. Furthermore, the interdependence of the 9th semester courses, especially of the research project (*Lecture-Διάλεξη*) with the final design thesis is expected to act positively on the achievement of a research by design process development and the successful completion of the final design thesis by the end of the 10th semester. Finally, the Department should also explore how compulsory and constraint elective courses could be covered through cross-listing and offerings with other Departments of the School of Engineering and the University.

The structure of the Department, the program of studies and the teaching and research activities by the faculty are **not** documented well on the web sites of the Department. The

course instructors' evaluations by the students, were introduced very recently and are gaining support within the student body. Due to the small size of the Department's population the students have a strong relationship with the faculty and are involved in the activities of the Department.

The internationalization of the program through participation in ERASMUS+, European networks of education and research, organization of international conferences and workshops in Xanthi, set-up of common courses with other Universities, as well as the students' and graduates' employment and activities abroad are noted. Equally important must be the acknowledgment by the quality assurance body of the faculty research activities, sabbatical leaves and participation in international conferences. Nevertheless, due to economic constraints, presently there is **very limited** financial support by the University or the government for the faculty's research activities. There is also no mechanism for renewal and development of the faculty body through the hiring of new colleagues, external collaborators, or ΕΔΙΠ and ETEM staff. It is not clear if, in this framework, the quality assurance body has succeeded in extending and adapting the evaluation criteria for promotion of the faculty members to include accomplishments beyond research and also measures of architectural recognition.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The *interdepartmental program of studies* (curriculum) committee should articulate a renewed vision of the Department, revise the program according to the main suggestions made in this report, provide a five-year plan and design a road map for implementation. The updating of the curriculum should be perceived as a continuous and dynamic process that involves a number of entities including faculty, students, and external participants. This committee should include, in an advisory capacity all stakeholders, and should have a tight time schedule of meetings and consultations with the aim of a comprehensive proposal to be discussed and approved by the faculty. The central administration should facilitate such endeavours. The slightly negative current comments presented in this Principle could be ameliorated by implementing the suggested recommendations.

The students should be encouraged or otherwise directed to make use of the evaluation process of the course instructors, in the newly established process. Furthermore, the new Best Teaching

Awards should be reinforced and presented on an annual basis by the University to promote innovation and quality in teaching.

The linking of teaching and research should be strengthened through specific synergies between thematic areas that need to be formulated in the program of studies, and collaborative design-based or multidisciplinary research. Design-based research may be initiated by the faculty and the students already at the 9th and 10th semester level, whereas multidisciplinary research, through stronger collaborative actions by the faculty members and networking of the individual research labs.

Annual reviews of the program of studies need to be further institutionalized by the Department, as well as external evaluations, organized by the Department itself every 5 years. This will help to constantly revise and improve the profile and mission of the Department, as well as to set up long-term development aims and policies at multiple levels of operation. The updating of the curriculum should be perceived as a continuous and dynamic process that involves a number of entities including faculty, students, and external participants. This committee should include, in an advisory capacity all stakeholders, and should have a tight time schedule of meetings and consultations with the aim of a comprehensive proposal to be discussed and approved by the faculty. The central administration should facilitate such endeavours.

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 Department of Architecture of the School of Engineering of the Democritus University of Thrace has been operating since 1999. The Department became autonomous in 2014. An external evaluation and a revision of the program of studies took place in 2013 and 2016 respectively. In 2017, the program was further approved at European Union level as to the 11 points of reference of the EU directive 2005/36/EC article 46; in 2018 the program was updated with the integrated Master's degree within the 5 years Diploma. The program's specific contents, objectives and aims comply with the academic and scientific guidelines of the University. The mission of the Department of Architecture is stated to cultivate and promote Architecture and Urban Planning through related academic and applied teaching activities, to provide the necessary design-based, theoretical and technological skills and knowledge and to contribute to the development of the discipline. The faculty emphasizes on the training of the students and researchers in applying systematic and rational methods of practice in architecture; such methods are of general and specialized nature, primarily related to architectural design, urban design and planning, from a scientific and technological point of

view, but also from the point of view of cultivation, protection and preservation of cultural and artistic principles and traditions.

In particular, following the external evaluation of the program, the revisions of the program of studies that were made, are the reduction of the number of courses, mainly through consolidation of individual lecture and laboratory-based courses, the introduction of courses addressing issues of new media and technologies and the redefinition of the students' workload in each course. Although the quality assurance body and the faculty as a whole seemed to support the existing identity of the program as formulated above, the Panel believes that this identity is presently not adequately and convincingly reflected in the structure of the program of studies. At the same time the program needs to account for the broader contemporary context of the discipline, including areas of theory, social and environmental sustainability, research by design, inter- and transdisciplinary activities in teaching and research. Presently, the sequence of the main courses on architectural design are clearly defined with regard to the contents, levels of advancement and pedagogical objectives. Nevertheless, the individual courses in each semester do not necessarily act synergistically to the main courses of architectural design. This influences the efficiency of the educational process by the students and the workload of both, students and design instructors. In addition, the practical internship and free electives from outside the department should count within the required 300 ECTS to complete the program of studies. Finally, there is no distinct structure of the 5 years program of studies with regard to the core of compulsory courses and the formulation of a last stage of studies accounting for the integrated Master's component. In enhancing the program's identity, the Panel believes that a general and balanced education in Architecture should be provided in the first three years, as well as an advanced component and possible concentration of the students' education in the final two years. Furthermore, the interdependence of the 9th semester courses, especially of the research project (*Lecture-Διάλεξη*) with the final design thesis is expected to act positively on the achievement of a research by design process development and the successful completion of the final design thesis by the end of the 10th semester. Finally, the Department should also explore how compulsory and constraint elective courses could be covered through cross-listing and offerings with other Departments of the School of Engineering and the University.

The program reflects the interests and specializations of its faculty and is comparable with programs internationally. At the same time, an effective synergy between faculty research, creative practice and teaching is required. The labs of the Department are only inadequately implemented, due to financial, spatial, personnel and time management constraints. The labs should be redefined and reorganized within the Department to account for the acquisition and implementation of research projects, the achievement of diversity within the discipline and potential for interdisciplinary research activities. The planning of two additional labs on Timber and Steel Structures and New Media is a positive step towards this direction. In this respect, the University needs to support the Department with the acquisition of laboratory equipment and especially personnel.

The Department delivers on the stated intention of creating an extroverted program and opening the students' horizons to the international circles in academia and practice. The course syllabi support this direction through both project and bibliography. The alumni with whom we spoke, many of whom work abroad, spoke highly of the value of their experience noting that in

addition to architectural design the program prepared them for other design-related career paths, as well.

The faculty should be commended for addressing the relative high number of the student body at a time of multiple crises by preserving through personal efforts a program organization that is better suited to a much higher number of faculty members. The impending expansion and renewal of faculty through the announcement of new positions in the next few years merits a thoughtful reorganization to meet present and future changes and challenges.

There are procedures and regulations for the revisions of the program, and the Panel was made aware that the program has been internally monitored and assessed periodically. We are however not aware of the involvement of outside consultation in any intentional and systematic way. One student representative is involved and included in the departmental meetings, but we are not certain of the students' specific role in curriculum revisions. In our discussions with the students and alumni it became clear that they would appreciate a multidisciplinary character and stronger diversity of the program to account for the contemporary developments in practice, in architecture and other related fields. Recently, students have contributed by submitting course and faculty evaluations. We would encourage the use of virtual platforms/social media to enhance student participation and engagement.

The student guide is complete and appropriate. The Department web site needs to be updated with regard to the courses' syllabi, the academic personnel information, examples of the student work accomplished, research and networking activities of the Department. That could allow the students to access efficiently both the academic and non-academic resources of the Program and the University.

Panel Judgement

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

| The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel agrees that this Programme leads to a Level 7 Qualification according to the National & European Qualifications Network (Integrated Master) | YES | NO* |
|--|------------|------------|
| | X | |

Panel Recommendations

The *interdepartmental program of studies* (curriculum) committee should articulate a renewed vision of the Department, revise the program according to the main suggestions made in this report, provide a five-year plan and design a road map for implementation. The updating of the curriculum should be perceived as a continuous and dynamic process that involves a number of entities including faculty, students, and external participants. This committee should include, in an advisory capacity all stakeholders, and should have a tight time schedule of meetings and consultations with the aim of a comprehensive proposal to be discussed and approved by the faculty. The central administration should facilitate such endeavours. The slightly negative current comments presented in this Principle could be ameliorated by implementing the suggested recommendations.

In this respect, the program needs to account for the broader contemporary context of the discipline, including areas of theory, social and environmental sustainability, research by design, inter- and transdisciplinary activities in teaching and research. In addition, the practice and free electives should count within the required 300 ECTS to complete the program of studies.

The individual courses in each semester need to act synergistically, as much as possible, to the main courses of architectural design.

An advanced component and the possibility of concentration of the students' education in the final two years should be provided. Furthermore, the interdependence of the 9th semester courses, especially of the research project (*Lecture-Διάλεξη*) with the final design thesis is expected to act positively on the achievement of a research by design process development and the completion of the final design thesis by the end of the 10th semester.

The Department should also explore how compulsory and constraint elective courses could be covered through cross-listing and offerings with other Departments of the School of Engineering and the University.

The labs of the Department should be redefined and reorganized within the Department to account for the acquisition and implementation of research projects, the achievement of diversity within the discipline and potential for interdisciplinary research activities and the linking of research and teaching.

It is imperative that the new areas suggested by this proposal necessitate the definition of new academic positions and the needed financial and otherwise resources, in order to maintain the future development and sustainability of the program and can be a mechanism to forge the emerging identity of the Department.

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 program curriculum consists of lecture courses, seminars and design studios. During the five-year program, students are required to complete a total of 50 courses, 44 of which are compulsory. The 6 elective courses can be chosen from a list of 18 courses that are offered through the program. Additionally, the students are able to select courses from a list of 21 subjects from other programs within the School of Engineering but, unfortunately, these courses do not satisfy graduation requirements. The same applies for the practical training experience, which does not count in the total of the 300 ECTS courses.

The architectural design studios should promote interdisciplinarity, enable creative use of knowledge and experimental learning paths, whereby students should be able to interact with methods and tools in order to construct knowledge. Students are free to lead individual or group design research. They usually form a working group of two to three students, which can be also a practical solution for the not positive ratio of 1 instructor per 44 students in the studio. The content, skills and methods of delivery and assessment are described in the course guide.

The final jury of the Diploma project is composed of 3 examiners from the department; the student's supervisor attends the presentation/examination, but the committee of examiners assigns the grade. Diploma projects are digitized, archived and available at the central library which is not publicly accessible. The current departmental presence on the web does not display produced architectural work, which is unfortunate, as the high quality of the work could reflect very positively on the Department and the University.

The Department is considered a medium to small academic entity, where there are 745 undergraduate students, 67 doctoral candidates and 4 others in a post-doctorate engagement. Students have commented very positively on the availability, the direct and friendly approach and devotion of the faculty, and how this created a strong sense of belonging to a community. Both the faculty and the students think of this close interpersonal relationship as a strong part of the identity of their program and the ideal platform to enhance the processes of gaining knowledge and skills. This community structure engages also the inclusion of the Department alumni, opening thus more thematic choices and opportunities for all the students and faculty. It is commendable how the diverse areas of the current research of the graduates impacts the interests and research of both the faculty and students.

The Department promotes international collaborations. A considerable number of students participate in Erasmus exchange or for a practical training and a significant number of graduates go abroad either for postgraduate studies or to work in well-known architecture offices and others.

The Panel observed that a large percentage of students exceed seven years to graduation, instead of the 5 years' official length of studies, which may be the average real length of studies in all Greek Institutions. There is a newly instituted student academic advisor, from the current faculty, in order to provide assistance with the progress of the student through the program or other issues. In case of problems, students can contact the curriculum committee.

The Panel appreciates the openness and flexibility of the program but observes the absence of a comprehensive structure, which could put forward the identity of the school and facilitate the student orientation. Currently, the Panel is very concerned with the lack of equipment and technical personnel to keep up with technology and the new directions in architecture.

Additionally, the reduction of the 100 courses from the establishment of the Department to currently 50 courses in the program was a decisive factor for the students to strengthen their own areas of interest and be engaged with contemporary issues of architecture. At the same time, based on the comments of the evaluation committee that took place in 2013, the faculty carefully responded to the overlapping of the thematic through the courses, which also increased the possibility of opening to different directions in architecture. The updating of the curriculum should be perceived as a continuous and dynamic process that involves a number of

entities including faculty, students, and external participants. This committee should include, in an advisory capacity all stakeholders, and should have a tight time schedule of meetings and consultations with the aim of a comprehensive proposal to be discussed and approved by the faculty. The central administration should facilitate such endeavours.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The Panel acknowledges and appreciates the response of the program to the comments of the evaluation committee of 2013 in opening it up to the diversity of the current thematic of the contemporary architecture issues. It also positively noticed the attempt, in various occasions, of linking the thesis class to the final year project in the 9th and 10th semesters. The faculty is encouraged to further adopt this kind of mechanisms to generate more inclusion of students' ever-increasing choices on thematic.

The completion of the timber, steel and virtual reality labs together with the presence of the relevant experts would contribute a lot to further facilitate the development of the students' skills and areas of research. In parallel to that a further collaboration with other disciplines of the School of Engineering in Xanthi could add another one important layer in this direction.

The Panel recognizes the positive improvement in the student response rate for faculty evaluation process and encourages for keeping up the fruitful efforts.

The Panel observed that the students' results indicate a rich body of work that can better describe a clearer identity of the program. It is therefore imperative that the Department better communicates the student and faculty achievements and work by making them more visible through the appropriate media and other environments to the outside world. It is believed that having responded to these recommendations a mechanism will be triggered to increase the forging of the identity of the program and allow improvement in the linking between teaching and research.

Furthermore, the Panel encourages further mobility and collaborations, in order to create stronger links locally and internationally, by overcoming the feeling of the remoteness of the location of Xanthi. The successful career of alumni, in architecture and in other fields locally and internationally should be used as a catalyst for further development of the program. As such,

the Panel suggests for the Department to consider a period of internship/practical training by linking the current students and alumni, as an integral part of the curriculum.

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 Department of Architecture of the Democritus University of Thrace, although it accepts a small number of students (about 80 per year), provides a friendly and welcoming atmosphere to every young student. A proud effort is made to create a strong community, composed not only from the faculty working with the freshmen, but also with all undergraduates in all years. This effort attempts to make the transition from high school easier, and at the same time in combination with the program's structure and demands, encourages the young students to improve their cooperation qualities, their interests and their perception of Architecture. Due to the close relationship, that the faculty has with the students, the progression of every student is monitored, on daily basis, and the longing for evolution is pursued from both sides. It is noted that the main core of the program consists of architecture design studios in which every faculty member attempts to use as springboard of solving small and different aspects of the creative process. Since projects undertaken in the design studios, in several locations of the surrounding areas, students are acquainted, with several landscapes via educational excursions to nearby destinations which are strongly pursued.

The Department made strong progress, trying to create opportunities for the students to broaden their fields of interest, by reaching out to the other Departments within the School of Engineering, and contributes to collaborations. Faculty and students are interested in expanding similar collaborations and learning experiences with other educational fields, but as the University is divided in different cities, the pursuing of such options is not self-evident.

The Panel acknowledges that lectures with invited external speakers and workshops are frequently organized, in order to provide as many architectural experiences, as possible. The clear distinction of the integrated Master's degree, in the fifth year, is not clearly defined in the structure of the program, a practice which may contribute to the graduation delay.

Although, Practical Training does accumulate ECTS units, they do not count as part of the required 300 ECTS for graduation. Given that the architectural offices in Greece are primarily very small, the lack of experience for students makes their participation even more difficult. Also, since no internship is required after graduation before acquiring professional rights, the practical experience during the studies is the only opportunity for the students to make a contact with the professional field.

Moreover, there are several platforms, provided from the university, in order to encourage students' mobility through the ERASMUS+ program, allowing many undergraduates to have the experience of European Universities, despite the fact that there is no additional financial aid.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The Department should explore different structures, in order to facilitate the student's management of time, such as the integration of the research project (*Lecture-Διάλεξη*) with the final design thesis.
- The Panel suggests flexible mechanisms for alternative studio topic adjustments catalysts for the learning processes, in order to keep the interest vivid both for faculty and students. The organizing and participation in architectural competitions, which was also suggested by the students' representatives during our meeting with them, could also be a refreshing aspect to enhance even more the learning experiences.
- The Panel encourages the faculty to experiment with different and diverse architectural design projects and processes within the traditional studio sequence and adapt the learning experiences to accommodate contemporary trends in architecture.
- The collaboration with the other Departments in the School of Engineering is encouraged.
- The Panel appreciates the efforts of the faculty to connect with Universities and Academics within the European Union and other countries and expects the University to provide all the necessary resources and support to facilitate this practice.

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 Department comprises a significant number of high-quality teaching staff with varied profiles (architecture, art, civil engineering and history). Their activities and publications are not well presented at the Department's website.

The Department has 18 faculty members (7 Professors, 3 Associate Professors and 8 Assistant Professors) and 1 special teaching staff member (ΕΤΕΠ). Additional there is 1 assistant professor pending position, 3 positions for secretary and 3 positions for adjunct (fixed) instructors. Recruitments and promotions of the academic staff follow the criteria and the procedures established by the Greek Ministry and appropriate legislation. Currently, the renewal of the faculty is very slow.

As the 2013 evaluation committee of the Program stated, the Department had and still has a shortage in numbers of teaching staff. The original projection for faculty members, defined in the establishment plan of the Department was 24, which might, actually, not be sufficient in the current conditions and the increase of the number of the students. Additionally, the need of a renewal in the members of the teaching staff can be identified by the high ratio of student to faculty. The faculty ratio of high rank positions is disproportionate establishing the Department as "top heavy". The 18 members of the teaching staff make enormous efforts to cover the lack of the teaching staff by being overloaded with extra hours in teaching and participating in administrative work, 15 committees, etc. This condition is further aggravated during fall semester, as it is not possible to engage teaching assistants in the design studio courses and the ratio of students 41,4 reaches 44,0 per faculty. This is considered very low as the average ratio in many European countries may be 12/15 students per faculty in studio courses.

Both the current students and the alumni spoke very highly about the **heroic** devotion of time and energy invested by their instructors, with them extending the teaching hours long after the

official completion of the meeting period for each course, which safeguards the high level of the course quality. It is imperative that the central University administration understands the different teaching requirements that are embedded in architectural education and the increased resources that are needed, in order to successfully complete an architectural education. The Panel highly appreciates this devotion, but it notes that this can be detrimental in the development of the research which will further help in the definition of the Department's identity.

The Department promotes faculty mobility. The teaching staff has the opportunity for a sabbatical leave every three years or a leave to teach at other institutions via Erasmus+ for limited periods of 1-2 weeks. Unfortunately, and due to the issue of the understaffing of the Department, in reality, faculty do not have the opportunity of sabbatical or Erasmus leaves as often as it is allowed.

The Panel was informed, after the draft report of the efforts that the Department has undertaken to finalize the selection of a candidate for the new position in Digital Architectural Representations and New Technologies and the establishment of the process for the engagement of a faculty member in History and Theory of Architecture -Architectural Morphology - Restoration.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The Panel, considering the significant shortage in the number of the teaching staff, and understanding the issue of the peripheral location of Xanthi as one of the causes, encourages the Department to pursue additional hiring and to seek incentives in order to attract potential faculty members that will remain there. Furthermore, the Panel encourages the Department to seek solutions in overcoming the strenuous and lengthy procedures in pursuing promotion of the faculty which could result in the loss of some of the faculty.
- The Panel suggests that after establishing a clear understanding of the identity of the Department, the University must provide the resources for new faculty to fill the required areas of interest and research. It is imperative that the central administration understands the nature of the architectural education.

- The Panel encourages the Department to further promote and make visible the evolving diversity of the research and areas of the interest within the Department. At the same time, it is advisable to further link and embed the research areas within the curriculum.
- In addition, the Panel encourages the faculty to keep up and strengthen the mechanism of reaching out and creating more and stronger local and international collaborations, thus counterbalancing the remoteness of the location of Xanthi.
- The Department is encouraged to establish frequent self-assessment procedures for its faculty and develop a global strategy for future necessary renewal of the teaching staff.
- The Panel recommends that the faculty members strengthen the research-teaching nexus in the undergraduate program, while more members of the staff should become involved into the research labs.

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-centered learning and the adoption of flexible modes of learning and teaching. Support activities and facilities may be organized 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 Department of Architecture faces a crucial problem of resources. The faculty and staff as well as the students of the Department of Architecture must be praised for their resilience and commitment. They have managed to maintain the quality and momentum of the program and its environment provided, both human and physical, in remarkably good order despite financial and other adversities. To begin with, the Department is accommodated within a building, originally designed for the School of Engineering Library. As a result, the Department has made strong efforts in order to convert the space provided and to facilitate the requirements of the architecture teaching process, by organizing classrooms, studios, lecture spaces and labs to the best possible way. This effort would have been even more successful and productive, if the department administration had full control of the building to adjust the areas more freely, or even expand to cover additional needs, such as in-house library, laboratories, exhibition spaces, and support offices, among others. The existing facilities are rationally if not economically organized, though it must be noted that more space would be helpful especially for the freshmen year. The location of the library in the town makes immediate access to reference books impossible. A small reference library annex within the building would be desirable. Reinforcing the connection of the School of Engineering campus to the amenities of the city of Xanthi, is highly encouraged. The free and frequent public transportation provided is appreciated by all, but it does not constitute a solution to support the existing facilities.

At this point of transition, the renewal of the support infrastructure, facilities, technology and student services should be urgently addressed. The Panel understands that the Department depends on the institutional context, University and Ministry, not only for resources, but also for permission, a procedure that should be eased to achieve better results. This is the predicament of all state schools around the world. We encourage the Department to consider seeking external funding as a priority at this juncture at the same time as it advocates for additional funding from the University and the State. This outreach activity should be coordinated with the institution and the Department's strategic plan. It should be targeted and based on reasonable financial estimates.

The Department is commended for securing the resources and equipment which will guarantee much needed laboratory for both teaching and research, considering the planned installation of the two additional labs on Timber and Steel Structures and New Media, that should be supported with the appropriate support staff (ΕΤΕΠ).

It is noted and highly appreciated, that supporting infrastructures are provided from the Student Welfare Directorate, such as dormitories and catering facilities in walking distance from the Department, supported by infrastructures to host students' groups, created to participate to all cultural events organized in Xanthi, athletic events and learning clubs. It was not evident if the University and Department provide services for the well-being of the student population with respect to social and psychological problems.

Information about these services is available through the Democritus University website and the Secretariat of the Department of Architecture. There is no in-house staff to address student support services and a great shortage of staff to take care of the even short-term administrative tasks of the Department. This shortage affects the student-centric character of the program.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The Department should advocate and find ways to coordinate a network of mental health professionals that can effectively deal with growing mental health and alcohol and drug abuse problems in student populations. We acknowledge the establishment of the Counselling and Accessibility Unit (ΔΥΣΟΠ) in Xanthi for the well-being of the students.

- The Panel encourages the Department, as part of its outreach program to explore existing opportunities and pursue new agreements with software companies that would alleviate, at least partially, a financial burden for the students. It is encouraging that efforts are made to centralize and automate distribution of software licenses by the University.
- The Panel recommends to the Department to enhance the publication of the praiseworthy teaching efforts and the remarkable achievements from both faculty and students. Such enhanced presence in the public realm will help to achieve external collaboration and funding.
- The Panel strongly recommends the University to support the development of the lab infrastructure and the promotion of research work. A more appealing and infrastructure plentiful environment could also motivate doctoral candidates to choose the Department and enhance the teaching process.

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 analysing information and planning follow-up activities.

Study Programme Compliance

The information management of the program of studies and related activities of the students and the faculty in teaching and research takes place at the levels of the Ministry of Education, the University and the Department. In particular, through application of respective information technology services provided by the University a comprehensive information system of data collection and recording has been developed with regard to the overall operation of the institution. The data refer to the academic faculty, the administration and the students. Further data have been collected by the research financial services and the library. Relevant data are presented on the web sites of the Department, including related announcements, the repository of courses, quotations of the faculty members' and the course instructors' work. The information obtained from the satisfaction surveys by the students and the graduates' databank is limited.

The Department evaluates the data collected and presents the results in quantifiable measures in terms of the program of studies, performance indicators – grades, duration of study – completion and dropout, and comparative conclusions of indicators with previous academic years. The data assist in the preparation of internal evaluation reports and related improvement proposals. The evaluation criteria of the faculty members have been successfully extended and adapted to include information beyond research accomplishments, such as artistic and

architectural recognition measures, which are included in the accomplishments of the faculty members' database.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The Panel understands that the faculty has made committed efforts up to achieve active participation of the students in the evaluation of their course instructors. The difficulty of collecting representative quantities of feedback samples by the students should be further addressed through introduction of further incentives and measures that would apply to all students of the University.

The Department should formalize individual efforts by faculty members to organize alumni via platforms of social media, such as *LinkedIn* and others. A representative databank with regard to the career paths of the graduates can only be developed through the setting up of a related monitoring mechanism by the faculty for the systematic collection of data. In this context, the development of an alumni body has also been proposed by the graduates of the program in their meeting with the Panel members.

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 main communication forum between the faculty and students is the individual and personal relationships that the faculty have established with the students. Due to the small size of the school, such interpersonal activities work well. The Panel did see some evidence of other forms of publications, such as periodicals, leaflets or posters by the individual faculty members and in the departmental presentation. The faculty should have adequate support and access to the web site and be provided, by the University's central administration, with all necessary resources in order to create a functional and current web and social media presence. The existing site does not present any of the excellent student work, which can serve as a very strong indicator of the Department's achievements. Also incomplete are the information regarding the program and the CVs of the faculty. Subsequent to the Panel's virtual visit and arising from the discussions during the accreditation process the University has provided the Department with the necessary resources to update their presence on the web and enhance their public outreach.

The Panel would like to express our enormous appreciation for the hard voluntary work that faculty members and the Department's administration undertook during the *virtual visit* in order to collect and display past and current student work, which highly influenced our positive evaluation of the program. The Panel strongly recommends that the University provides permanent and departmental-based support for the Department's presence on the web. Students and faculty produced excellent work that should be easily available to the architecture community and general public.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The Panel would recommend that the Department establishes its strong electronic presence with the documentation of the student and faculty work, departmental facilities and infrastructure.

Additionally, there does not seem to be any departmental sanctioned virtual and physical space managed by the students themselves for the presentation of their activities. Similarly, the Panel noticed the absence of the Department on social media, while there do not seem to be communication groups of the actions to old graduates or in the local communities. There was also limited information appropriate for prospective or new students of the Department. Given the digitization of the works of students as well as research and theses, it would be useful to present them online. The **excellent** presentation format that was prepared for our review of the student and faculty work could serve as the basis for a publicly available presentation of student/faculty work.

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 has in place a process for periodic evaluation of the curriculum through support by the University mechanisms for Quality Assurance, the interdepartmental program of studies (curriculum) committee, the General Assembly and the School of Engineering Council meetings. There is a periodic evaluation process of faculty and course content by the students and an evaluation of the support services and learning environment by the faculty. Students' evaluation of courses and faculty was introduced very recently. Documents shared with the Panel indicate that a student representative is involved and included in the departmental meetings, but we are not certain of the students' specific role in curriculum revisions.

The statistical data are collected through a series of questionnaires that the Department has developed in cooperation with the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) of the University. The results of these questionnaires are summarized and discussed with the faculty and they are submitted to the QAU. The results for each course evaluated are shared with the faculty member(s) who taught the course and appropriate actions are initiated to address any issues raised as part of the evaluation.

Presently related monitoring and evaluation of the program of studies refer primarily to the current situation and needs of the Department in providing its teaching activities. In addition, strengthening of the research activities by the faculty and related synergistic actions with teaching, as well as latest research trends and changing needs of the society should be included as driving components for the future development of the Department.

The Department also engages in continued communication with graduates. Initial steps have been made to develop an alumni database and formal, through social media, connections to the Department's graduates. This would allow for close relationships with the units they are working and provides an opportunity for the Department to engage with their employers and establish collaborative activities to address professional aspects, community needs, or common projects.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The Department should engage in a formal and consistent evaluation process of the program of studies and activities. Additionally, strengthening of the research activities by the faculty and related synergistic actions with teaching, as well as latest research trends and changing needs of the society should be included as driving components for the future development of the Department.
- The Department should consider, as part of their programmatic evaluation, the trends of emerging research and practice in architecture in strategically addressing future faculty hires. The Panel suggests that the Department identifies the emerging areas in the field and attempts to address them with the new hires. The Panel is concerned that the Department's personnel are overextended in multiple duties, in order to fulfil the established requirements in an environment of extremely reduced resources and funding.

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 was evaluated in 2013 by an international external evaluation committee. The Evaluation report included a set of recommendations that the Department has made significant efforts to address. As a response to the committee suggestion, the Department pursued autonomous state and successfully granted in 2014. Additionally, the program of studies was revised in 2016. The revisions made referred to the reduction of the course number, from 64 to 50 courses, mainly through consolidation of individual theoretical courses, the introduction of courses addressing issues of new media and technologies and the redefinition of the students' work-load in each course.

The Panel recommends further revision of the program of studies to address contemporary issues of the society and the profession and improve the working load of the students and faculty in the courses of each semester. With regard to a perceived lack of synergy between the individual courses and the main architectural design courses, the comment expressed in the external evaluation, *"With much care and effort by the teachers, as well as earnest toil and perseverance by the students, the results achieved meet the standards expected in architectural education – but at the expense of other activities, notably research and experimentation in education."* applies even today.

The Panel realized that the concern expressed by the external evaluation, *"A more significant but for the moment unfortunately abandoned development concerns a graduate (Master's) course on heritage and conservation"* has not been addressed. The Panel believes that a respective concentration of studies at the Master's level would improve the identity of the Department and enhance its research activities in the area of preservation and new technologies, as well as other areas deemed appropriate. At the same time the undergraduate

program of studies could be freed from a number of specialized courses to be replaced by other courses currently missing from the curriculum.

Additionally, the Panel is concerned with the current very low number of faculty and lack of substantial adjunct positions. The external evaluation of 2013 expressed concern about this same issue and albeit the department is powerless to affect these decisions, the Panel reiterates the previous comments, *“Care should be taken that the human resources are not overextended or overexposed either by the number and subject of courses or by the didactic method”* and *“Finally, a matter of urgency of Democritus University is the expansion of the faculty of the Department with the missing four positions. It would provide not merely a quantitative improvement but also opportunities to introduce the new subjects the curriculum is currently lacking.”* The negative implications of a heavy teaching load in conducting research by the faculty are still evident, as initially expressed in the external evaluation, *“However, there is no formal policy or objectives in research. Due to the heavy teaching load of the faculty, there is no formal approach of the Department to promote and support research.”* Similarly, the Panel is concerned with the lack of financial means, as was also identified by the previous report on labs and equipment.

The issue expressed in the external evaluation, *“The Department should be provided with its own building to give the Department not only functional space but also a physical identity”*, remains still unsolved, despite the appreciable efforts made by the faculty in finding permanent premises in the centre of Xanthi (tobacco warehouse) in collaboration with the Municipality. The current facilities somewhat serve the needs of the Department but are not under the full control of the Department for much needed adjustment and expansion.

There have been no other evaluation efforts outside of the single review sponsored by HAHE. However, the Department implements the procedures set forth by the University Quality Assurance Unit, collects and analyses the required data periodically, and provides their results to the QAU.

All faculty and staff recognize the importance of the external evaluation and value the past and future recommendations. They all believe this helps the Department achieve its goals and purpose, help them improve, and engage in meaningful discussions about the future of the program and the changing educational demands placed by a diverse set of social and professional issues. Unfortunately, the Department does not have the financial means to implement their own external evaluations process. A possible solution might be the establishment of an advisory professional board whose members volunteer their services for the benefit of the Department.

The Panel had the opportunity to interact not only with almost all faculty and staff members but also with current students of the Department as well as graduates. All showed a great level of enthusiasm and professionalism as well as commitment in supporting and aiding the Panel in any manner and request made. The administration, faculty and staff of the Department were very eager and accommodating to the needs and requests of the Panel which was made to feel very welcomed. The slightly negative current comments presented in this Principle could be ameliorated by implementing the suggested recommendations by both external reviews.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The Department should implement their own external evaluations process. A possible solution might be the establishment of an advisory professional board whose members volunteer their services for the benefit of the Department.
- Additionally, the Department should finalize all necessary changes based on the previous external evaluation report.
- The University should provide the Department with additional building recourses.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

- The program reflects the interests and specializations of its founding faculty and is comparable with professional programs internationally. There seems to be a good synergy between faculty and students that needs to be further supported and expanded.
- The faculty should be commended for addressing the growth of the student body at a time of multiple crises by preserving through personal efforts a program organization that was better suited to the original size and scale of operations.
- The effort to maintain the close-knit and supportive atmosphere that characterizes the relations of the academic community seeking mutual support and understanding between members is very beneficial to the program.
- Faculty, staff and students should be praised for their resilience and commitment. They have managed to maintain the quality and momentum of the program and its environment, both human and physical, in remarkably good order despite financial and other adversities.
- The architectural studio work of the students is of high calibre.
- The Department fosters a strong community with their graduates which are engaged in traditional architectural practices and diverse experimental explorations and careers, locally and internationally. The breadth of their expertise and involvement with the Department is highly commendable.

II. Areas of Weakness

- The linking of teaching and research should be strengthened through specific synergies between thematic areas that need to be formulated in the program of studies, and collaborative design-based or multidisciplinary research.
- There is a lack of a clearly defined identity and an absence of a strategic planning document that would provide the Department with a road map for future, establish priorities and strategies towards and help coordinate the efforts towards a renewing the vision of the founding faculty and assuring a sustainable future.
- The program of studies already includes specialized topics and expertise in different fields, such as Morphology and Historical Reconstruction, which easily serves as a foundation for concentration studies at the Master's level. The current structure of the Department does not take advantage of focused postgraduate education.
- Support infrastructure, building and lab facilities, technology and student services need to be updated.
- There is a lack of an Alumni organization supported by the Department.
- The Panel is concerned that the Department's personnel are overextended in multiple duties, in order to fulfil the established requirements in an environment of diminished funding.
- The Panel is concerned with the disproportionally very small number of *special teaching staff members (ΕΔΙΠ)* members and the total absence of *Technical Support staff (ΕΤΕΠ)*.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

- The Department should articulate a renewed vision of the Department, revise the curriculum according to the suggestions made in this report, provide a five-year plan and design a road map for implementation. The updating of the curriculum should be perceived as a continuous and dynamic process that involves a number of entities including faculty, students, and external participants. The program's identity should be clearly formulated and reflected through specific synergies that need to be created between thematic areas, courses and research activities by the faculty.
- Appointment of a faculty curriculum committee with the mandate to articulate a renewed vision of the department and revise the program and provide a five-year plan and design a road map for implementation. The central University administration should facilitate the Department's endeavours in defining an identity and updating the curriculum.
- The Department should account for the broader contemporary context of the discipline, including areas of theory, social and environmental sustainability, research by design, inter- and transdisciplinary activities in teaching and research. The individual courses in each semester need to act synergistically, as much as possible, to the main courses of architectural design.
- The Panel recommends flexible mechanisms for alternative studio topic adjustments catalysts for the learning processes, in order to keep the interest vivid both for faculty and students. The organizing and participation in architectural competitions, which was also suggested by the students' representatives during our meeting with them, could also be a refreshing aspect to enhance even more the learning experiences.
- An advanced component and the possibility of concentration of the students' education in the final two years should be provided. Furthermore, the interdependence of the 9th semester courses, especially of the research project (*Lecture-Διάλεξη*) with the final design thesis is expected to act positively on the achievement of a research by design process development and the completion of the final design thesis by the end of the 10th semester.
- The Department should engage in a formal and consistent evaluation process of its program and activities.
- The linking of teaching and research should be strengthened through specific synergies between thematic areas that need to be formulated in the program of studies, and collaborative design-based or multidisciplinary research, while more members of the staff should become involved into the research labs.
- The Panel believes that a respective concentration of studies at the Master's level would improve the identity of the Department and enhance its research activities in the area of preservation and new technologies, as well as other areas deemed appropriate. At the same time the undergraduate program of studies could be freed from a number of specialized courses to be replaced by other courses currently missing from the curriculum.
- Annual reviews of the program of studies need to be further institutionalized by the Department, as well as external evaluations, organized even by the Department itself every 5 years.
- Consider seeking external funding as a priority at the same time as it advocates for additional funding from the Ministry and University. This outreach activity should be coordinated with

the Institution and the Department's strategic plan. It should be targeted and based on reasonable financial estimates.

- The Department should formalize individual efforts to organize alumni via platforms of social media, such as LinkedIn and others. A representative databank with regard to the career paths of the graduates can only be developed through the set-up of a related monitoring mechanism by the faculty for the systematic collection of data. In this context, the development of an alumni body has also been proposed by the graduates of the program in their meeting with the Panel members.
- The Panel encourages further mobility and collaborations, in order to create stronger links locally and internationally, by overcoming the feeling of the remoteness of the location of Xanthi. The successful career of alumni, in architecture and in other fields locally and internationally should be used as a catalyst for further development of the program.
- The Department must enhance its electronic presence with the documentation of the departmental facilities and infrastructure, information for prospective/new students, and students' theses.
- The Department should implement its own external evaluations process. A possible solution might be the establishment of an advisory professional board with members who volunteer their services for the benefit of the Department.
- The Panel emphasizes the need for renewal of the current teaching staff with appropriate new hires and suggests that the Department identifies the emerging areas in the field and attempts to address them with the new hires. Additionally, the Department is encouraged to establish frequent self-assessment procedures for its faculty and develop a global strategy for future necessary renewal of the teaching staff.
- The University should provide the Department with the appropriate teaching and research resources in particular of *special teaching staff members (ΕΔΙΠ)* members and of *Technical Support staff (ΕΤΕΠ)*.
- The Panel underlines the need for equipment and tools to allow digital representation and fabrication (3D printing, laser cutting, CNC, and others).
- In order to overcome the low participation in evaluation through questionnaires, the Panel suggests that the faculty work with students in implementing their suggestions for a direct problem-solving discussion during the learning process.
- The Panel recommends a more comprehensive structure for the program (e.g., thematic paths) which would highlight the character of the Department and would facilitate the focus of students in deciding their choices more consciously. This structure could be based on the interrelations between teaching and research in order to facilitate students in the preparation of their research project in the 9th semester.
- The Panel suggests to the Department to consider a period of internship/practical training as part of the curriculum.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: **3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9**

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: **1, 2, 8, 10**

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 External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel agrees that this Programme leads to a Level 7 Qualification according to the National & European Qualifications Network (Integrated Master) | YES | NO |
|---|----------|----|
| | X | |

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname

Signature

- 1. Professor Loukas Kalisperis, (Chair),**
Pennsylvania State University, University Park,
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