



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ  
ΑΔΙΠ

ΑΡΧΗ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ  
ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΑΝΩΤΑΤΗ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗ

HELLENIC REPUBLIC  
HQA

HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE  
AND ACCREDITATION AGENCY

# Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of:

**Sociology**

**Institution: University of Aegean**

**Date: March 23, 2019**

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



Report of the Panel appointed by the HQA to undertake the review of the  
Undergraduate Study Programme of **Sociology** of the **University of Aegean**  
for the purposes of granting accreditation

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## **PART A: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE REVIEW**

### **I. The Accreditation Panel**

The Panel responsible for the Accreditation Review of the **Undergraduate Study Programme** of the Higher Education Institution named: **Sociology, University of Aegean** comprised the following five (5) members, drawn from the HQA Register, in accordance with the Law 4009/2011:

**1. Prof. Nikos Fokas (Chair)**

Dept. of Sociology, Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), Budapest, Hungary

**2. Prof. Dimitris Michailakis**

Dept. of Social and welfare Studies, University of Linköping, Stockholm, Sweden

**3. Prof. Panagiotis Christias**

University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus

**4. Prof. Apostolis Papakostas**

Södertörn University, Stockholm, Sweden

**5. Dr John Karamichas**

Queen's University Belfast, Belfast, United Kingdom

## II. Review Procedure and Documentation

Prior to their visit in **Mytilene**, the members of the Accreditation Panel (AP) had the opportunity to study all documents supplied to them by HQA in advance, including:

- (a) HQA Materials such as Guidelines for Accreditation, Mapping Grid for members of AP, Indexes of the Department of Sociology University of Aegean
- (b) Recommendations of the 2012 External Evaluation Report
- (c) the Department's Proposal for Accreditation with several annexes

Before travelling to **Mytilene**, the Accreditation Panel members (AP) attended a meeting in Athens on Monday 18/03/2019, at which the Accreditation Procedure was explained by members of the HQA and useful information was provided on HQA mission, the guidelines of the Quality Assurance process, and the role and tasks of the AP members.

The review procedure began on 18 March with a comprehensive briefing by Prof Pantelis Kyprianos, President of HQA, and Dr C. Besta, General Director of HQA, in which were explained and discussed the aims of the accreditation system.

The visit of the Department by the AP members was conducted between 18 and 20 March 2019 following a well organized schedule.

In the afternoon 18 March the AP members had a welcome meeting with the Vice-Rector of Academic Affairs and Student Welfare/President of MODIP Prof. Elena Theodoropoulou, and Prof. Michalis Psimitis Head of the Department who gave a broad overview of the history, academic profile and current status of the Undergraduate Study Programme. Prof. Psimitis made a brief presentation of the history of the Department, which was founded in 1989 and started to operate in 1999/2000. He explained various aspects concerning the students' profile, mobility, mentoring, the study programme, teaching staff, professional opportunities.

After a short break AP members discussed the degree of compliance of the Undergraduate Programme to the Standards for Quality Accreditation with

- **OMEA** members Prof. Manousos Marangudakis, Department of Sociology, Assistant Prof. Panagiotis Giavrimis, Department of Sociology, Chrysoula Palla, Undergraduate Student, Department of Sociology
- **MODIP** members. Prof. Aikaterini Klonari, Department of Geography, Aikaterini Nicolarea, E.E.P. Associate, Prof. Athanasios Stasinakis, Department of Environment, Prof. Evangelos Xideas, Department of Shipping Trade & Transport

OMEA representatives explained the Department's evaluation processes, which are coordinated by OMEA and answered a series of questions addressed to them by the AP, providing supplementary information when requested.

Then, the members of the AP met in a private consultation to briefly discuss the Proposal, to divide tasks among them and to organize in detail the teamwork.

On the next day, the site visit of AP members included subsequent meetings with:

- **Teaching staff** members

Prof. Panagiotis Grigoriou, Manos Savvakis, Assistant Professor, Prof. Ioannis Kallas, Maria Markantonatou, Assistant Professor, Prof. Nikolaos Nagopoulos, Efstratios Papanis, Assistant Professor, Prof. Sotiris Chtouris, Maria Eleni Syrmali, Teaching Staff, University Scholar, Nikolaos Xypolytas, Teaching Staff, University Scholar, Prof. Michalis Psimitis, Michalis Poulimas, Teaching Staff, University Scholar, Christos Bakalis, Special Teaching Staff, Christos Kouroutzas, Teaching Staff, University Scholar, Kostas Rontos.

The AP had the opportunity to discuss with them the structure of the study programme, linking of teaching and research their professional careers and, teaching staff mobility, their understanding of student-centred teaching.

- **Students of Undergraduate Studies**

The AP particularly interested in their involvement in evaluation processes, and the possibilities they had of participating in research activities. The students expressed very positive opinions about their personal relationship with the members of the teaching staff. Since the meeting took place in a constructive atmosphere the members of AP had the opportunity to ask the students about their satisfaction with the Department generally their motivation and the study programme.

- **Graduates**

The AP discussed with twelve graduates their experience of studying at the Department and their career paths. All except one of the graduates came to Mytilene for their studies, and after their diploma were integrated in the social and professional life of the island. Their professions include various state and associative administrative positions with major impact in the local community.

- **Employers and social partners.**

The discussion focused on the work experience that Department students carry out in their institutions. The AP had an interesting exchange of ideas about the practical skills that the labour market requires from Sociology students. The judgment of the employers on the collaboration with the Department was very positive.

During a guided tour, accompanied by members of Department, the AP members were able to evaluate departmental facilities and learning resources including offices of the teaching staff, and a few classrooms and had the opportunity briefly to observe a teaching in a seminar. The IT laboratory has a basic library as well as computers available to students. Two members of AP visited the central Library because of time constraints.

The site visit concluded with a closure meeting with the Prof. Dimitrios Papageorgiou Vice-Rector, Prof. Michalis Psimitis Head of Department, and the representatives of MODIP and OMEA, at which the members of the AP gave their first feedback on the visit.

It is much appreciated that, during their visit to the Department, the AP members were given access to all additional material or information they requested. The AP was provided with the additional documentation (on paper and a flash drive) containing a presentation with further

information about the activities of OMEA and a document containing information on the organization of student work placements.

The AP would like to emphasize that the site visit was conducted in a very positive atmosphere. The reception of the AP by the Department was excellent and all staff members and students were particularly cooperative.

In writing its report the AP has consulted the documentation sent by the HQA, the webpage of the Department and communicated with Prof. Michalis Psimitis Head of Department asked some further information.

### **III. Study Programme Profile**

The minimum duration of undergraduate studies cannot be shorter than eight terms, during which students are free to develop their own programme of study. Subjects are divided into base, core specialization as well as elective subjects.

Base subjects consist of compulsory courses in Sociology and a different field of Methodology. In the case of core subjects from the available elective specialization subjects, students are obliged to choose at least four seminars before completing their studies. Their performance is evaluated on the basis of a seminar essay which is also presented orally in class. Students may also choose from among free electives, which may be offered by the Department.

Courses are supported the Department's web page, and offer training in the use of bibliographic databases and other search tools.

On successful completion of the Undergraduate Programme, the students are qualified as sociologists. Employment opportunities lie mainly in the broad field of social services.

The declared overall aim of the undergraduate program curriculum in a "Department of Sociology" is to educate students in sociological theory and methods. The programme intends also to develop research skills adequate for addressing problems of contemporary society.

## 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.*

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

*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 main instrument of the quality assurance policy in the Department of Sociology is the Internal Evaluation group (OMEA) which conducts annual detailed internal evaluation. The Internal Evaluation group (OMEA) works in close cooperation on with the University's Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP). Consequently these annual procedures are carried out in accordance with the criteria set by HQA. The Quality Assurance Policy of the Department of Sociology is in line with the Institutional policy on Quality.

In the opinion of the AP the Department has worked to develop appropriate quality procedures. Within the Department a Study Programme Committee is in charge of carrying out an annual

review of the study programme. The results of the annual evaluations are discussed in departmental meetings and are also used as a basis for the reports requested by HQA. This annual review process opens the possibilities to continuous improvement and affords some flexibility for the undergraduate program.

The Quality Assurance Policy is communicated to all parties involved. The OMEA estimates a participation rate of 10-12% of students and recognizes the difficulty of implementing this new 'culture' of evaluation. The AP members encourage the Department to enhance the communication of the results of the quality assurance policy with all involved stakeholders.

The AP could observe that on the basis of the internal evaluation results and, especially, of the suggestions of the External Evaluation Report of 2012 measurements have been taken for improving the Undergraduate Programme but still there is a room for more improvements.

The overall impression of the Department's Assurance Policy is positive, given the fact that this process helped the faculty members to detect strengths and weaknesses of the Undergraduate Programme.

#### **Panel judgement**

| <b>Principle 1: Institution policy for Quality Assurance</b> |          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Fully compliant                                              |          |
| Substantially compliant                                      | <b>X</b> |
| Partially compliant                                          |          |
| Non-compliant                                                |          |

#### **Panel Recommendations**

The AP members encourage the Department to enhance the communication with all involved partners of the final results of the quality assurance policy as well as of the yearly partial evaluations recorded by the competent bodies of the Department and of the University.

## 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 Institutional strategy*

The Department has established a programme of study which the schedule of classes follows closely. The required course offerings are made available in a specific sequence and students are required to follow this sequence. However, the great majority of courses are elective courses. Learning outcomes are thus not - and cannot be - fully consistent and uniform. The lack of consistency and uniformity is what in the following we refer as the fragmentation of the programme. As a consequence of the fragmentation learning outcomes cannot be ingrained in the course offerings for the academic programme. Therefore, there is an urgent need for the OMEA which periodically examine the curriculum and make changes based on advances in technology, student needs, etc. to re-examine the overall learning outcomes in the study of sociology. An impediment for these programme changes must be approved by the Departmental Board (geniki syneleusi).

Although a visible effort has been made to reduce previously observed fragmentation. Further efforts are needed to reduce this. The grouping of optional courses in thematic units would help to a certain extent the orientation of students.

- *the active participation of students*

Student participation in the non-lab courses is low and there is a need to address and remedy this reality. Nearly the half of the registered students not even live in the island. Most of them are coming only to participate in the exams.

There is a consciousness of the Department as to the need to increase participation in student evaluations. The participation rate is very low and by no means can be used as reliable source for information.

- *the experience of external stakeholders from the labour market*

In the curriculum revision procedure should involve the consultation of stakeholders, external experts, students and graduates in order to couple studies in sociology with the labour market.

- *the smooth progression of students throughout the stages of the programme*

The fragmentation mentioned above is the main impediment as a consequence of the enormous amount of elective courses offered to the students.

The undergraduate programmes are stressed by an overwhelming number of entering students whose minimum qualifications are somewhat low and problematic in relation to the academic targets of the department. Efforts to improve the situation, aided by the legislation in past years of forcing a maximum duration of studies of v+2 years, are meeting great resistance at the governmental level. Since efforts to improve this situation is hindered by legislation, no measurable improvement can be seen in the near future.

- *the anticipated student workload according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System*

The anticipated student workload is 30 ECTS per semester (5 courses), according to european standards. The actual breakdown of the ECTS (face to face teaching, essay writing, individual reading and preparations, etc.) implicates 18 hours of assistance to courses. Although many European universities comply with this kind of breakdown that charges students with many classroom teaching hours, other national traditions prefer less teaching hours and more individual and group work.

- *the option to provide work experience to the students*

There is an important mechanism implementing the practical training in local social care structures and social enterprises with activities in the island of Lesbos. The social network includes services of local municipalities, the central government, local social enterprises, non-governmental agencies, the University of the Aegean and its various departments. The implementation is coordinated via a digital platform, ATLAS.

Students have access to the offer of placements and coordinate their actions with the services of the University and the local actors in order for their training to be formally accepted. The

number of placements is nevertheless limited and only a small percentage of students can profit for them.

The duration of the practical training is set to two months during the summer months from June to August. Representatives of the host structures spoke very highly of the student's performance although the actual work in most cases is that of a social worker than of a sociologist. Teaching staff assured a guiding and preparatory work is done with the candidates to practical training specified the needs of each placement.

- *the linking of teaching and research*

Members of the Department have been successful in the funding to a number of competitive national and European research programmes, in which they include their own students. Teaching staff is fully aware of the necessity to link teaching to research and actually provide courses that came out of research experience in these programmes.

- *the relevant regulatory framework and the official procedure for the approval of the programme by the Institution.*

The programme is discussed first by the Study Programme Committee of the Department that takes into consideration the relevant inputs, proposes changes and forwards them to the Departmental Board for approval.

### Panel judgement

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

### Panel Recommendations

In our view there is a need to enforce a flexible mechanism for the regular review of curriculum development to update it in relation to the societal demands.

Since the low rate of response in questionnaires for course assessment is not a reliable source to draw any conclusions and face to face is not a recommended method because nothing can be verified. There is a need to find supplementary methods and tools that allow identification of weaknesses in teaching and provide mechanisms for the effective and reliable resolution of these issues.

The AP strongly recommends that further efforts are needed to reduce the fragmentation of the programme. The grouping of optional courses in thematic units would help to a certain extent the orientation of students.

There is a need to implement a more systematic cost-benefit analysis in the process of deciding to offer undergraduate courses. The elective courses can be offered with a minimum of student

participation of three students. This is not cost-effective and needs to be addressed by the Department.

Student participation in the non-lab courses is low and there is a need to remedy this reality.

### 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

Regarding students, the main challenge of the Department of Sociology of the University of the Aegean at Mytilene is the median/low rate of class attendance by the students. Fairly a 40-50 % attend classes, and even if the Teaching Staff assured that attendance in Seminar classes (courses of the 3rd and the 4th year of studies) are actually compulsory, it is hard to imagine that students who never set foot in Mytilene, except for the exams, in the first two years of their Studies could effectively organize the attendance of Seminar classes.

Nevertheless, for the resident students, attendance rate is high, although not formally controlled, except for the seminars. The programme adopted is flexible and student-centred with different and even individualized learning paths in many cases, through a multitude of special research orientated seminars, a variety of pedagogical methods, extending from face to face teaching, collective exercises and reports, individual tasks, participation in actual research, undergraduate thesis and practical training. Thus the programme encourages students to develop individual skills.

Students are seen as active partners in the teaching/learning process by informally established flexible, interactive ways, strengthened by the institution of the students counselling by the members of the teaching staff. This general, formal and informal, culture is actually preferred by all partners, as established in the interviews we conducted with stakeholders. Assessment criteria and methods are published in advance and there are both formal and informal procedures for student appeals in place.

There is a procedure for student satisfaction surveys through teaching courses' assessment, but the low rate of 10-12% of participation (almost 6 to 7 students out of 60) renders these results unfit for further exploitation. There is also an informal culture of regular meetings and even face to face interactions between students and teaching staff compensates partially the lack of satisfactory results in the surveys. In this sense, considerable efforts are needed to improve the existing assessment and surveys formal procedures.

The overall understanding of the AP is that the undergraduate programme is delivered in a student-centred learning environment that promotes mutual respect for students who demand it. However, according to reports, it is still examination-centred, in the sense that a majority of students only participate in the three and, as established, sometimes four examination campaigns, basing their entire curriculum and degree in their work at home with manuals and notes of their fellow ongoing and past colleagues.

The examination process is well known and understood by both partners, student and teaching staff, delivers to our knowledge fair results and takes into account mitigating circumstances, mostly informally, though formal procedures do exist. However, the fact that students have the occasion to undertake several times the same examination, sometimes even three in an academic year, adds to the exam-centred culture.

### Panel judgement

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

## **Panel Recommendations**

Measures should be implemented to raise the attendance rate of students. If making attendance to courses compulsory is not an option for the Department as it actually does not depend on it to decide such a measure, there should be compulsory group work *in situ*, field assignments in Mytilene, and frequent student presentations in courses so that it should be made clear that the final exams only do not suffice to pass the first two year courses.

Measures should be taken also to increase the rate of student participation in the courses assessments, for example keep the electronic form of evaluation open for the last month of the semester and until the noting of the final exams.

Independent surveys should be carried out as to examine the overall rate of satisfaction of the students, their understanding of the coherence of the programme, their expectations regarding teaching material, pedagogical methods and, not least, mutual respect between students and teaching staff.

Teaching staff should reply to evaluations both individually and collectively in written reports mentioning ongoing and upcoming changes of the courses and of the programme responding to the evaluations.

## 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 Island of Lesbos is actually described by both students and teaching staff as “frontier island” (*akritiko*), which poses numerous problems for students' establishment in the island. Actually, according to our information, only half of students received in the programme establish themselves in the island of Lesbos for the whole duration of their studies.

There is a formal and informal culture to support incoming students. Though no systematic aid to students seeking apartments exists, and university housing possibilities are limited, there is in general, a culture of entrain and orientation between the students and locals, as well as support from university's bureaus and secretarial staff.

The administration is available through INTERNET services. Informatics tools render inscription and choice of courses from distance possible, and this is according to students particularly helpful in their orientation in the programme. Students' progression is monitored by informal ways (cooperation with teaching staff in various assignments and courses), and by the institution of the student's counsellor. There is no information though for students who do not attend or partially attend courses and seminars. Individual failing rates are not monitored for example, so to further help counselling.

The ECTS is applied across the curriculum and a diploma supplement is delivered. The students' mobility is encouraged. There is an Erasmus office and the rates of outcoming students are satisfactory.

The study programme has defined a set of quality requirements for the implementation of the thesis. The Thesis Handbook is available online. Furthermore, in order to support a practical training the academic unit developed a network including social, cultural, productive bodies. A practical training is deemed as a valuable part of the programme that develops students' job-specific skills and introduces them in the professional field. Both the thesis and the practical

training are neither compulsory nor available to all students. In general, only students with the best learning results have access.

#### Panel judgement

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

#### Panel Recommendations

Systematic surveys should be formally implemented in order to follow student's understanding of the programme, their individual progression (failing rate along the semesters) and degree of correspondence to the educational expectations of the programme.

A formal mixed group constituted of at least five of the best students and the Study Programme Committee of the Department should meet every semester in order to assess the semester's progression and problems and discuss changes.

## 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 AP panel lacks the necessary factual data in order to pronounce itself on whether recruitment is transparent and impartial. Another set of input and inquiry would have been necessary as to examine this specific feature.

The professional development opportunities for the teaching staff are excellent. The rate of members of the Department that have been promoted to full professors is extremely high. The rank distribution is like a reverse pyramid. Meanwhile, the AP notices the unequal distribution of gender generally and specific at the highest level. There are only two female colleagues at the Department and only one among the 11 full professors. We observed the opposite proportion among the graduates we had the opportunity to meet.

The teaching staff mobility encouraged by many ways e.g. sabbatical, Erasmus.

The teaching workload of the teaching staff deemed more than appropriate. Lower than the average EU standards.

The AP found much evidence of linking teaching with research.

The teaching staffs is regularly evaluated by the students through surveys, but due to very low participation rate – 10-12% - of students is very difficult, almost impossible to draw valid conclusions.

The programme has a defined research strategy concerning new challenges for social sciences such as refugee/immigration problem and focusing in specific scientific areas of local community.

The AP has not observed any specific policies in order to attract highly qualified academic staff. In general, the Panel considers that the institutional framework of Greek universities does not permit the implementation of measures taken in this direction.

## Panel judgement

| Principle 5: Teaching Staff |          |
|-----------------------------|----------|
| Fully compliant             |          |
| Substantially compliant     | <b>X</b> |
| Partially compliant         |          |
| Non-compliant               |          |

## Panel Recommendations

The AP underlines the importance of substantial financial support by the State in order to ensure the continuity and increase of high quality research outputs.

At the long term, the Department should establish a strategy aiming to reverse the rate professors/teaching staff and take measures to reduce the apparent gender inequality and the asymmetric gender distribution at all levels.

One particular aspect of the Greek Higher Education is the phenomenon that can be termed 'FEK fetishism', i.e. the formal identification of academics with a rigid, extremely narrow and legally determined label given at the beginning of academic careers. This feature has devastating consequences at all levels and areas of academic activity as individuals are imprisoned in these labels and need to defend them throughout their careers. One of the worst consequences is what one could call a 'defensive fragmentation' of teaching and research activities, i.e. once a staff member has managed to successfully delineate his or her specialist area within a Department, he or she does not need to engage with other areas or emulate success in cogent areas. This administrative straitjacket should be replaced by a system that strongly encourages motivation, emulation and flexibility in autonomously choosing one's research areas and objectives. Definition of research fields should not be narrower than the description of sectors or thematic entities such as political sociology, social psychology, sociology of immigration, sociology of health, urban sociology etc.

## Principle 6: Learning Resources and Student Support

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

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

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

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

### Study Programme compliance

Based on the requirements and needs arising during its operation, the Department has determined ways to define, allocate and maintain all the necessary resources to ensure its smooth and proper functioning, i.e. teaching rooms, research and auxiliary facilities, equipment and software, support facilities (cleaning, transportation, communication) etc.

The infrastructure is deemed satisfactory in most cases. There is internet access (wireless or wired) in the majority of the buildings. There exists sufficient and updated IT infrastructure (e.g., computers, software) and other specialized lab equipment that supports the needs of the faculty and students.

The library is equipped with a large database of scientific journals which is used by faculty and students active in research. The accessibility of the database is excellent. The location of the library and the lack of group rooms and of a sufficient number of individual places for studying in the library and in the Department limit considerably students' possibility to meet and discuss.

There is a restaurant that offers free or at low price meal for all students. The quality of the food provided is good.

In general, the working environment in the Department is considered quite favourable – measured with Greek standards - for the daily activities of faculty and staff. The campus and

building premises were not quite clean and not favourable for a productive academic environment. In one case three members of staff shared one single room. The overall appearance of the premises visited was quite good; however, some buildings had a need for continuous maintenance painted on the walls.

The administrative staff in our view is sufficient for the operations of the institution.

#### **Panel judgement**

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

#### **Panel Recommendations**

There is a need for effective technical services to monitor the identification of the operational needs (infrastructure, rooms, laboratory equipment, consumables, human resources, etc.) of the departments which have a direct impact on the quality of teaching, learning, and research. The funding of the maintenance of infrastructure of the Department must be secured by the appropriate authorities.

The lack of group rooms and of a sufficient number of individual places for studying in the library and in the Department that limit considerably students' possibility to meet and discuss should be adequately addressed immediately by the Department through a reassignment of the use of available spaces.

## Principle 7: Information Management

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Study Programme compliance

The academic unit has established procedures for the collection of data regarding: student body, teaching methods, student progression.

The information was presented with graphs and tables and allowed direct interpretation and comparisons over time.

There are no regular procedures for the collection of data regarding employability and career paths of graduates. Meanwhile, during the meeting with the OMEA, the internal unit for Quality Assurance, the results of a survey on employability were presented. As we understand it, the Department of Sociology has plans for systematizing the collection of such data in the near future.

Some elementary data about student and staff satisfaction is collected but not by a systematically and periodically distributed survey. The type of data available is not sufficient to make appropriate indicators of improvement.

Learning resources and student supports are available online.

### Panel judgement

| Principle 7: Information Management |          |
|-------------------------------------|----------|
| Fully compliant                     |          |
| Substantially compliant             | <b>X</b> |
| Partially compliant                 |          |
| Non-compliant                       |          |

### Panel Recommendations

The Department should establish regular procedures for the collection of data regarding employability plus student and staff satisfaction. If possible such procedures could be coordinated at the University level.

## 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 Department of sociology has an own homepage, easily accessible from the main page of the university. The home page is constructed in a simple and perspicuous manner and it is easy to navigate while there.

The information is updated and sufficient to understand the vision, the activities, the educational programmes, the people and their roles.

The study programmes are presented, the information is detailed and clear. The structure of the programme is presented in structured way, including the mode of attendance, the criteria for assessment and the degrees awarded.

The CVs of the teaching stuff are available online and updated.

Meanwhile, the accreditation panel notices that the partners of the Department are not presented on the homepage. During our visit we had the opportunity to meet an impressive number of several representatives from civil society organizations, the Municipality and the Region. As these organizations are important for the practice of the students or could provide opportunities for future employment, short presentations of the partners could be helpful to the students.

### Panel judgement

| Principle 8: Public Information |          |
|---------------------------------|----------|
| Fully compliant                 | <b>X</b> |
| Substantially compliant         |          |
| Partially compliant             |          |
| Non-compliant                   |          |

### Panel Recommendations

Short presentations of the partners should, if possible, be available at the department's homepage.

## 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

Each member of the teaching staff is responsible for the updating of the content, the bibliography and the pedagogical methods of his course. Changes are forwarded to the Departmental Board for approval.

The Study Programme Committee undertakes the task to propose changes to the Programme in order to meet societal changes. For example, the current migration crisis has led the Department to strengthen migration sociology and develop synergies with local stakeholders and community services.

The self-assessment procedure of the study programme takes place annually. Unfortunately students courses' assessments cannot be taken into consideration as a result of the low rate of the student's participation. The outcomes of the self-assessment are properly recorded and submitted to the QAU/MODIP of the Institution. The changes that result from the self-assessment are shared within the academic unit.

The self-assessments result up to the limited rate in documented and communicated action following. There is no evidence that the collected data from the student evaluations are factored in changes on the learning and teaching standards in modular provisions in the following year.

## Panel judgement

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

## Panel Recommendations

There is need for enhancing the mechanism that underpins the modular evaluation by students. Some possible ways to do that could be by developing an online platform that encourages online participation. In addition, an imperative change would be to develop a less onerous questionnaire. The way that the questionnaire is currently structured does not encourage participation and completion. In addition, in order to avoid negative commentary by students with below average course participation the collected data must be corroborated with the participation of the student in course learning processes by adding an item where the student adds the rate of attendance in classes (lectures/seminars/workshops) in the course evaluation questionnaire.

## Principle 10: Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programmes

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

*HQA is responsible for administering the programme accreditation process which is realised as an external evaluation procedure, and implemented by a committee of independent experts. HQA 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

In 2012 the study programme has undergone an external evaluation procedure set by HQA.

The study programme / academic unit hasn't recently undergone external reviews conducted by other Agencies.

All members of the staff, students are aware of the importance of the external review. They were cooperative. All stakeholders of the programme / academic unit actively engage in the external review.

Follow up actions are expected from the Department.

### Panel judgement

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

### Panel Recommendations

The follow up action can take the form of a clear account of changes on individual modules that have been stimulated by both programme reviews (internal and external) and student evaluations. The course outline must have a clear structure of themes and subjects covered, student coursework/exam performance that is followed by a summary of results from the student evaluation and plans for module/course enhancement.

## **Part C: Conclusions**

### **I. Features of Good Practice**

Despite a national student culture of exam-centred learning, the teaching staff of the Department supports their students and are committed to the principles of student-centred learning.

The AP notices that since the last evaluation of the Department in 2012, there has been significant progress that has permitted the incorporation of the evaluation and self-evaluation culture in everyday practices. Internal institutions and bodies have been created and are active permanently in monitoring and improving the teaching and the quality of the programme.

There is a clear direction of the Department in the sense of the mutual promotion and support of research and teaching that integrates students in the research of the Department and offers courses that have come substantially out of the research activities and experience.

The Department has deep roots in the local community and in the life of the island of Lesbos. It is connected to all local stakeholders and to organization of the civil society. It responds to the local needs and adjusts its philosophy in order to provide necessary solutions to social challenges such as the immigration crisis. This offers the opportunity to enrol students to practical training and introduce them to active professional life as sociologists.

### **II. Areas of Weakness**

The University and the Department itself have little or no control over staffing levels, infrastructure and general funding.

The general problem of the study programme is the fragmentation of courses, i.e. the lack of connectivity between the courses and of explicit progressivity over the years of study.

The existence of a reversed pyramid in the ranks of the academic staff, where eleven out of fifteen are full professors, is an obvious impediment to the future dynamic of the sociology programme of the Department.

Gender inequality regarding the teaching staff must be addressed and redressed.

Cost effectiveness of the elective courses. There is a need for the rational allocation of limited resources.

The very low class attendance by the students, who are rooted in exam-centred learning culture and the poor percentages in student evaluations, reflects the fact that they do not consider themselves as active partners in the learning procedure and in the academic life of the Department. It is a menace both to the quality of the teaching and of the programme development that must be urgently addressed.

### **III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions**

The AP feels strongly that further efforts are needed to reduce the fragmentation of the programme. The grouping of optional courses in thematic units would help to a certain extent the orientation of students. The thematic areas of the post graduate-programme could offer a good starting point. In such an effort the progressivity of the program should be a guiding principle.

Measures should be implemented to raise the attendance rate of students. Compulsory group work *in situ*, field assignments in Mytilene, and frequent student presentations in courses so should be introduced in order to make clear that the final exams alone do not suffice to formally fulfil requirements for crediting the courses.

In order to increase the rate of student participation in the courses assessments, the electronic form of evaluation should be kept open for the last month of the semester and until the noting of the final exams. Additionally, independent surveys of the overall rate of satisfaction of the students, their understanding of the coherence of the programme, their expectations regarding teaching material, pedagogical methods and, not least, mutual respect between students and teaching staff must be introduced. Teaching staff should reply to evaluations both individually and collectively in written reports mentioning ongoing and upcoming changes of the courses and of the programme responding to the evaluations.

At the long term, the Department should establish a strategy aiming to reverse the rate professors/teaching staff and take measures to reduce the apparent gender inequality and the asymmetric gender distribution at all levels.

The AP wishes to make two remarks considering general features of the Institutional framework that impede the functionality of the Department. The first one is the lack of budgetary awareness that impedes the rational use of the available resources. The second one is the 'FEK fetishism', i.e. the formal identification of academics with a rigid, extremely narrow and legally determined label given at the beginning of academic careers. This feature has devastating consequences at all levels and areas of academic activity as individuals are imprisoned in these labels and need to defend them throughout their careers. The AP suggests that the Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency should initiate a reform proposal on the matters.

### **IV. Summary & Overall Assessment**

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: 8

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

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are: 2

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are: None

| Overall Judgement       |          |
|-------------------------|----------|
| Fully compliant         |          |
| Substantially compliant | <b>X</b> |
| Partially compliant     |          |
| Non-compliant           |          |

**The members of the Accreditation Panel  
for the UGP Sociology of the  
University of Aegean**

Name and Surname

Signature

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