



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ

HELLENIC REPUBLIC

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HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE

ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΑΝΩΤΑΤΗ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗ

AND ACCREDITATION AGENCY

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

The Department of
Home Economics and Ecology

Harokopion University

June 26, 2014



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



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External Evaluation Committee

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

1. Roussos Sevastianos, Professor Aix Marseille University– Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD), France / **Coordinator**
2. Eliophotou Menon Maria, Associate Professor, Department of Education, University of Cyprus, Cyprus
3. Koutselini Mary, Professor, Department of Education, University of Cyprus, Cyprus
4. Violaris Ioannis, Former Dean and Associate Professor of Economics of the School of Economic Sciences and Administration, Frederick University, Cyprus, Consultant, M.G.Violaris & Sons Ltd

GLOSSARY / ABBREVIATIONS

Committee and/or EEC: External Evaluation Committee

Department: Department of Home Economics and Ecology

DLP: Digital Light Processors

ECTS: European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

EU: European Union

HQA: Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency

HUA: Harokopion University Athens

ICT: Information and Communications Technology.

IEC: Internal Evaluation Committee

IER: Internal Evaluation Report

OMEA: Internal Evaluation Team (IET).

***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

Monday, June 23rd, 2014

After an overview and orientation meeting at the HQA’s Headquarters in Athens, the EEC visited the Rector of the HUA, Prof. D. Anagnostopoulos, at the HUA’s premises.

Present at the meeting were also the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs and Personnel, Prof. E. Georgitsoyianni, the Department’s Chair, Prof. E. Theodoropoulou and the Secretary of the Institute, Dr. A. Haliapa.

The Committee had a thorough and useful discussion with them and exchanged views on the structure of the university system in Greece and recent changes pertaining to the higher educational system and their impact on the HUA and specifically the Department.

The EEC also had the opportunity to explain to the HUA Officials that their visit is meant to identify possible areas that might need improvement as well as to suggest ways of enhancing the contribution of the Department to society.

The Committee subsequently met with the Chair of the Department and the members of the IEC Drs. K. Koutroumba and K. Ambeliotis, as well as the students’ representative M. Zarkadoula and immediately after the EEC met with the Department’s faculty members.

The Department’s Chair presented to the EEC the Department’s under-graduate and post-graduate programmes of study as well as its main activities and accomplishments.

The EEC had the opportunity during the above mentioned meetings to clarify several issues related to the programmes of study, the research activity taking place, the conferences, seminars and other academic events organised, as well as the means through which the Department aims to assist the community and the country in areas related to its academic programmes.

The following documents were either electronically or by hand delivered to the EEC:

The available Internal Evaluation Report (IER);

The Student Counselling Centre’s evaluation report;

The prospectuses both for the under-graduate as well as for the post-graduate programmes of study;

A purpose-prepared booklet related to the Centre of Family Study;

A purpose-prepared booklet on Library services;

A document explaining the possibility of the post-graduate students to register with the Economic Chamber of Greece;

The internal quality assurance regulation of the HUA;

A document summarising the research activities of the Department's faculty members;

A document describing the practicum students follow in their last two semesters of studies;

Faculty curriculum vitae;

Presentation material with information on the Department and its laboratories.

Tuesday, June 24th, 2014

The EEC continued its visit at the HUA with meetings with the faculty members

(5 Professors, 4 Associate Professors, 6 Assistant Professors and 1 Lecturer), 2 Special teaching staff members and 2 Special assisting staff members.

The EEC also met with 6 under-graduate students, 8 post-graduate students, 1 Doctoral and 1 Post-doctoral student.

These meetings proved to be very useful as they gave the opportunity to the Committee members to discuss with the faculty members their first-hand impressions on how well the University and specifically the Department under evaluation operates and the opportunities offered to them for attending seminars, conferences and participating in research groups, as well as in conducting their own research work.

The students' feedback was also extremely important and useful, as it indicated that the Department is cultivating a very positive culture that relates the programmes of study to the industry's and society's needs.

The EEC convened at the end of the day to summarise the information gathered and plan their next steps.

Wednesday, June 25th, 2014

The EEC met with 6 alumni members and Ms C. Varda who is both a post-graduate student and responsible for the Liaison Office.

Again this meeting was useful as it brought to the surface the problems graduates face with their employment, especially because graduates of other Departments, such as Geography, Physical Education and Economics, claim appointment as Home Economics' Gymnasium Teachers.

The EEC also toured the main physical facilities of the Department: the Library, the Networks and Communication Centre, the Biology, Chemistry and Eco-technology laboratories, several typical classrooms, the Amphitheatre, the Computer Laboratory and the Students' Counselling Centre.

The visit ended with a private meeting of the EEC with the Department's Chair and the

University's Rector, during which the overall positive impressions were conveyed and the main weaknesses, set out in the following Sections, were mentioned.

II. The Internal Evaluation Procedure

The IER, according to the EEC's impression, did not adequately address the various questions set out in the HQA's guidelines. Yet, to a great extent the information contained in the documents mentioned above, do contain the data and evidence necessary for evaluating the state of affairs of the Department.

The meetings and discussions with the University's Officials, faculty members, current and past students, supplemented and elaborated on all aspects that merited additional attention and discussion.

In particular, the EEC highly appreciated the presentation of additional material as additional documents presented key information in graphical and tabular form. Thus, the Committee has the impression that the primary objectives of the internal evaluation procedure have been met.

A. Curriculum

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

APPROACH

The Department of Home Economics and Ecology has a multidisciplinary approach, which provides it with a positive uniqueness, in line with its goals and objectives. It is organised into two directions, the Pedagogical Home Economics and Ecology, and the Human Ecology. The staff is organised into three groups of academic activities (called “laboratories”) based on the different fields of their academic expertise. Each laboratory is responsible for the supervision of the courses they offer, the quality of teaching, and the plans for development.

The Department is aware of the necessity to revise the Curriculum and the different programmes of study and has a working committee set up for this purpose.

Recommendations: We have some concerns about the risk of the “autonomy” of each laboratory, and the departmentalisation of the decisions which in the future may harm the unity of the Department. We think that it would be better to take decisions in a more integrated way so that the development of the Department becomes balanced and it is more able to serve all the different specialities effectively. With this in mind, we find that the courses of Environmental Studies and Ecology, and Fundamental Skills on Qualitative and Quantitative Research should be further enhanced.

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

The Department is aware of its uniqueness and multidisciplinary approach. The working committee for the Department’s Strategic Planning must discuss the goals and objectives of each “laboratory” in the context of the Department’s mission so as to develop a vision that goes beyond the development of opportunities of students’ employability, which at the moment is the main concern of the staff. This goes beyond the development of teachers capable only of teaching what is required in the school or of professionals who must be antagonistic towards the graduates of other universities. The Department’s vision, which was presented at the meeting with the staff and the Head of the Department, is to develop educated persons and professionals who can approach and analyse holistically and from different points of view the contemporary economic, political, ecological, psychological and educational issues in contemporary society, a perspective that is very progressive and in line with the demands of our times.

Recommendations: It would be better if this philosophy as well as the aims and the objectives of the Department were articulated in writing. Such an approach would give a much more cohesive perspective and help the Department to define a strategic plan for achieving its aims.

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

The Department often collaborates with external experts and other stakeholders and discusses the strategic planning at the meetings of the laboratories and of the Council of the

Department. The main concern at the moment is the employability of the HUA graduates.

- **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, and that teachers, students, as well as administrators in school settings, were consulted. The Department needs to re-examine, however, the balance between both the courses of different laboratories and between laboratories. In its present structure, the programme of studies offers core courses and electives awarded different ECTS, a situation that creates problems in the Erasmus Students' Exchange programme because of the weak correspondence between the HUA's ECTS system and the system of other universities in the EU. Moreover, the different ECTS given in different courses differentiate the status of the courses, a situation that may negatively affect the students' expected outcomes.

Recommendations: It would be better to upgrade the status of the electives and accordingly reduce the number of electives and the number of courses required to complete the programme of studies. This situation perhaps needs to be reconsidered in the light of the need to provide a better balance between compulsory and elective courses.

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

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

Post-graduate Programme

The Department offers two self-funded post-graduate programmes: Sustainable Development, and Education and Culture. Both students and staff are very satisfied with the quality of the programmes, and the opportunities for external collaborations, study visits, participation in international activities and conferences. However, opportunities for post-graduate students to work in different laboratories and acquire experiences in teaching and research are very limited.

Recommendations: Additional students' funding, therefore, must be provided for the employment of post-graduate students in teaching and assistance in the laboratories. In relation to the Doctorate programme, the minimum and maximum length of studies has been set between 3-5 years. It is better for the maximum length for part-time students to be extended to 8 years.

The Department needs to ensure that all post-graduate students have the necessary research competencies; especially for students coming from other universities, one or more courses in Research according to the orientation of their studies should be compulsory.

IMPLEMENTATION

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

The IER provides information about the implementation of the Curriculum, based on the Students' Electronic Questionnaire, which is anonymously completed at the end of each semester, and analysed by OMEA, in the following areas: a) attendance of courses; b) assessment and evaluation; c) teaching; this indicates that the curriculum is effectively implemented to a great degree. Approximately 85% of under-graduate students regularly attend the lessons. However, they declare that they do not need considerable time for their

assignments and requirements of the courses (p. 12 of the IER 2012-2013), a matter that must be discussed in the Department in order to plan requirements that correspond to the ECTS load of students' work. Students appear satisfied with the assessment and evaluation system. The Committee's separate discussion with the staff and students' representatives showed that the Curriculum is effectively implemented and that there is very good communication between students and instructors. Post-graduate students are especially satisfied with their studies, and find the course effective and useful. It is worth noting that there is an agreement between academic staff and students about the effective implementation of the curriculum and especially about the personal, caring, and effective interaction between students and staff in all courses. The Committee is concerned that this qualitative and personal communication may change due to the government's policy to increase student numbers and the danger that the HUA will work with inadequate provision.

- **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 of study.

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

The Department's philosophy, aims and objectives need to be articulated in writing.

- **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 seems appropriate.

Recommendations: The School and Work Experience Programme could be improved by offering students the opportunity to teach at least for 15 days in the final semester of their studies (2 weeks actual teaching), and to work for 15 days in public and private work places as reflected in the "best practices" of many countries. The School and Work experience could be extended to observations of lessons and every day work activities during the 7th semester.

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

The Department has appropriate qualified staff, but it needs support in the implementation of the Curriculum and the running of the very important activities of the laboratories. It would be good for post-graduate students to contribute to teaching.

Recommendations: An example of good practice is the mentoring of third and fourth year students and/or of post-graduate students with difficulties in their courses so that they can support first and second year students. Similarly, doctoral students could be asked to deliver lectures in under-graduate and post-graduate 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 the enrolled students graduating each year, the low level of unemployment among graduates and the dedication of both students and the overall staff to the Department's mission. Student satisfaction was also expressed during the interviews with the students. These results also reflect the good collaboration and excellent communication between students and members of the 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 IER, 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?**

Recommendations: The restructuring of the courses' curricula and the awareness of the need to balance the courses so that all the directions be served are within the Departments' concerns. The correspondence of students' workload to ECTS will give the chance to academic staff to reconsider the requirements of their courses and their assessment system.

The Committee's recommendation is that the Department should plan programmes that can be offered to the community and external participants, which will potentially serve to make the Department more acknowledged for its expertise and services: Psychology courses (i.e., Controlling Anxiety in the Workplace; Counselling for Self and Business Improvement), Pedagogical courses (i.e. the Pedagogical Certificate, which has been included in the Governments' laws for higher education as a prerequisite for teaching; Adult Education in the Workplace; Long Life Learning and Development), Ecological, Pedagogical, Financial, and Environmental courses (i.e. Ecology in Everyday Life; Consumers' Education; Long Life Learning). These "External Programmes" can be self-funded, but in order to be supported by the University and the community it is recommended for the budget to be organised in such a way that 1/3 of the fees are distributed to the University, 1/3 to the Department (in order to cover the expenses of the course), while the remaining 1/3 is assigned to instructors.

B. Teaching

APPROACH:

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

Discussions with both the academic staff and students indicated that the Department needs to develop a basic building block upon which the Department's pedagogical policy can rest with respect to each course's methodology and differentiated needs.

Recommendations: The contemporary pedagogical trends for adult education must be taken into account and opportunities for students' reflection on selected videos, problem and scenario solving, simulations, and discussions on representations of the workplace could support interaction and learning. Moreover, ICT could be actively embedded in the course teaching.

Please comment on :

- **Teaching methods used**

A range of teaching methods is used which includes lectures, workshops, tutorials, fieldwork, study visits, and work in the labs. The Department uses also an e-class platform which allows students to access materials and presentations.

Recommendations: The Committee's opinion is that the e-class environment needs to be improved in order to allow students' engagement in online discussions and interaction, problem solving and discussion of assignments. The use of an interactive e-class will become a necessity in the new environment of gradually increasing student numbers.

- **Teaching staff/ student ratio**

The teaching staff /student ratio at the moment is 1/ 21.6, an ideal ratio in the case where all students attend classes. In the elective courses, student attendance is low, a fact that affects performance and student learning. This is another reason for which the Department must rethink the status and the student workload and requirements for the elective courses. From another point of view, the increasing number of students, according to a recent Governmental decision, will make both the attendance in the compulsory courses and the work in the labs particularly problematic.

- **Teacher/student collaboration**

The questionnaires and interviews clearly indicate that the students are very satisfied with the quality of their relationship and the collaboration with their tutors. During the interviews we recognised that students are very pleased with this collaboration and that teachers are very proud of their personal contact with, and support to, students.

- **Adequacy of means and resources**

There is a medium degree of adequacy of means and resources because of the lack of labs and material properly designed for the Department's needs. The fact that the Department shares the labs with other Departments limits its capability to serve the needs of its own students and to thus fulfil its objectives. However, staff enthusiasm and

the commitment towards human resources create a constructive and inspiring environment. Some teachers offer the same subject twice even though this means an increase in their teaching workload. Given this situation, it is worth mentioning that the academic staff achieves more than one could expect.

- **Use of information technologies**

Most teaching rooms have access to a computer and a DLP. 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 that there is an adequate use of technologies during the teaching of all courses.

- **Examination system**

The examination system consists of written exams, research projects, and dissertations.

Recommendations: The Department should rethink and discuss the compulsory dissertation of under-graduate students in the 7th and 8th semester of their studies, as an overall policy for all courses.

IMPLEMENTATION

The quality of teaching in general is satisfactory and it compares favourably to international standards.

Recommendations: The Department has the pedagogical capability for developing and implementing the Programme for the Certificate of Pedagogical Adequacy of the graduates of other Departments. It is also recommended that the Department organises conferences for the improvement of teaching and learning: i.e., Adult Education; Advanced Methods of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.

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 teachers are involved in research projects, the findings of which they then use in their teaching. Students always undertake research dissertations at under-graduate and post-graduate levels.

- **Mobility of academic staff and students**

Academic staff, as well as students, take advantage of opportunities for mobility through the ERASMUS programme. The Department would like to increase the level of mobility but the number of slots/stipends available is strictly limited. Post-graduate students have the opportunity to attend lessons of academics from abroad who are invited at the HUA, and they also participate in local and international conferences.

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

OMEA provides evaluation by the students regarding teaching, course content and study

material/resources through the means of questionnaires.

RESULTS

- **Efficacy of teaching**

Teaching is efficient as indicated in the number of graduates per year, and the average final grade for students, which is between 7, 5 and 9.

- **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 do not complete their studies in four years is less than 0.5%.

- **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 personal communication with students.

IMPROVEMENT

- **Does the Department propose methods and ways for improvement?**

The Department discusses methods and ways for improvement. These include improvements in the e-class, the course delivery, and the evaluation system.

Recommendations: Although some teachers seem reluctant to accept that teaching is a continuous and lifelong improvement practice, it is the responsibility of the Department to organise conferences and workshops on effective interactive teaching. The Department should proceed to the development and implementation of the Programme for the Certificate of Pedagogical Adequacy of the graduates of other Departments.

- **What initiatives does it take in this direction?**

The work in the laboratories and the internal discussions of the evaluation results are considered good initiatives for the improvement of teaching. Despite this, the Committee's recommendation is that the issue of teaching improvement must become part of the core discussions in the Council of the Department. The Centre of Counselling, which we had the opportunity to visit, is one of the Department's suitable environments for the teaching of particular subjects. As an overall evaluation, the Committee notes that the academic staff has a very positive attitude towards evaluation and improvement and that teachers achieve more than one could expect mainly because of their commitment and personal work.

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 is pursuing research in the general area of home economics and ecology. In particular, the Department is benefiting from access to the international and national networks for research as well as the personal networking of the academic faculty.

There is an uneven allocation in numbers regarding the publications in scientific journals per academic faculty member of the Department and a minimal interaction among the different professionals involving research activities. However, the faculty has a significant number of book publications and there are a lot of presentations in conferences and conferences proceedings. It is commendable that the majority of faculty members are involved in research projects. A well qualified member of technical staff helps run the different laboratories for practical teaching and exercises but has no active involvement in the different projects and publications.

The internal policy serves as code of practice to conduct research, but not as policy on topics and mainstream direction of research activities. Consequently, the Department is lacking research synergies.

The Department presently has 16 faculty members. They have organised their research expertise in the following three sectors: (i) Human Ecology and Rural Economics (ii) Management and Education and (iii) Economic and Social Analysis of the Family and the Consumer.

- **Has the Department set internal standards for assessing research?**

The Department has set some internal evaluation procedures through the Research Committee which is working on the basis of the internal research policy (see Internal Annual Reports for the periods 2011-2012 & 2012-13) for assessing all aspects of research activity including an external review undertaken at their own initiative.

The laboratory in Ecology still needs additional equipment and moreover additional technical staff is needed to support both the researchers and the different projects.

An internal committee (OMEA) was established for the evaluation of the scientific work and the presentation of the most important results. This committee was very responsive to all EEC requests for additional information or arrangements. The internal evaluation process used commonly-accepted international standards for the assessment of scientific work, such as the number of publications (peer review journals and chapters in books) and citations, the impact factor of journals in which the results have been published, the h-index (Science/Scopus), the number of invited talks at conferences, and the recognition of faculty members with domestic/national or international awards.

Recommendations:

1. Increase the number of the support staff for implementing research (such as

technical staff, contracted project-based post-docs). Increase their recognition by acknowledgement in publications.

2. Also increase the number of young and high calibre researchers in the application of theory and practice in households; for example, moulds and food contamination, mycotoxin intoxications, or solid domestic waste recycling.
3. Design a research strategy so as to become a research hub of excellence in Home Economics and Ecology
4. Create and enforce research policy guidelines at the Department
5. We suggest that a specialised laboratory is created for the practical exercise of students in areas specifically related to the Department's research domains. For instance, one could be the Eco-technological pilot laboratory and the other could be the Student Counselling Center adapted for the specific needs of home economics and ecology.

IMPLEMENTATION

• **How does the Department promote and support research?**

The Department has initiated multiple actions to promote research:

- a) several research collaborations have been set up with other local, national and European Universities or Associations, many of them with distinguished researchers;
- b) faculty members participate in several nationally and internationally funded programmes;
- c) several faculty members have initiated collaborations with the society and the industry;
- d) several faculty members arrange for under-graduate student exchanges and collaborations with Greek institutions (schools, museums, municipalities, orphanages), as well ERASMUS collaborations with other European research centres;
- e) several faculty members support each other's research by sharing laboratory space and equipment when critical needs appear.

Number of PhD students:

For the academic period (2013-2014), the Department serves 49 PhD students with an average duration of studies of 5.3 years.

• **Quality and adequacy of research infrastructure and support**

The research infrastructure of the Department is good with areas for improvement in relation to adequate instrumentation in many cases. It is worth noting that equipment maintenance and technical support is a concern. Furthermore, the limited availability of State support and funds for fellowships for post-graduate students is noted.

The EEC members fully understand this, and urge the State and/or the University to contribute towards this need.

• **Scientific publications**

In the past five years (2010-2014), the Department team presented more than 341

publications, oral presentations and conference proceedings and posters but less than 50 articles are in international journals and are with relevant high impact factor. This is satisfactory for the Department of Home Economics and Ecology of Harokopion University, which is primarily a teaching institution rather than a research institution. In some cases the publications are very impressive.

- **Research projects**

In the past five years (2010-2014), the Department has participated in 23 research projects with a total of 414641 €, essentially with domestic and no international funding, which were not adequately competitive. A large number of small projects were conducted at an average of 18027 €.

- **Research collaborations**

The Department has established numerous research collaborations with domestic and international academic and research institutions, as well as with health service partners and local authorities. More than 23 external collaborators participated in the Department's research programmes. In addition, 24 under-graduate and 5 post-graduate students were involved in the research projects.

Recommendations:

1. High quality poster and conference papers need to be written as scientific articles and published in journals.
2. Original publications with team collaboration but with different research areas should be published in a common article by the Department at least once a year.
3. A very large international project based on collaboration among several members of the teaching staff on the topic of domestic ecological and economically sustainable development, might be positive.
4. The Committee views positively the suggestion made during the interviews, according to which the Department should become member of the International Organisation of Home Economics.

RESULTS

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

See the replies above.

The EEC considers several members of this group of researchers as highly productive and on the way to national and international excellence.

IMPROVEMENT

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

Grant applications should be submitted in collaboration with complementary disciplines within the Department in order to have more success in the approval and funding of various proposals. Subsequently, the number of publications will be increased in more current subjects and areas of interest.

D. All Other Services

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

Secretarial support

The EEC had the opportunity to meet with the secretarial staff supporting the Rector's and Vice Rectors' offices, the Department's Chair, the Students' Support Unit, the Liaison and Erasmus Office and the Administrative Personnel (secretarial and general administrative service personnel). It seems that with the current student intake, the number of secretarial staff is adequate. Nevertheless, as the number of students is expected to double, the secretarial staff might not be able to efficiently handle the additional load, unless, as suggested by the EEC, more use is made of electronic registration and grade-recording software systems. In fact, such tools need to be utilised in all Departmental and University documents.

Computer Laboratory

The computer laboratory, though situated in a building outside the main campus, is modern, well-equipped and serves well the students' needs.

Computer Network Unit

This serves the needs of the HUA, is well-staffed and equipped, offering teleconferencing and emailing facilities and supporting technical problems faced by staff, faculty and students, as well as the e-class platform, which is, nevertheless, not widely and fully utilised by the faculty. A reason for this may be the fact that the availability of some services such as e-ticketing may not be known to faculty members (as suggested in interviews with staff).

The Biology, Chemistry and Eco-technology laboratories

Of the above, the former two are shared with the HUA's other Departments, yet seem to serve well the needs of the students. Nevertheless, some of the equipment needs replacement or repair. Notwithstanding the usual bureaucratic impediments as well as the side effects of the current economic crisis, the EEC do hope that these will soon be addressed. It is also mentioned that as the student intake grows, the current laboratories will not be adequate.

The latter lab, the Eco-technology one, wholly belongs to the Department; it is well organised, yet at the time of the visit its equipment was not in place, as it was ordered but not yet delivered.

Library

The University library, which serves the needs of all departments, is modern, adequately staffed with trained librarians, with computerised book-retrieving facilities, and is open even during weekends, whenever there is a need.

As usual, some of the subscriptions to journals might at certain times expire, and cause a time lag until they are renewed. We do hope this problem will be addressed by the Ministry's appropriate Departments.

Student Counselling Centre

The EEC was particularly and positively impressed by the work done at this Centre, which even though staffed by only two psychologists, does an excellent job and seems to actively and pre-actively handle the needs of the student community and additionally offer its services to the community.

Other facilities and services

The classrooms, the auditorium, the surrounding area/garden of the HUA are well- equipped and student friendly and provide for the needs of students with special needs as well.

The HUA has also maintained a very positive relationship with its graduates whom it is supporting in their employment needs as well as providing them with post-graduation seminars and life-long learning opportunities.

What seems to be not adequate is the technical support which depends on the Athens Technical Service Unit, which is bureaucratic and slow.

Students are also offered lunch at the Panteion University catering facilities, as until now, the HUA's own catering facility has not begun its operation: A tender has not been able to attract a provider, mainly because of the small number of students. This is expected to change as the number of students grows.

Conclusions

- Overall, the Committee was satisfied with the available services; it is nevertheless aware of the fact that as the intake of students grows, the facilities available might turn not to be adequate. It must be noted, that the Harokopion Charter of Establishment sets limitations on the expansion that can be made.
- As mentioned above, there is room for improvement in the procedures followed and in enhancing the use of electronic processes, for instance, in the use of the e-class platform.
- Students' presence on the campus is a problem that mainly stems from the law, which allows students not to attend classes and simply sit for their final examinations. It is the responsibility of the faculty members, through course work and other activities, to attract more students to their classes.

Collaboration with social, cultural and production organisations

The Department is actively seeking and achieving collaboration with social, cultural and other organisations, organising events, conferences and seminars, both for its own academic community, as well as for other interested parties. Such events seem to be taking place several times during each academic year.

Invited lecturers also enrich the delivery of specific material. Students also visit cultural sites in the context of their courses.

Groups of lyceum teachers, as well as other target groups, are given the opportunity of attending educational one-day or multi-day seminars. As previously mentioned, the Committee recommends that the Department should plan programmes to be offered to community and external participants, which will enhance the reputation of the Department as an expert provider of services.

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

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

Please, comment on the Department's:

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

As regards strategic planning, there does not appear to be a systematic process of formulating strategic plans based on long-term goals. However, the Department is aware of the need to introduce changes in its objectives, programme and orientation and has begun a process of reviewing the existing situation in order to introduce changes and improvements. After reviewing the relevant information, the Committee considers the potential inhibiting factors to include the following:

At State level

1. Limited educational funding and cut-backs, which result in infrastructure limitations and constraints in all areas. This means that it is sometimes impossible to replace equipment. Given the importance of laboratories for the Department, this is a serious inhibiting factor which is expected to become more important as the number of students increases.
2. The fact that decision making is centralised means that the Committee as well as other Departments at the HUA are not in a position to make important decisions regarding their programmes and students. For instance, the number of incoming students is decided at the central level (Ministry), without any consideration of the views of university officials and faculty members.
3. The centralisation mentioned above is linked to high levels of bureaucracy, which

result in delays in addressing problems (e.g. in responding to requests regarding the repair of equipment). Departmental staff members mentioned that the repair of equipment could take months due to bureaucracy.

At Institutional level

1. Poor funding with an impact on the quality of services offered. For the time being, the premises are well-maintained but the expected increase in the number of students could put additional pressure on the institution. Moreover, administrative services are understaffed and under pressure to cope with growing demands of stakeholders.
2. There is a need for more systematic evaluation of services and programmes. Attempts to evaluate services and programmes are not made on a systematic basis (with the exception of course evaluation questionnaires, which suffer from a low response rate).
3. There appear to be limited incentives for research among academic staff members.

At Departmental level

1. Lack of a structured Strategic Plan, which deals with long, medium and short-term goals. Both staff members and students referred to a common vision for the Department but were not always in a position to articulate this vision.
2. As regards research, some faculty members do not appear to have strong international collaborations and are unable to disseminate their work on an international level.
3. The programme of studies is mainly focused on teacher preparation and to a considerable extent is not informed by the current situation in the country (unemployment, societal needs etc.). At the same time, there is limited support to the Department for the development of new programmes that can enhance its links with the community and the workforce.
4. In addition, there appear to be important legal issues affecting the employability of the Department's graduates. These refer mainly to subjects taught at the secondary school level and the fact that graduates of other disciplines (e.g. physical education) are in competition with the Department's graduates. If such issues remain unresolved, they could have a significant negative effect on the employability of graduates.
5. Problems mentioned at the State and Institutional level apply to the Departmental level as well.

The Department is generally aware of the above inhibiting factors and where possible, is taking actions to overcome them. For instance, there is an attempt to revise the existing programme of studies in agreement with societal trends and needs. At the same time, the Department in collaboration with the active Alumni Association is taking measures in order to protect the position of Departmental graduates in the labour market.

At this point in time, the Department has not planned long-term actions. The focus is on short and medium term goals, which mainly concern the revision of the programme of studies. The formulation of long-term goals is expected to take place in the framework of a strategic plan currently under consideration. However, there is a difficulty of formulating long-term objectives in the current volatile economic situation in the country, which needs to be acknowledged.

Proposals on ways to overcome the above inhibiting factors are outlined in the final chapter of this report, concluding with recommendations of the Committee.

F. Final Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC

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

Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC on:

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

Overall, the Department fulfils its educational goals and for the time being, is in a position to meet the challenges linked to low funding and cut-backs. The staff and students are characterised by a positive attitude, very good team spirit, and desire to improve the Department and the organisation as a whole.

The following recommendations ought to be viewed within this very positive context, and include the following:

1. Both the University and the Department should develop a general strategic plan in order to meet the challenges presented by current and future trends. In this framework, a distinction should be made between short-term, medium-term and long-term goals. A clearer, more informed statement of mission and aims should be articulated. The strategic plan should include specific and measurable targets (deliverables), which can form the basis for the systematic evaluation of programmes and services offered by the HUA and the Department, in particular.
2. Moreover, the Committee recommends that an appropriate strategic plan takes into consideration the current severe cuts of academic budgets. In this context, the Department should consider the introduction of a student fee for doctoral and post-doctoral students in order to support its function and improve the quality of its services. The reasons for the introduction of fees and the risks of not introducing this measure should be clearly outlined. Students with very low family incomes could be exempted or funded through scholarships.
3. Certain changes in the under-graduate curriculum are necessary. As mentioned in the relevant chapter of this report, the Committee recommends that the changes are linked to the need to develop students as individuals as well as address their needs under the current economic and social conditions in the country. Moreover, given current constraints, certain under-graduate programme requirements should be re-examined (e.g. the compulsory thesis for under-graduate students). It is important to take into consideration student feedback and in particular, their request for a longer

period of practical experience (their suggestion is to extend it from two months to a whole semester). Students could also benefit from more extensive placement opportunities in the labour market. Finally, it is recommended that new students are given information and guidelines on their future studies in an orientation week before the beginning of their first semester of studies.

4. In addition, new programmes should be introduced in agreement with societal needs and expectations. This includes distance programmes as well as programmes in the English language. Additionally the e-class platform should be further used and developed into a tool that students can benefit from, e.g. become a source of notes, exercises, and most importantly be interactive.
5. There is a need to increase Department liaisons with society and/or the private sector. For instance, training and educational programmes could be developed in collaboration with major companies and local organisations. Any income derived from such programmes should be equally divided between the HUA, the Department and participating instructors/contributors.
6. The Committee believes that more emphasis should be placed on research that can significantly contribute to the international literature as well as upgrade the research status of the Department. International dissemination of research findings should continue to be encouraged. The Department website needs to be further developed with all the faculty CVs preferably in Europass form, research interests, and course descriptions. This may contribute to the establishment of international research collaborations.
7. Regarding administrative services, it is important to recognise the various problems associated with the understaffed administrative services, especially in the light of expected increases in student numbers. The HUA, in general, and the Department in particular, should consider this as a matter of priority and take actions that can help improve the situation.
8. The Department should take all actions needed in order to maintain the healthy organisational climate, which currently serves as the basis for the collaborative efforts and achievements of its staff. The Committee was impressed with the positive attitude and team spirit that appears to characterise the leadership of the Department and its faculty. It is worth mentioning that the students (both undergraduate and under-graduate) as well as the graduates we met with, were also enthusiastic and highly satisfied with the skills and knowledge acquired at the HUA and the Department in particular.
9. It must be emphasised that in addition to the general recommendations offered in this section, several specific recommendations are provided in the different sections of this report. These should be examined and taken into account in the attempt to improve the Department and the Institution as a whole.

The Members of the Committee

Name and Surname

Signature

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