



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ

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ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΑΝΩΤΑΤΗ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗ

HELLENIC REPUBLIC

H.Q.A.

HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE
AND ACCREDITATION AGENCY

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

Department of Cultural Technology and Communication

University of the Aegean



European Union
European Social Fund



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION & RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS, CULTURE & SPORTS
MANAGING AUTHORITY

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External Evaluation Committee

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the Department of Cultural Technology and Communication of the University of the Aegean consisted of the following four (4) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by the HQA in accordance with Law 3374/2005 :

1. Panayiotis Zaphiris, Associate Professor, Cyprus University of Technology, Cyprus (Coordinator)
2. Rick M. Newton, Professor Emeritus, Kent State University, Ohio, USA
3. Brendan Patrick Mullan, Associate Professor, Michigan State University, USA
4. Fatma Güliz Erginsoy, Professor, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Turkey

N.B. The structure of the “Template” proposed for the External Evaluation Report mirrors the requirements of Law 3374/2005 and corresponds overall to the structure of the Internal Evaluation Report submitted by the Department.

The length of text in each box is free. Questions included in each box are not exclusive nor should they always be answered separately; they are meant to provide a general outline of matters that should be addressed by the Committee when formulating its comments.

Introduction

I. The External Evaluation Procedure

- Dates and brief account of the site visit.
- Whom did the Committee meet?
- List of Reports, documents, other data examined by the Committee.
- Groups of teaching and administrative staff and students interviewed
- Facilities visited by the External Evaluation Committee.

The external evaluation committee (henceforth ‘the Committee’) visited the Department of Cultural Technology and Communication (henceforth ‘the Department’) of the University of the Aegean (henceforth ‘the University’) on the dates 10-12/12/2013. They were greeted upon arrival by the head of the Department (Associate Professor Alexandra Bounia, members of the Department and the secretarial support of the local quality assurance committee).

On 10/12/2013 the Committee met Vice-Rector of Finance and Development Prof. Yannis Kallas who delivered a presentation on the University. The first day also included a detailed presentation by the head of Department regarding the educational activities, programs, history, and trajectory of the Department. The full membership of the Departmental faculty and technical staff attended and participated. Both presentations encouraged useful and elaborate discussions on all aspects related to the University and Departmental operations.

On 11/12/2013 the Committee met with the faculty members. Upon the request of the Committee, two separate meetings were held – consecutively with senior and junior faculty. Other meetings were held with: (a) administrative and technical staff; (b) undergraduate students; (c) MSc/MA students; (d) PhD students; (e) alumni. All meetings were well attended and comprised of broad representation.

At the beginning of the meeting with undergraduate students the president of the student union requested, and was given, the opportunity to read a written statement expressing the opposition of the student union to external evaluation. The meeting with the undergraduate students was amicable and productive. All students (24-26) expressed their views openly and honestly in a spirit of mutual respect and support.

The day ended with 1) a meeting with collaborative social, cultural and production organizations that have worked with the Department (Maria Grigora, Head Librarian of the Municipal Library of Lesvos, / Kostas Maniatopoulos, Director of the Museum-Library Stratis Eleftheriadis-Teriade, / Lemonia Petra, Director of the 9th Primary School of Mytilene, / Eleni Stergiopoulou, Head of the Mytilene Office of the ICT Company "Aegean Solutions") and 2) a concluding presentation by members of the Department on research activities and infrastructure. All meetings were very well organized and provided valuable information to the members of the Committee and generated open and fruitful discussions.

On 12/12/2013 the Committee examined student work on all three levels (Undergraduate,

Graduate, PhD) and visited the eight research laboratories of the Department, followed by an off campus visit to the University Library in the centre of Mytilini. The visit ended with a brief walking tour of the Mytilini harbor, a hospitable lunch at a local restaurant, and coffee during which informal discussions with the Head and members of the Department continued.

The Committee was provided in advance with the internal evaluation report created by the Department, links to the website with extensive additional information and electronic copies of the presentations made to the Committee. In addition, the Committee requested additional material in English (including a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis), a listing of PhD dissertation titles and a copy of the schedule of classes. The Department also provided numerous volumes of published work, student examinations and course work assignments, and conference proceedings.

Overall, the Committee is pleased with and commends the welcoming and openly cooperative attitude of the Department and University, who made every effort to ensure that the Committee had ample and open access to all pertinent materials.

II. The Internal Evaluation Procedure

Please comment on:

- Appropriateness of sources and documentation used
- Quality and completeness of evidence reviewed and provided
- To what extent have the objectives of the internal evaluation process been met by the Department?

The internal evaluation report was helpful, although some information (e.g. details about the PhD program) was incomplete. The report was written in Greek; an English version may have facilitated the work of the Committee. The Committee feels that the on-site visit was the main source of information and should continue to be the major component of all evaluation procedures.

A. Curriculum

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

APPROACH

- What are the goals and objectives of the Curriculum? What is the plan for achieving them?
- How were the objectives decided? Which factors were taken into account? Were they set against appropriate standards? Did the unit consult other stakeholders?
- Is the curriculum consistent with the objectives of the Curriculum and the requirements of the society?
- How was the curriculum decided? Were all constituents of the Department, including students and other stakeholders, consulted?
- Has the unit set a procedure for the revision of the curriculum?

The goals and objectives of the undergraduate curriculum are to integrate cultural studies (broadly defined) and their technological applications for purposes of cultural education, employment opportunities in social media, and community outreach. The scope of the curriculum, while international, is unique among Greek universities. The Department rightly considers itself as an interdisciplinary and multi-faceted pioneer in the field of Cultural Technology and Communication.

To realize these objectives, the Department originally (in 2000) created a four-part program (divided into two years of core courses followed by two years of specialized courses within four sequences: a) Contemporary Museology; b) Audiovisual Communication; c) Cultural Representation and New Technologies; and d) Educational Technology/Intercultural Communication). The original curriculum was comprised of a 52-course sequence (26 core courses, 15 specialty courses, two English courses, two Informatics courses, six electives, and an optional undergraduate thesis). Above and beyond these requirements, summer internships (from local through international levels) were made available.

To meet the constant and rapid developments in these fields, in 2012-2013 the Department revisited its undergraduate sequence and revised requirements for increased efficiency, relevance, expanding and shifting career opportunities, and accessibility for students. The new program now offers fewer courses (44 required vs. the original 56; 20 core courses vs. the original 26; 23 electives) and an optional thesis, allowing for greater flexibility in course selection.

The curricular revisions followed recommendations made by the Departmental Curriculum Committee in consultation with the University of the Aegean Internal Evaluation Committee and included significant input from the student body (through three meetings with the chair and faculty). The rationale for these revisions include: improving flexibility for the delivery of new theoretical and technical material; allowing students to mix and match courses according to their needs and distinctive educational and career goals; establishing an environment for more creative synergies and in-depth study across the original four demarcations (see above); and creating larger class sizes both for improved efficiency in a time of economic stringency and fostering interdisciplinary dialogue among a broader spectrum of students.

In general, these revisions manifest a new and appropriate level of maturity and updating from the original undergraduate program, now 13 years old. The Department, originally a “pioneer” in multidisciplinary cultural studies in Greece has now progressed to the level of

“innovator.”

The goals and objectives of the postgraduate Masters Degree curriculum are to provide professionals (practitioners, scientists, and researchers) with applied training and high-level specialization skills and expertise in Informatics in Culture and Museology. The Masters Degree programs provide theoretical expertise, research experience, and practical training to enable participants to master new knowledge production techniques to advance national informatics cultural policy and strategy. Specifically, the Masters Degree programs promote 1) scientific knowledge and innovative research in the field of Cultural Informatics; 2) quality postgraduate education and training in the formation of strategic, nationally relevant cultural policies to promote Greek cultural heritage; 3) the development and deployment of internationally accepted economic and technological standards and policies; and 4) the recruitment of international students to the Department.

Through its Masters Degree programs, the Department seeks to meet local, regional, national, and international demand for scientists qualified and certified to respond to the needs of: public and private tourism enterprises, ministries and public organizations specializing in the development, management and promotion of museums and monuments, European Union institutions and organizations that develop policies on culture and technology, museums, galleries, art exhibitions and cultural institutions that develop digital applications and products, educational institutions specializing in informatics and multimedia, private corporations that develop projects on culture and technology to emphasize the promotion of cultural heritage, and national and international institutions devoted to the promotion and digital management of cultural heritage.

The Department lists 62 Ph.D candidates as currently active in pursuit of the terminal degree. Information provided by the Department Head indicates that, until recently, well over 70 Ph.D candidates were registered but not all were deemed active. Accurate current enrollment, progress to completion, and participation rates among doctoral candidates remains unclear. The Committee met with a panel of current Ph.D candidates of beginning, intermediate, and advanced status with perhaps an over-representation of those just now beginning their study.

IMPLEMENTATION

- How effectively is the Department’s goal implemented by the curriculum?
- How does the curriculum compare with appropriate, universally accepted standards for the specific area of study?
- Is the structure of the curriculum rational and clearly articulated?
- Is the curriculum coherent and functional?
- Is the material for each course appropriate and the time offered sufficient?
- Does the Department have the necessary resources and appropriately qualified and trained staff to implement the curriculum?

The Department has strived to implement the undergraduate curriculum expeditiously and efficiently. The new undergraduate curriculum is in its first year of implementation and, while no assessment of effectiveness is yet possible, early signs are that the new curriculum is fulfilling the needs of both students and faculty and that the Department will be well positioned for future curricular evaluation and innovation.

The new curriculum is rational, clearly articulated, coherent, and functional, and it compares well with appropriate, universally accepted standards in Cultural Technology and Communication. Students are being prepared theoretically, technically, linguistically, and professionally to pursue careers in cultural technology and other fields. The multi-

disciplinarity of the Department and its programs is conducive to an extremely wide range of ever-expanding career opportunities. Students largely expressed an especially high appreciation for the new curricular flexibility as it allows them to tailor their studies to their career plans. Others, however, expressed concern that future students might take “the easy way out” by choosing less rigorous courses, given the now extensive range of electives and optional courses. As the Department continues to assess itself, the external review committee recommends that they continuously monitor students’ selection of courses and their performance, lest the changes result in an unintentional lowering of quality.

Review of course syllabi, student projects with bibliography, examination scripts, and course work indicates adequate availability of course materials, in both electronic and hard copy formats. Department resources to implement the curriculum are sufficient, thanks in large part to the new revisions of the curriculum that enable the programme to continue despite the diminishing faculty lines. The Committee notes that many faculty teach well beyond the stipulated eight contact hour requirement. In sum, faculty resources are sufficient only because faculty accept and deliver significant teaching overloads, which remain uncompensated.

One postgraduate studies program with an allotted 40 available spaces annually, leads to a Master of Sciences in Cultural Informatics with specialized study orientations in Museology and Digital and Cultural Product Design. This program provides scientists and researchers with specialized training in informatics specifically related to Culture and Museology, providing both theoretical expertise and research experience so that students may participate in the production of new knowledge that will advance the development of national cultural policy. This full-time one-year (three semester) programme is structured around ten required in-class semester-long courses and a thesis. Current 2013-14 enrollment is 27 students.

A second postgraduate studies program with an allotted 20 available spaces annually (in partnership with the Department of History and Archeology at the University of Athens and the Department of Architecture at the University of Patras) offers an inter-departmental Program of Postgraduate Studies (PPS) in “Monument Management: Archaeology, City and Architecture.” The PPS is aimed at postgraduates in archaeology, architecture and cultural technology and provides professional training and certification in the design, intervention and management of spaces in historic settlements and their surroundings. This full-time two-year programme is structured around formal classroom instruction, an interdisciplinary seminar, and a thesis. Current 2012-13 enrollment is approximately 15 students.

As currently implemented the postgraduate program in Cultural Informatics with specialized study orientations in Museology and Digital and Cultural Product Design charges individual tuition of 2,500 Euro per program participant. The Department receives approximately 75% of tuition revenue, which it applies to undergraduate departmental instructional needs (especially the provision of a new 25-station computer classroom/laboratory).

RESULTS

- How well is the implementation achieving the Department’s predefined goals and objectives?
- If not, why is it so? How is this problem dealt with?
- Does the Department understand why and how it achieved or failed to achieve these results?

Based on interviews with students, alumni, external local constituencies and organizations

the Committee finds that the Department is accomplishing its goals and objectives despite the challenge of increasingly diminished resources. The Committee recommends that the Department develop an Undergraduate Student Handbook comprehensively describing departmental policies and procedures that affect students, departmental expectations of students, disciplinary and grievance redress procedures, academic ethics etc.

The Committee sees the Cultural Informatics with specialized orientations in Museology and Digital and Cultural Product Design Masters program as providing a viable and valuable degree that opens opportunities for students pursuing careers in diverse professions (e.g., teaching, journalism, museum curatorship, museum management, digital monument preservation, cultural heritage preservation, and avant-garde graphic art design and production). Additionally, this program prepares students for further work at the doctoral level. Because the revenue generated by this program to date has funded undergraduate computer labs and the like, the hardware and software available to the Masters Degree candidates is somewhat outdated. The Committee believes that students at this advanced, applied level must have access to current state-of-the-art technologies and equipment, especially in these digital fields that continuously modernize.

Furthermore, the Committee questions the ten-course, two-semester workload that currently comprises the formal instructional component of this program. This requirement plus a thesis is inconsistent with accepted national and international standards. Typically, such programs require eight formal classes and a thesis. The additional two classes place an unnecessarily heavy burden on both faculty and students. The Committee therefore recommends that, just as the undergraduate curriculum was recently revised and streamlined, similar attention now be given to revising the post-graduate curriculum. These revisions would aim at course consolidation, resulting in a lightening of both student and faculty workloads. This proposed reduction in the number of required courses would also result in an enhanced in-depth understanding of the academic content and substance that is especially appropriate for Masters-level work.

The Committee further recommends that the Department develop a Postgraduate Student Handbook describing and explaining course sequencing, pre-requisites, evaluation policies and procedures, etc. (see analogous recommendations above for the Undergraduate Handbook). The Committee's review of a selection of Masters theses and projects indicates a high caliber of work both scholarly and professionally.

The Ph.D program admission criteria are ill specified. The candidates appear to enjoy a strong personal and productive working relationship with their advisors, but the Committee finds that the program is seriously lacking in formal structure, procedures, and even specifics of course requirements. It appears that, upon entering the program, candidates simply commence writing their dissertation under the guidance of their advisors and committee members. Candidates receive no formal departmental preparation for scholarly investigation and writing. For example, there appear no such courses as: "Ph.D Pro-seminar," "Literature Review Development," "Scholarly Bibliography Development," "Professional Writing," and the like.

The Committee recommends that the Department, just as it did with its impressive undergraduate and postgraduate programme develop, design, implement, and evaluate a well-structured and rigorous Ph.D program to shape and prepare future scholars and researchers. A Ph.D Programme Handbook clearly delineating entrance requirements, procedures, faculty liaison/mentoring responsibilities, reading list requirements and assessment, etc., must be developed. Following Department practice, the Committee has referred to the current Ph.D students as "candidates." This terminology is not in keeping with international standards and practice, according to which a Ph.D "student" advances to

Ph.D “candidacy” only upon successful completion of a required sequence of courses, a qualifying and/or comprehensive examination (written and oral), and a subsequent faculty vote. The Committee recommends adherence to international standards as the Department re-conceptualizes and designs the terminal degree.

In general, the Committee finds that this Department is impressively well positioned for national and international pre-eminence in its undergraduate and postgraduate programs. By reviewing, re-conceptualizing, and reforming its mission and identity as a fully credible Ph.D granting unit, the Department will also raise its visibility and status to the level of the terminal degree.

IMPROVEMENT

- Does the Department know how the Curriculum should be improved?
- Which improvements does the Department plan to introduce?

See above

B. Teaching

APPROACH:

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

Please comment on :

- Teaching methods used
- Teaching staff/ student ratio
- Teacher/student collaboration
- Adequacy of means and resources
- Use of information technologies
- Examination system

The faculty employ a variety of teaching methods, including lecture, laboratory classrooms, student presentations, in-class discussions, small group assignments, active learning pedagogy, internships, and field work. Similarly, they follow a variety of assessments of student work, including final examinations, on-going coursework portfolio development, oral examinations, online projects and thesis.

The student-to-faculty ratio is high and growing because of the University's inability to replace faculty who leave through retirement, resignation, or relocation. This trend is a matter of concern, especially in light of the Department's recent adoption of one-on-one advising. As the ratio increases, the faculty-advising burden will also rise.

The student-to-equipment ratio is disturbingly high, especially because students in all three programs (UG, PG and PhD) require intense contact with technology for this particular discipline. The Department is making efforts to accommodate all its students with limited equipment and space, but it should not be allowed that as many as four student share a single workstation in class and laboratories.

IMPLEMENTATION

Please comment on:

- Quality of teaching procedures
- Quality and adequacy of teaching materials and resources.
- Quality of course material. Is it brought up to date?
- Linking of research with teaching
- Mobility of academic staff and students
- Evaluation by the students of (a) the teaching and (b) the course content and study material/resources

Based on the student interviews, the Committee finds that the teaching in the Department is of high quality and up-to-date. Likewise, interviews with the faculty demonstrated an admirable enthusiasm and passion on the part of the teachers toward their content areas and their students. A commitment to deliver a sophisticated, relevant, contemporaneous curriculum was evident across all ranks. However, the Committee notes a somewhat uneven distribution of course allocation and teaching assignments, especially in the case of junior faculty who must develop new preparations while also advancing their research and performing strenuous administrative tasks.

The current international emphasis on incorporating faculty research into teaching suggests

that the Department may wish to promote and formalize this trend. On the PhD level, it is clear that the faculty are mentoring their students by teaching them to become serious researchers. Despite constraints imposed by space and equipment limitations, the Committee recommends that the undergraduate and post-graduate programs likewise incorporate research related themes into their pedagogy.

The faculty make use of opportunities for sabbatical leave, and students make good use of ERASMUS and other student exchange opportunities.

Written student evaluations have been replaced with online evaluation procedures across the University. Faculty report low completion rates and participation that is skewed towards the “outliers” of highly satisfied and dissatisfied students.

RESULTS

Please comment on:

- Efficacy of teaching.
- Discrepancies in the success/failure percentage between courses and how they are justified.
- Differences between students in (a) the time to graduation, and (b) final degree grades.
- Whether the Department understands the reasons of such positive or negative results?

The undergraduate time to graduation of 5.2 years as reported by the Department compares favourably with international standards (e.g. USA national average of time-to-graduation in public universities is 5.8 years). This is highly commendable in economically challenging times when students are forced to seek part-time employment in order to maintain their student status. The postgraduate time-to-graduation within the Department is likewise internationally competitive. But the PhD program’s time-to-completion is unknown and indeterminate, suggesting that the Department review all aspects of its PhD program.

IMPROVEMENT

- Does the Department propose methods and ways for improvement?
- What initiatives does it take in this direction?

As a procedural matter, the Committee believes that the Department will benefit greatly from implementing its own Faculty Handbook. Such a document would detail faculty procedures that will be especially valuable for new and junior faculty seeking to secure tenure. Included in such a handbook would be procedures and policies concerning periodic but regular pre-tenure review in the areas of teaching, research, service, and outreach. Corresponding procedures and policies for post-tenure review of faculty would also be appropriate.

In addition the Committee recommends:

1. Gradually incorporate more English into all levels of instruction, including the undergraduate program.
2. Incorporate a significant online component to the newly adapted student advising program to keep the workload manageable to faculty.
3. Build on the Department’s recent initiation of seminars, symposia etc. on Mytilini so as to expand the university culture on the island.
4. Relocate the Department within the proposed and approved new Social Sciences building to further enhance interdisciplinary collaborations.

C. Research

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

APPROACH

- What is the Department's policy and main objective in research?
- Has the Department set internal standards for assessing research?

The Department is multi-disciplinary, with academics from both the humanities and sciences who publish their work in traditional research venues, but also includes members from the visual arts whose research output takes the form of such activities as film festivals, software and visual productions, comics, and animations. A number of the faculty have a strong research portfolio that includes the supervision of PhD students, the securing of external funding, and the production of high quality research outputs. It is especially commendable that some junior members have a publication record far superior to their current rank.

The Department lacks a clearly articulated long-term strategy as well as an internal process for assessing research activity, but this shortcoming is not uncommon in multi-disciplinary departments in which faculty pursue diverse research agendas and objectives.

IMPLEMENTATION

- How does the Department promote and support research?
- Quality and adequacy of research infrastructure and support.
- Scientific publications.
- Research projects.
- Research collaborations.

The Department organizes its research activity through eight research laboratories:

1. Museology
2. Cultural Heritage Management
3. Cultural Informatics
4. Audiovisual Design and Cultural Representation
5. Youth and Media
6. Telematic Applications
7. Virtual Reality
8. Audiovisual Applications and Communication

Apart from the «Audiovisual Design and Cultural Representation», which is very well equipped and housed in adequate quarters, the other laboratories are unevenly equipped and squeezed into extremely inadequate and unacceptably small spaces. Nevertheless, the prolific research and publication output of these laboratories, is incommensurate with the facilities provided.

The constraints within which the Department operates (non- funding for equipment, absence of support for attending international academic conferences, lack of post-doctoral research positions, limited physical space, relatively isolated location) have a pronounced negative impact on actualizing and maximizing the full research potential of the Department.

By organizing local, national, and international conferences, festivals, and exhibitions, the Department has succeeded in raising its visibility to that of a leading research entity. New opportunities for collaboration and research with international partners continue to grow,

and the Committee urges that appropriate funding and other supports be made available to sustain and support these endeavours.

Based on the meeting with the PhD students, the Committee notes that there does not appear to be a strong PhD student community or esprit de corps within the Department. On the contrary, each PhD student largely collaborates with his/her individual advisor, often relying on distance communication in lieu of face-to-face interaction with faculty and other students.

RESULTS

- How successfully were the Department's research objectives implemented?
- Scientific publications.
- Research projects.
- Research collaborations.
- Efficacy of research work. Applied results. Patents etc.
- Is the Department's research acknowledged and visible outside the Department?
Rewards and awards.

The Department has a steady stream of journal and conference publications (about ten journal papers and ten conference papers per academic year) and a steady stream of external funding (in excess of five million Euro since 2000). Since most externally-secured funding primarily supported the initiation of activities (e.g., practical training, program start-up, research lab start-up costs, student-faculty exchanges, equipment procurement, and community engagement) and regional collaborations (e.g. INTERREG with Cyprus), the scope of these grants, while more applied in orientation than theoretical, played a significant role in establishing the identity of the Department as a viable academic unit. To advance to the next state of research maturity, the Committee recommends that future grant seeking activity concentrate on accomplishing basic inductive/deductive scientific research through internationally competitive research programs. The committee considers that the new EU calls (Horizon 2020) will provide an opportunity for attracting more research oriented projects of wider international scholarly potential and prestige. This will strengthen the momentum of the Department towards that of an internationally respected research leader.

IMPROVEMENT

- Improvements in research proposed by the Department, if necessary.
- Initiatives in this direction undertaken by the Department .

To cultivate and strengthen the Department research culture, the Committee recommends that the Department consider implementing the following recommendations:

1. Bring the eight current labs under the umbrella of a unified research centre (borrowing ideas from international examples such as the [MIT Media Lab](#)), with an appropriate management structure to oversee the allocation of space, equipment and other resources.
2. Move the research laboratories to a common shared space - open platform to enable more collaborations across labs and more efficient use of resources and equipment.
3. Place greater emphasis on establishing protection mechanisms and mentoring to allow junior faculty to focus more on research and less on administration.
4. Provide faculty and PhD students with funding support to attend international conferences.

Within the context of the University as a whole, the Committee recommends that a portion of funded project overheads be returned to the Department in order to respond to the above recommendations. The central university should also, at a minimum, provide all needed financial and technical support for upgrading and maintaining teaching software and hardware.

D. All Other Services

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

APPROACH

- How does the Department view the various services provided to the members of the academic community (teaching staff, students).
- Does the Department have a policy to simplify administrative procedures? Are most procedures processed electronically?
- Does the Department have a policy to increase student presence on Campus?

The Department views the various administrative services provided to the faculty as satisfactory. At the moment, the Department has five administrative staff (one being the head of administration services) and three technical staff (who also provide teaching support to laboratory sessions). Most administrative procedures are processed electronically, although procedures remain complex due to constraints imposed by the law and the absence of locally adapted policies.

The University offers free housing to students with financial needs, and the Student Union offers extracurricular activities through numerous clubs and societies. Although examinations, various exercises, and computer laboratory participation are required, student class attendance is poor because it remains optional, a common problem in all Greek Universities.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Organization and infrastructure of the Department's administration (e.g. secretariat of the Department).
- Form and function of academic services and infrastructure for students (e.g. library, PCs and free internet access, student counseling, athletic- cultural activity etc.).

The Department support staff is divided into a five member Secretariat (with a Head of Secretariat), and a three member ICT Technical Support Group. All administrative staff are well trained, some with post-graduate degrees or pursuing PhD studies. The Committee was informed that besides the study advisor, who advises students on academic choices at the Department, students in need of personal counselling services (e.g., psychological or disability assistance, emotional stress management, etc.) are served on an ad hoc basis by individual staff and faculty who may not have the training to provide such service.

A free wi-fi network exists on campus and at the Library, limited access to computer laboratories for coursework and project work is provided. Students commented positively regarding easy access to their teachers for questions and advising.

The University Library administration is helpful and pleasant in its interaction with staff and students. The Library, however, is at a considerable distance from the main campus with a limited and out-dated collection and with totally inadequate reading room space and electronic resources.

RESULTS

- Are administrative and other services adequate and functional?
- How does the Department view the particular results?

The Committee formed the opinion that the support services work well and effectively. The Department expressed a similar opinion and in general seems to be satisfied with the support provided. Interviews with the students confirmed these impressions.

IMPROVEMENTS

- Has the Department identified ways and methods to improve the services provided?
- Initiatives undertaken in this direction.

The Department pioneered the development and promotion of better administrative procedures that were later taken up by other departments or by the University as a whole. Of note is their emphasis on student evaluations, electronic administration and alumni online identification and communication systems. Tracking and encouraging alumni participation in Departmental and University activities after graduation is now a priority. The Department has created a database of 200+ graduates from a total population of graduate since 2004 (the first graduation class) of over 960. The Committee lauds the Department's efforts in actively tracking and engaging with alumni to monitor their career trajectories, activities, and whereabouts.

Collaboration with social, cultural and production organizations

Please, comment on quality, originality and significance of the Department's initiatives.

The Department's initiatives include organisation of social events, educational excursions, local art exhibitions and other activities. Connection with business and industry exists through the practical training process and diploma theses.

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

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

Please, comment on the Department's:

- Potential inhibiting factors at State, Institutional and Departmental level, and proposals on ways to overcome them.
- Short-, medium- and long-term goals.
- Plan and actions for improvement by the Department/Academic Unit
- Long-term actions proposed by the Department.

From its origin, the Department has proven itself a visionary in terms of creating and expanding a viable academic program that provides significant career opportunities for all graduates. Their recent revision of the undergraduate curriculum stands out as an exemplar of the vision of the Department moving toward even broader vistas.

The Department's future goals as stated in a strategy document provided to us are: (a) The

establishment and implementation of the new undergraduate programme and faculty advisor system; (b) movement to a new dedicated facility; (c) establishing new master programs preferably in other areas and languages; (d) acquiring new faculty members; (e) evaluation of teaching quality and methods; (f) maintenance and upgrading of research equipment; (g) strengthen its links with industry; (h) increase its international exposure; (i) introduction of specialized shared teaching in English as an effort to improve students language skills.

Under normal circumstances, the objectives identified by the Department would be well within reach. A repeated trend at all the meetings of the Committee with the faculty at all levels, however, was the concern regarding the fluid situation concerning financial and policy issues at state level which affects all academic activities throughout Greece.

Specifically, the absence of funds for hiring any adjunct staff, dependence on limited and competitive state funding for facility and research infrastructure expansions and continuous changes and thus confusion regarding Higher Education Law causes both confusion and uncertainty.

The short, medium and long term goals and strategy of the Department are highly affected also by its location (the physically dispersed nature of the university and the location of Mytilini away from any of the country's major urban centres).

F. Final Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC

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

Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC on:

- the development of the Department to this date and its present situation, including explicit comments on good practices and weaknesses identified through the External Evaluation process and recommendations for improvement
- the Department's readiness and capability to change/improve
- the Department's quality assurance.

The Committee acknowledges the strong current academic leadership of the Department and the esprit de corps that exists among the faculty and between the faculty and the Department Head. It is unfortunate, however, that current legislation mandates only a two-year term, with possibility of only one renewal thereafter. This policy impacts negatively on long term planning and programmatic continuity, to the potential detriment of the entire Department.

The Committee is fully aware of and sympathetic to the difficulties facing all Greek universities during this prolonged period of economic uncertainty and legislative instability. Such a context should neither, however, exonerate institutions and programs from their responsibility to engage in long-term and short-term planning, nor should it dishearten them from articulating future aspirations, especially as they sustain the hope that the currently extreme difficulties will eventually abate and reverse. Such planning therefore will assist all educators and administrators in managing the continuing or even possibly worsening difficulties and in positioning them to move forward in an aggressive manner when the situation finally improves. As the saying goes, "We plan for the worst but we hope the best." It is with this spirit that the Committee makes the following recommendations for strategic

planning:

1. The Department should continuously monitor students' selection of courses and their performance across all three levels of programs.
2. The Department should develop Undergraduate, Postgraduate and PhD Student Handbooks.
3. The students should have ongoing access to current state-of-the-art technologies and equipment and upgrades.
4. The Department should revise the post-graduate curriculum with an aim at course consolidation, resulting in a lightening of both student and faculty workloads.
5. The Department should develop, design, implement, and evaluate a well-structured and rigorous Ph.D program to shape and prepare future scholars and researchers.
6. The Department should align its PhD program with international standards.
7. The undergraduate and post-graduate programs should incorporate research related themes into their pedagogy.
8. The Department should develop its own Faculty Handbook.
9. The Department should focus its future grant seeking activity on accomplishing basic inductive/deductive scientific research through internationally competitive research programs.
10. The Department should consolidate its eight current research laboratories under the umbrella of a unified research centre and move them to a common shared space - open platform.
11. The Department should systematize protection mechanisms and mentoring for junior faculty.
12. The Department should vigorously pursue measures to secure funds, both inside and outside the university, for faculty and PhD students to attend international conferences.
13. The University should return a portion of funded project overheads to the Department in order to allow for strategic research expansion.
14. The University should, at a minimum, provide needed financial and technical support for upgrading and maintaining teaching software and hardware.
15. The University should establish a central student counselling and advising office.

The Members of the Committee

Name and Surname	Signature
1. Panayiotis Zaphiris	
2. Rick M. Newton	
3. Brendan Patrick Mullan	
4. Fatma Güliz Erginsoy	