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Α.ΔΙ.Π.
ΑΡΧΗ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ & ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ
ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΑΝΩΤΑΤΗ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗ

HELLENIC REPUBLIC
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HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE
AND ACCREDITATION AGENCY

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

DEPARTMENT: Primary Education

UNIVERSITY: University of Patras

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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION & RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS, CULTURE & SPORTS
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External Evaluation Committee

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the **Department of Primary Education of the University of Patras** consisted of the following four (4) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by the HQA in accordance with Law 3374/2005 :

- 1. Professor Marcie Boucouvalas**
Virginia Tech Graduate Center/National Capital Region, USA
Department of Human Development
(Coordinator)

- 2. Professor Mary Koutselini**
University of Cyprus, Cyprus
Department of Education

- 3. Dr. Anna Traianou**, Reader
Goldsmiths, University of London, U.K.
Department of Educational Studies

- 4. Dr. Despina Varnava-Marouchou**, Assistant Professor
European University Cyprus, Cyprus
Department of Management and Marketing

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.

On 14 October 2013 we travelled to the University of Patras by van provided by the University. The 3 hour trip afforded an opportunity to get to know one another, discuss our experiences and philosophical perspectives on evaluation in general and specifically with regard to the Hellenic Quality Assurance project and process. We agreed upon an approach to our visit and by the time we reached Patras we had already moved from a collection of individuals to a team (and increasingly so as the days of the visit progressed (14, 15, 16 October). Upon arrival we were enthusiastically greeted by the Department, as well as by the administration of the University, and were pleased to experience their clear commitment to evaluation and their continuing strides in this area well before any external evaluation requirements were in place. Moreover, their openness to dialogue was a *modus operandi*, a way of being for them, which resulted in a very authentic evaluation process.

- With whom did the Committee meet?

Virtually all administrators, faculty, staff, et al. were involved in meeting and greeting the evaluation committee and more important in providing extensive information both orally and in carefully prepared reports. In fact, the preparedness of the Department cannot be overemphasized. Moreover, questions from the committee were very thoroughly addressed.

- List of Reports, documents, other data examined by the Committee. Reports, documents, student productions (including undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral work and dissertations, school experience portfolios, art work, etc.), and other materials were readily available to and reviewed by the committee.

- Groups of teaching and administrative staff and students interviewed

All Divisions of the Department (faculty and administration) along with groups of undergraduate, master's, and doctoral students were interviewed. Please refer to the itinerary entitled "Final Programme of the External Evaluation" for further information as to the extensiveness of the visit

- Facilities visited by the External Evaluation Committee.

All facilities listed on the "Final Programme of the External Evaluation" were visited.

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?

Notes to above questions regarding the internal evaluation

The internal evaluation report provides a good description of the work that is been going on in the Department. There is clear evidence that much work has been put into both the report as well as the self-examination process. The process of evaluation is an integral part of the Department's philosophy and has a long-standing tradition. Such an orientation helps the Department define and revisit objectives on a frequent basis. The internal unit of quality assurance of the University of Patras was responsible for the conduct of the evaluation process, the results of which were included in the internal evaluation report. A very positive part of the internal evaluation document is the inclusion of the questionnaires. The questionnaires include appropriate questions for tutors and students and for the assessment of all aspects of their activities (e.g., curriculum, teaching, research and other services)

The report does not include an action plan. During our visit, however, it became clear that the members of the department are in dialogue with regard to addressing the issues that they have identified in the report. The report provided us with an advanced organizer, which enabled us to derive a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the Department.

We were impressed to realize during our study visit that with no exception all members of the department had a positive attitude to the evaluation and had

participated in the process and in the writing of the internal evaluation report. This point also applies to people who are currently under threat to become redundant or redeployed. The students that we met also had a positive attitude to the evaluation. All appeared to be in a learning-readiness mode for evaluation and improvement.

The Department operates on a very restricted budget and with a very small number of full members of academic staff and support staff (e.g., technicians, maintenance personnel and administrative staff). As a result some of the support work is carried out voluntarily by full members of academic staff.

Despite these problems, the department maintains a strong sense of its mission and a commitment for improvement.

In no instances were the current financial limitations used an excuse for potential suboptimal work.

Negatives/Areas of Improvement

Research

- The department does not have a formal research advisory and support system for new members of staff (e.g., mentoring)
- Lack of scholarships to postgraduate students

A. Curriculum

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

APPROACH

The department is divided in four domains and each domain is responsible for the supervision of the courses they offer. Each domain runs one or more laboratories. We have some concerns about the effectiveness of this structure in relation to the fulfilment of the Department's objectives and in general about the necessity to continue to offer courses in separate domains. This is also a major concern of the members of the department. We believe that the domains served their purpose but currently it would be better to structure the programme of studies in a more holistic and integrated way according to the mission and the objectives of the department.

The Department is aware of the necessity to revise regularly the curriculum and the programme of studies and have a working committee set up for that.

- What are the goals and objectives of the Curriculum? What is the plan for achieving them?

There is a clear philosophical orientation which guides the curriculum. This goes beyond the development of teachers capable only of teaching what is required in the primary school. The curriculum aims to develop an educated person with the identity of a global citizen who can actively participate in the local and the wider community and who is able to critically reflect on all the conditions and needs affecting their profession and the development of the society. It would be better if this philosophy, the aims and the objectives were articulated in writing and not restricted only to the individual domains. Such an approach would give a much more cohesive perspective and help them to define a strategic plan for achieving their aims.

- How were the objectives decided? Which factors were taken into account? Were they set against appropriate standards? Did the unit consult other stakeholders?

It seems that because the objectives are defined within each domain they take into account the abilities and the needs of each domain instead of the needs of department as a whole; however, in each domain many things have been achieved. For example, the Department often collaborates with external experts and other stakeholders. Their vision of the development of global citizens provides the potential to transcend a perspective that is only limited to individual domains.

- How was the curriculum decided? Were all constituents of the Department, including students and other stakeholders, consulted?

It is quite clear that many constituents were included in the determination of the curriculum, including teachers as well as administrators in school settings. The department needs to re-examine, however, the sequence of the subjects offered in the curriculum and the balance between the courses of general education and the teaching of subjects in the specific domains. In its present structure the programme of studies offers a large number of electives. This situation perhaps needs to be reconsidered in the light of providing a better balance between compulsory and elective courses. It is worth noting that the Head of Department confirmed that it is in the department's forthcoming plans to reduce the number of courses required to complete the programme of studies.

- Has the unit set a procedure for the revision of the curriculum?

The Department has set up a committee for the revision of the curriculum, which meets regularly.

Postgraduate Programme

The taught postgraduate course is about to complete its cycle and approval for its renewal comes from the Ministry of Education. Both students and staff would like for the programme to continue. However, teaching in this course places further demands on the already heavy teaching load of the academic staff. Additional funding, therefore, must be found to enable the running of the programme, the provision of scholarships and for the employment of postgraduate students in teaching and assistance in the laboratories. Students also suggested the need of a framework which defines their rights, responsibilities and obligations.

In relation of the Doctorate programme it is important that the procedures for progression and completion are clear. For example, minimum and maximum length of studies (3-8 years for part time students).

They need to ensure that all postgraduate students have the necessary research competencies.

IMPLEMENTATION

- How effectively is the Department's goal implemented by the curriculum?

OMEA provides information about the implementation of the curriculum and specifically for three domains: a) attendance of courses; b) textbooks and c) teaching, which indicates that the curriculum is effectively implemented to a great degree. Tables 4.2, 4.10 (of the Department's Internal Report) indicate that in general there is an agreement of academic staff and students about the effective implementation of the curriculum. However, students' opinions give some insights for potential improvement: for example, about the content of the courses, timetable, usefulness of the course, teaching accommodation), and especially the need to improve the interaction between student and staff in some courses, although we understand that this last point is not easy to change given the large numbers of students and the inadequate accommodation.

- How does the curriculum compare with appropriate, universally accepted standards for the specific area of study?

From our knowledge and experience the curriculum is comparable with the universally accepted standards in this specific area in the study.

- Is the structure of the curriculum rational and clearly articulated?

The department's philosophy, aims and objectives need to be articulated in writing and not only restricted to the individual domains.

- Is the curriculum coherent and functional?

The curriculum could become more cohesive and functional if it were clearer how each course contributes to the fulfilment of the implementation of the goals and objectives of the department.

- Is the material for each course appropriate and the time offered sufficient?

Overall the material for each course is appropriate but the time offered is being considered during the revision of the Curriculum. The school experience could be improved by offering students the opportunity to teach every day during their time in schools, as reflected in 'best practices' in many countries.; however, more support is needed from additional special personnel (e.g. seconded teachers).

- Does the Department have the necessary resources and appropriately qualified and trained staff to implement the curriculum?

The department has appropriate qualified staff, which however is increasingly diminishing. This applies to staff who teach in the postgraduate programs. It would be good for postgraduate students to contribute to the teaching and support of the postgraduate programs. An example of good practice is the mentoring of third and fourth year students in the subject of mathematics so they can support the first and second year students. Similarly, doctoral students could be asked to deliver lectures at undergraduate and postgraduate programs. Interviews with seconded teachers and special scientific personnel (ETEP/EEP) revealed their immense contribution to the effective implementation of all programmes.

RESULTS

- How well is the implementation achieving the Department's predefined goals and objectives?

According to all the indications referred to above the curriculum is implemented well. The Department has a very good reputation which is reflected in the high percentage of students graduating each year, the low level of unemployment among graduates and the high demand of graduates by schools and other institutions, and their acceptance into postgraduate programmes in Greece and abroad. Student satisfaction was also expressed during the interviews with students. These results also relate to the good collaboration between students and members of academic staff.

- If not, why is it so? How is this problem dealt with? N/A
- Does the Department understand why and how it achieved or failed to achieve these results?

As indicated in the internal evaluation report it is clear that the department is

aware of how it has managed to achieve these positive results.

IMPROVEMENT

- Does the Department know how the Curriculum should be improved?

As was mentioned earlier the Department has a committee that is responsible for the improvement of the Curriculum.

- Which improvements does the Department plan to introduce?

The restructuring of the curriculum and the reduction of the required courses according to international standards. The introduction of the ECTS, which will make transparent student workload and will give the chance to academic staff to reconsider the requirements of their courses and their assessment system.

B. Teaching

APPROACH:

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

The discussion with the academic staff indicated that a basic building block upon which the Department's pedagogical policy rests is their attunement to contemporary academic trends, which provides the basis for reflection, discussion and adjustment when needed.

Please comment on :

- Teaching methods used

A rich range of teaching methods is used which includes lectures, workshops, tutorials, fieldwork, work in the labs. More recently, the department has started to make use of the e-class platform, which allows students to access materials, powerpoint presentations and to engage in online discussions. The use of e-class could be used more widely when the number of students does not allow personal tutor-student contact. The teaching methods are suitable to the nature of the subject taught.

- Teaching staff/ student ratio

At present there are 1200 students and 25 full time members of staff which makes it clear that the department is severely understaffed. Students are very aware of this deficiency which becomes particularly problematic when it comes to attendance in the compulsory courses. Given this large number of students it is worth mentioning that the academic staff achieves more than one could expect.

- Teacher/student collaboration

The questionnaires and interviews clearly indicate that the students are very satisfied with the quality of their relationship and collaboration with their tutors. We came across many successful examples of tutors who mentored students who were then became mentors to other students.

- Adequacy of means and resources

There is no adequacy of means and resources. However, the enthusiasm and the commitment of the human resources create a constructive and inspiring environment despite the lack of material resources. Teachers of aesthetics, for example, find alternative spaces for the teaching of their subjects. Some tutors offer the same subject twice even though this means an increase of their teaching workload. (Also, teachers who were not seconded this year to the department came back to help on a voluntary basis).

- Use of information technologies

Most teaching rooms have access to the computer. There is only one ICT suite and no technical support. As a result some of the teaching staff has to take the responsibility for the maintenance of the suite. All students have an email account, access to the University e-class platform and online access to the university library. However, students do not feel there is an adequate use of technologies during teaching (according to the OMEA study, table 4.8, p. 41 in the internal evaluation report)

- Examination system

The examination system consists of written exams, research projects, dissertations, portfolios. Some of members of staff also use oral exams, critical reviews, presentations and other formats. This is not always possible because student attendance is not compulsory.

IMPLEMENTATION

The role of OMEA is crucial here. It provides information about the quality of teaching procedures, teaching materials and resources and in general the implementation of teaching for self-improvement. The quality of teaching in general compares favorably to international standards. Efforts are made to keep the materials as well as the way courses are taught as current and effective as possible. These issues are discussed at Division level. These are under the purview of each faculty member.

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

Most of the tutors are involved in research projects, the findings of which they then use in their teaching. Students are sometimes involved during their undergraduate projects and they always complete research dissertations at postgraduate levels.

- Mobility of academic staff and students

Academic staff as well as students take advantage of opportunities for mobility through a number of European union programs (e.g., ERASMUS). The Department would like to increase the level of mobility but the number of slots/stipends available is strictly limited.

- Evaluation by the students of (a) the teaching and (b) the course content and study material/resources

OMEA provides evaluation by the students about teaching, course content and study material/resources through the means of questionnaires.

RESULTS

Please comment on:

- Efficacy of teaching.

Teaching is efficient as it is indicated in the number of graduates per year, and the average final grade for students, which is between 7 and 8.

- Discrepancies in the success/failure percentage between courses and how they are justified.

There are no discrepancies in the success/failure percentage between courses,

- Differences between students in (a) the time to graduation, and (b) final degree grades.

The percentage of students who will not complete their studies in four years is less than 5%. There is however, a big difference between undergraduate and doctoral completion rates as doctorate students pointed out.

- Whether the Department understands the reasons of such positive or negative results?

The department seems to be aware of the importance of effective teaching and they are very vigilant. The department needs to pay more attention to the completion rates of the doctoral students.

IMPROVEMENT

- Does the Department propose methods and ways for improvement?

The Department has developed methods and ways for improvement. These include improvements in the e-class and the development of the online forum 'Thinking Society 10'. Also developed is a Facebook page for students in the Department to use for communication in an asynchronous as well as synchronous manner.

- What initiatives does it take in this direction?

Initiatives include the Museum of Education, Centre for the Study of Philosophy and Religion, the lab for the teaching of physics, the Unit for the Teaching of the Deaf, and many others. These provide adequate environments for the teaching of the particular subjects.

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?

The Department's policy and main objective in research has been articulated in the statement of domains' mission and it refers to the promotion and implementation of both quantitative and qualitative research in all the levels of programmes (undergraduate, graduate, and doctorate). There is a stated concern for the differentiation of research methodologies that better apply in different fields, such as psychology, sociology, and pedagogy.

- Has the Department set internal standards for assessing research?

The internal standards set by the Department in the graduate and doctorate programmes are congruent with the international research standards for originality, quality and significant results, i.e., appropriateness of methods chosen for answering the research questions, respect of the subjects-sample of the research, methods of data analysis and presentation, limitations of the research and coherence of the results, conclusions and recommendations.

IMPLEMENTATION

- How does the Department promote and support research?

The great number of local, national, and international projects where faculty are scientific administrators, partners, principal investigators, and/or members of consortiums (See Appendix of the Internal Evaluation Report) provides strong evidence for the research promotion and support. Moreover the inclusion of research course in the undergraduate programme indicates that students are expected to acquire research skills, the ability to read, assess and write academic articles, and develop awareness towards different research methods and instruments. In the graduate level all students must implement research studies for their MA theses, and all doctorate dissertations are research oriented. Reflecting on international standards for the doctorate studies, the deficiency that can be identified is that students do not attend sufficient number of advanced research courses.

- Quality and adequacy of research infrastructure and support.

The research infrastructure and support is not adequate because of the lack of any financial and equipment support, insufficient technical support in the laboratories and no employability of graduate and doctorate students in the position of research assistants. However the domains' laboratories include both undergraduate and post graduate students in their research projects (funded and/or unfunded) affording them training and hands-on experience.

- Scientific publications.

The Laboratories, Domains and Department organize seminars, symposiums and local, national, regional and international conferences where undergraduate and postgraduate students can attend and present their research in poster and paper presentations. Students are prompted to submit poster/paper abstracts for presentation in conferences at all levels. Students' posters presented at conferences are also displayed at the Department.

- Research projects.

The scientific publications of the academic staff in national and international refereed journals, in conference proceedings, technical reports, and collective scientific books meet the international standards for academic publications. As indicated in the Internal Evaluation Report (p.50), the financial crisis affected negatively the participation in International Conferences and the publications in Scientific proceedings, a fact that affects also the exchange of ideas and research practices with the international scientific community.

- Research collaborations.

Research collaborations are strongly promoted among faculty members in the specific domains and could be further encouraged between both domains and postgraduate students of different specializations and fields of study.

RESULTS

- How successfully were the Department's research objectives implemented?

All the above indicate that the Department's research objectives have been successfully implemented. Moreover, many postgraduate and postdoctoral students have been awarded important distinctions.

- Scientific publications.

All the above indicate that the members of academic staff have a strong research profile in terms of national and international publications (see C.V.s)

- Research projects and collaborations.

In addition to an array of on-going research projects by faculty and students, members of academic staff collaborate with faculty in other departments of the University of Patras, with faculty of other universities in Greece and abroad. Examples of research Centres which have been recognized at national, European, and international level include the Center of Citizenship Education, Centre of Multiculturalism and Greek as a Second Language, Centre of Education of Children with Special Needs and the Unit for the Teaching of the Deaf, Centre of Counseling, Centre of Diagnosis of Dyslexia,

Centre of History of Education Museum, Centre of Philosophy and Religion in Education, Centre of the Arts in Education.

- Efficacy of research work. Applied results. Patents, etc.

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- Is the Department's research acknowledged and visible outside the Department? Rewards and awards.

The Unit of the 'Education for the Deaf' has an international reputation and it has been internationally recognized and awarded. In 2011 the scientific and social work of the Director of the Unit was prized by the American Biographical Institute for Dedication and Excellence. Also, as already mentioned, members of the academic staff publish their work in scientific journals with high impact factors, and their work is repeatedly cited by members of the national and international community (as evidenced by the *Social Science Citation Index* and the like).

IMPROVEMENT

- Improvements in research proposed by the Department, if necessary.

The Department has been considering and discussing restructuring away from its present division into separate domains. This is recommended because such a policy could further encourage the collaboration among academic staff who work in different scientific fields and promote integrated approaches in research, projects, and postgraduate studies.

It is worth noting that national research funding must be increased, and the centrally administered European research budget must be distributed to the Universities for the promotion of research. It is important to note that the Research Office of the University of Patras should offer regular seminars on how to obtain European funding as soon as calls are announced.

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).

There are 15 committees in the department which support the services provided to students and members of staff. For example, the financial committee, Erasmus committee, student affairs, curriculum committee,

committee for the induction of people with special needs, library committee. The committees also cover needs that should be covered by central services.

- Does the Department have a policy to simplify administrative procedures? Are most procedures processed electronically?

Recently, the department has moved to the use of electronic systems for students' course registration, requesting certifications. The library has a meaningful vision for bringing the department further into the 21st century. However, the lack of resources is depressing the implementation. Nevertheless, doctoral students could be employed to work in the Department library for a few hours per week so that the library opening hours are extended.

- Does the Department have a policy to increase student presence on Campus?

The department has produced documentation about the services available to students and staff, which encourages them to make use of all the available facilities and services such as student counselling, the sports centre, library, ICT suite and other labs, cultural activities

IMPLEMENTATION

- Organization and infrastructure of the Department's administration (e.g., secretariat of the Department).

The secretariat office of the department functions in an atmosphere of uncertainty because of their proposed redeployment and redundancy. There is a real concern in the department as to whether or not the administrative services will continue to operate. Despite that, the department runs effectively though this precarious situation is very likely to affect the running 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 should be supported from the Universities' central services, which should be expanded to include free access to ICT suites which will be loaded with software packages such as Nvivo, Atlas and so on and a place for the doctoral students to meet.

RESULTS

- Are administrative and other services adequate and functional?

According to all that has been discussed above it is obvious that administrative and other services do not function effectively for reasons beyond the control of the Department.

- How does the Department view the particular results?

They view the results with grave concern but nevertheless are performing a Herculean feat in their resourcefulness and attitude.

IMPROVEMENTS

- Has the Department identified ways and methods to improve the services provided?

The department has recognised the importance of the contribution of technical and scientific personnel in the effective running of the laboratories and other services provided. Therefore, we would like to recommend the continuation of support of such personnel. Furthermore, the department believes that the administration of the European funded programmes (e.g., Erasmus) should be supported by the University's central administrative services in order to ease the administrative load of the department. We also believe this is very important.

- Initiatives undertaken in this direction.

The Department of Education Standing Committee in which the Head of the Department participates meets regularly and discusses and plans for ways in which the above issues can be improved. However, the lack of financial resources makes the implementation of their plans very difficult.

Collaboration with social, cultural and production organizations

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

The Department embraces collaboration as a way of thinking and being not just limited to isolated activities. It has developed a very rich network of collaboration with external social, cultural and production organisations such as the Greek Red Cross, the Institute of Migrants' Induction, the movement for the protection of refugees in Patras, Municipality of Patras (please see also pages. 55-57 in the internal report). Many tutors invite representatives of these organisations to present their work to the students during teaching.

These collaborations have been evaluated by the students as being of very high quality and have deepened the quality and sustainability of learning. The quality and quantity of the collaborations have resulted to new ideas, products, and action plans.

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.

The department is in a transition mode at present and they have given considerable attention to the short, medium and long term changes as well as to plans for improvement. However, many problems derive from the current economic crisis. Because of the large number of students many tutors are forced to offer their subject twice even though this does not result in reduction of their workload. This has particular implications for the supervision of doctorate students since this time is not recognised in the tutors' workload. The establishment of OMEA and other department committees helps to identify inhibiting factors and to study ways to overcome them (e.g., deficiencies in teaching, accommodation, resources). The department currently reconsiders the balance between the theoretical and practical side of the courses offered.

- Short-, medium- and long-term goals.
- Plan and actions for improvement by the Department/Academic Unit
- Long-term actions proposed by the Department.

The Department has clear short, medium and long-term goals. The short-term goals include the restructuring of the programme of studies, the introduction of the ECT system, the restructuring of the postgraduate studies and improvement of the system of electronic communication with students. The department needs to consider carefully which specialisms they would like to lose during the process of the restructuring of the curriculum since these are unlikely to be replaced with the appointment of new members of academic staff. Medium term goals include increasing the number of

research publications in high impact journals and the number of citations of their work, all of which indicates the Department's interest in further promoting a research active environment. Long term plans include the improvement of and increase in the number of postgraduate programmes and services.

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

Evaluation as a process of improvement is an integral part of the Department's culture and action planning for improvement and represents a 'best practice' in this area. The department is committed to a progressive vision about the development of teachers as educators, which includes the development of a constructive discourse about the professional and scientific academic identity of teachers. Good practices include: a) the setting up of a number of committees for dealing with all the aspects that affect the running of the department and the provision of good quality services to students; b) the processes in place for internal evaluation; c) the links developed between the department and the local and wider community; d) the establishment of research centres and labs because they promote a research active culture; e) the accessibility of students to academic and non-academic staff; f) the opportunities offered to students to participate at conferences and exchange programmes; g) the well organised programme of studies for school experience and the preparation of reflective student teaching plans; h) the commitment of the support staff (e.g., school mentors, seconded teachers, technical and scientific personal) who still work in the department in a voluntary basis; i) the limited use of e-class

In terms of weaknesses we noticed the following: a) need for an overall well defined set of goals and objectives for the whole programme of studies similar to the ones that exist for each of the four domains b) accommodation: including the lack of space for the teaching of the arts, for the expansion of the labs and for study rooms in the library and the lack of space for social and cultural activities; c) the restricted (Department) library opening times and

the limited borrowing rights; d) lack of funding for postgraduate studies (including scholarships) and for the employment of doctorate students; e) the very centralised and bureaucratic structure of the Greek higher education system especially the central services of the Ministry of Education concerning the external funding for European programmes; f) no provision at University level for the maintenance of the labs in the department; g) no central university-wide services for student with special needs, although the department provides a lot of counselling and has much expertise in that area; h) the lack of compulsory attendance, which encourages students to opt for courses that are exam-only assessed.

Recommendations. To consider: a) the issues deriving from the division of separate domains, b) the revision of the curriculum and the reduction of the number of courses and the enhancement of courses which are compulsory in primary school c) the use of ICT during teaching and the expansion of e-class d) the introduction of a framework which defines the rights, responsibilities and obligations of postgraduate and doctorate students; e) the improvement of the research training provision at postgraduate and doctorate level f) the provision of seminars about how to obtain European funding; g) the establishment of a centre of teaching and learning excellence for the continuing professional development h) work on setting up an alumni association

- the Department's readiness and capability to change/improve

The department has a very positive attitude towards change and improvement.

- the Department's quality assurance.

The department has established the unit of quality assurance (OMEA), which provides much useful information concerning curriculum, teaching, research and student-tutors interaction.

The Members of the Committee (Signatures are on file at the HQA office)