



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
HELLENIC REPUBLIC



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Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης**
Hellenic Authority
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Accreditation Report **for the Undergraduate Study Programme of:**

Political Sciences

Institution: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Date: 4 December 2021

Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the
Undergraduate Study Programme of **Political Sciences** of the **Aristotle**
University of Thessaloniki for the purposes of granting accreditation

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PART A: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE REVIEW

I. The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

The Panel responsible for the Accreditation Review of the Undergraduate Study Programme of **Political Sciences** of the **Aristotle University of Thessaloniki** comprised the following four (4) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

- 1. Prof. Symeon Giannakos (Chair)**
Salve Regina University, Newport, RI, United States of America
- 2. Prof. Emeritus Joseph Joseph**
University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus
- 3. Prof. Apostolis Papakostas**
Södertörn University, Stockholm, Sweden
- 4. Assoc. Professor Petros Vamvakas**
Emmanuel College, Boston, MA, United States of America

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

In the unusual circumstances we find ourselves in, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the accreditation visit of the undergraduate programme of the Political Sciences Department of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki was conducted remotely. The visit went according to plan, communications were effective, and there were no logistical or technology hurdles to overcome. The meetings were engaging and constructive. The entire process was smooth and achieved its goal in an efficient and professional manner.

The purpose of this report is to provide the Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE) with the External Evaluation and Accreditation Panel's (EEAP) determination regarding the Department's progress towards accreditation since the external evaluation conducted in 2014. By extension, this report is also intended to provide the Department with suggestions towards continuous progress in the context of international standards and best practices in higher education.

HAHE provided the EEAP with the necessary material in preparation for the visit. The material included guidelines and templates, the 2014 external evaluation report and the Department's accreditation proposal along with supportive documentation. The Department was most helpful in providing in a timely fashion additional information such as power point presentations made during the visit. In this regard, the Department projected a collegial and cooperative atmosphere, which indicated its willingness to use the process towards continuous improvement.

The duration of the visit lasted two days, from November 30 to December 1, 2021. Prior to that, on November 29, the EEAP members met through ZOOM and charted out a plan of action towards undertaking and completing the accreditation process and report.

The visit begun in the evening of November 30 with a 15-minute meeting with the Vice Rector for Academic and Students Affairs and with the Chair of the Department. Following a short break, the EEAP met with the MODIP Coordinator, the Coordinator of the Department's Committee of Internal Evaluation, OMEA (Ομάδα Εσωτερικής Αξιολόγησης), along with faculty members of OMEA and staff members of MODIP. The meetings were cordial and constructive. The EEAP was briefed on the interactions and functions of both MODIP and OMEA and the data selection process.

Following a very brief break, the EEAP then teleconferenced with the department faculty. After the Department's presentation, issues addressed were the academic programme, curriculum development, plan of studies, teaching loads, syllabi, student attendance and progress, and the general academic function of the Department.

Subsequently, the EEAP teleconferenced with current undergraduate students. The discussion involved student satisfaction with teaching and advising, course offerings, and time required towards degree completion. The day closed with the EEAP having a private meeting to discuss general impressions and preliminary findings.

On December 1, the EEAP received an online tour of the University and its facilities, the Department's library and classrooms, and the research labs. It had a discussion with the librarian and each of the directors of the labs. At this time, the EEAP also met with the administrative staff of the Department.

Following the tour, the EEAP teleconferenced with a number of the Department's alumni and discussed their educational experiences and curricular issues. Finally, the EEAP teleconferenced with employers and social partners, and discussed their level of satisfaction with Department interns and their employees who are graduates of the Department. After that, the EEAP had a private debriefing meeting.

The second day came to a close with a teleconference with both MODIP and OMEA and with the EEAP presenting their preliminary findings. The visit ended in an amicable and professional manner.

III. Study Programme Profile

The Political Sciences Department of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki was established in 1999 and provided an opportunity for students from northern Greece to study political sciences close to home rather than either the Department of Political Science and Public Administration of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens or the Department of Political Science and History of the Panteion University, also in Athens. It should be noted that about the same time, the University of Crete also established a Political Science Department. In this regard, it is now one of four Political Sciences Departments in Greece.

The aim of the Department has been to develop for the students a balanced educational experience between theory and practice and provide them with the ability to analyze complex political and social phenomena and evaluate the process and consequences of decision making. Specifically, the Department "aims at producing graduates capable of describing and interpreting identities, relations, ideologies and policies, and of supporting decision-making processes in the public sphere. Above all else, it serves and encourages the exercise of critical thought in the spirit of academic freedom that ought to characterise such a democratic institution as a public university."

In order for students to earn their undergraduate degree, they must complete 240 European Credit Transfer System units (ECTS) or the equivalent of 39 required courses and about 12 electives, depending on the exact number of ECTS units per course. According to the Department's website, students who complete the 240 ECTS are equipped with:

- The necessary knowledge (theoretical, conceptual and analytical) allowing them to map and understand political phenomena: political institutions, processes and antagonisms, as they unfold at the local, national and international levels.
- The required tools and methods, originating from various (quantitative and qualitative) research traditions in political science and related disciplines, permitting them to

analyze relations between collective and individual subjects within the framework of organized society.

- The intellectual/critical skills allowing them to describe and interpret identities, relationships, ideologies and policies, and to support decision-making processes in a democratic public sphere.
- The practical skills necessary for the successful collection and evaluation of evidence, the processing and synthesis of information from a variety of sources (conventional and electronic), the scientific questioning and development of arguments in written and oral discourse, the tackling of multiple challenges in a comprehensive way, the efficient completion of individual and group assignments, as well as for participating in the design and implementation of research and professional projects with a feeling of social, democratic and ethical responsibility.

Since the 2014 external evaluation, the Department has instituted an optional internship programme by which students are placed in positions in the public and private sector where they acquire practical experience. Upon graduation, students either continue with graduate work in Greece or abroad or seek employment with the public and private sector.

Principle 1: Academic Unit Policy for Quality Assurance

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD APPLY A QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY AS PART OF THEIR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT. THIS POLICY SHOULD EXPAND AND BE AIMED (WITH THE COLLABORATION OF EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS) AT ALL INSTITUTION'S AREAS OF ACTIVITY, AND PARTICULARLY AT THE FULFILMENT OF QUALITY REQUIREMENTS OF UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES. THIS POLICY SHOULD BE PUBLISHED AND IMPLEMENTED BY ALL STAKEHOLDERS.

The quality assurance policy of the academic unit is in line with the Institutional policy on quality, and is included in a published statement that is implemented by all stakeholders. It focuses on the achievement of special objectives related to the quality assurance of study programmes offered by the academic unit.

The quality policy statement of the academic unit includes its commitment to implement a quality policy that will promote the academic profile and orientation of the programme, its purpose and field of study; it will 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.

In particular, in order to carry out this policy, the academic unit commits itself to put into practice quality procedures that will demonstrate:

- a) the suitability of the structure and organization of the curriculum;*
- b) the pursuit of learning outcomes and qualifications in accordance with the European and the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education;*
- c) the promotion of the quality and effectiveness of teaching;*
- d) the appropriateness of the qualifications of the teaching staff;*
- e) the enhancement of the quality and quantity of the research output among faculty members of the academic unit;*
- f) ways for linking teaching and research;*
- g) the level of demand for qualifications acquired by graduates, in the labour market;*
- h) the quality of support services such as the administrative services, the Library, and the student welfare office;*
- i) the conduct of an annual review and an internal audit of the quality assurance system of the undergraduate programme(s) offered, as well as the collaboration of the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) with the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU).*

Study Programme Compliance

The Department, along with the University, has clearly integrated the evaluation and assessment process in its workings. Both MODIP and OMEA are institutionalized and their

interaction in terms of data collection and process implementation has been streamlined. In this regard, the Department has internalized the input of the 2014 external evaluation report and has implemented substantial changes in both the programme of studies and the assessment process. The Department easily created the impression to the EEAP that it takes the evaluation and accreditation process at heart and has been working to increase the quality of education and serve its student population better in a spirit of continuous improvement.

The Chair of the Department, the OMEA coordinator, its faculty members, and especially the MODIP staff, exhibited a coherent and dedicated approach to meet the expectations of the accreditation process. This is an outcome of the Department's sincere dedication to the welfare of its student body.

Panel Judgement

Principle 1: Academic Unit Policy for Quality Assurance	
Fully compliant	x
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- Continue with streamlining the content of the obligatory courses and reduce a number of content overlap among courses.
- Review course content of each course and when possible, integrate courses to avoid repetitions and content redundancy between them.
- Create space in the list of obligatory courses for timely and thematic topics with less theoretical content and more practical application.
- Continue improving the process of course sequencing from introductory to advanced course content.
- Start implementing an optional fourth-year thesis where students have the opportunity to connect theory to practice.
- Provide more options for student assessment in the form of mid-terms and research assignments in a consistent way across the curriculum.

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

One of the undergraduate curriculum objectives is to acquaint students with different research methodologies and equip them with strong research skills. The link between research and teaching is accomplished in three ways:

- Linking literature with research.
- Linking teaching with research.
- Linking up the research conducted by members of the Department with the content of the courses offered.

The impression of the EEAP is that these links are established in varying degrees and in the vast majority of the courses offered. The EEAP has noticed the curriculum's strong employability orientation towards the public sector and civil society.

In the material attached to the Department's portfolio, there is a certain degree of ambiguity concerning course progression and the structure of individual plans of study. Overall, there are more than 90 courses in the curriculum and from these a set number offered annually either as required courses or as electives. The elective offerings are not thematized or sequenced, thus not allowing an external observer to discern the degree of progression. Similar course content is dispersed in many courses in different sub-themes of the discipline. Undeniably the ambition of broad knowledge is fulfilled, but often without an apparent progressive deepening of knowledge from the first half to the second half of the programme of studies.

There is a rather high degree of student freedom to choose elective courses while the offering of electives differs from year to year. This results in transcript variability of the Department's graduates. In addition, there is content overlap between courses and prerequisite requirements for advanced courses are not specified. The EEAP has thus not noticed an explicit progression or a pattern of deepening knowledge in the curriculum.

There is no final thesis requirement.

The progression of the students through the programme is not satisfactory. Only about one fifth of the students manages to complete their degree after four years of study, while the mean duration of studies is about 5 ½ years. Students reported that they do not study hard until the beginning of the examination period, at the end of each semester.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The balance between obligatory and elective courses needs restructuring. There is more space for consolidating the courses in order to avoid overlaps between them.
- The courses should be explicitly sequenced to demonstrate progression of learning and knowledge acquired. Pre-requisites should be explicitly stated.
- The Department may want to consider making explicit clustering and sequencing of the elective courses into maybe four thematic areas with specific academic years devoted to specified thematic umbrellas for students who wish to concentrate in specific thematic areas.
- We suggest that the Department offers students the possibility to conduct their own research and write a thesis on a theme of their choice. The duration of an undergraduate thesis in the curriculum should correspond to ten weeks of study. Consolidating courses should free up time to devote to thesis supervision.

- Specific and uniform supervision should be provided to all students on their undergraduate thesis (i.e., standard number of hours on specific aspects such as study design, fit of research methods, analysis, ethics and actual writing).
- Finally, the Department should implement at least one mid-term examination in all courses in order to disperse the academic efforts of students throughout the semester

Principle 3: Student- centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES ARE DELIVERED IN A WAY THAT ENCOURAGES STUDENTS TO TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN CREATING THE LEARNING PROCESS. THE ASSESSMENT METHODS SHOULD REFLECT THIS APPROACH.

Student-centred learning and teaching plays an important role in stimulating students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in the learning process. The above entail continuous consideration of the programme's delivery and the assessment of the related outcomes.

The student-centred learning and teaching process

- *respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths;*
- *considers and uses different modes of delivery, where appropriate;*
- *flexibly uses a variety of pedagogical methods;*
- *regularly evaluates and adjusts the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods aiming at improvement;*
- *regularly evaluates the quality and effectiveness of teaching, as documented especially through student surveys;*
- *reinforces the student's sense of autonomy, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teaching staff;*
- *promotes mutual respect in the student - teacher relationship;*
- *applies appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints.*

In addition:

- *the academic staff are familiar with the existing examination system and methods and are supported in developing their own skills in this field;*
- *the assessment criteria and methods are published in advance;*
- *the assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary is linked to advice on the learning process;*
- *student assessment is conducted by more than one examiner, where possible;*
- *the regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances;*
- *assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures;*
- *a formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*

Study Programme Compliance

The faculty clearly understands the importance of student-centered learning and has taken measures to continuously move toward this end. The Department's mission is firmly anchored in student-centered learning. The faculty is making a concerted effort to move away from just a lecture-style of classroom deliveries and just an end-of-the-semester final examination. At least some of the faculty are utilizing student progress assessments throughout the semester such as

midterms, presentations, and research projects. Still, the scope and implementation of utilizing such tools is unclear. Students indicated that they study minimally throughout the semester and only study systematically when the final examination period approaches. Although the EEAP recognizes that exclusive reliance on final examinations is symptomatic of the educational process in the Greek public university, it is especially necessary to provide consistently different assessment and evaluation exercises throughout the semester so that students can learn and appreciate the course content and also remain engaged in the course and in the course of study. The Department does have a curricular end-of-year review process, but it is unclear as to whether that also includes pedagogy and whether there is a teaching seminar or retraining for faculty. It seems that different professors are utilizing unilaterally different approaches and not in concert. Ironically, the transition forced by the current pandemic has opened up the teaching and content delivery approach and the utilization of online and e-learning approaches. The Department has been very successful in making a seamless transition.

As only a small minority of students finishes in 4 years, while a substantial percentage never finishes and still stays on the Department's active lists for many years, student engagement and retention seem to be a major issue. Granted that this type of a system allows for the necessary flexibility for many working students, ways must be found to encourage students to complete their degree in four years. It is not unusual for students in foreign universities to be working while also completing their studies in a timely fashion.

A positive outcome of the 2014 evaluation has been the introduction of student evaluations of teaching effectiveness and course content. There is growing utilization of student surveys as a tool of assessment of teaching effectiveness. Although the average percentage of student participation is around 18%, faculty indicated that they were able to accommodate student feedback and make adjustments in both course content and teaching style. This is also a cultural shift according to the Department members who were interviewed.

It should be noted that the Department has moved toward establishing institutional structures of empowering student-participation in regards to course content, programme of studies, and advising. Although institutional structures are in place to assist students in learning and provide psychological support, such as the *Academic Advisor* and the *Student Ombudsman*, there seems to be little reliance on them. Students rely instead on personal relationships with individual faculty who become academic advisors, research advisors, and overall mentors. There is a strong sense of an informal associations built on mutual trust and respect over time between students and faculty and it lasts beyond the student years. Current students and alumni uniformly indicated that they highly respect and appreciate their faculty, and in turn, the faculty is excited and proud of the students' accomplishments.

As the academic wellbeing of the students is safeguarded by the establishment of the institution of the *Student Ombudsman*, this Department is clearly a student-centric one.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- Reinforce established structures, such as that of the *Academic Advisor*, student learning, and psychological support for students.
- Establish a pedagogical review process in the same manner as that of the annual curricular review process.
- Incentivize attendance by faculty in Teaching/Learning seminars at least once a year to explore different teaching approaches.
- Create stronger and more formalized links with Department alumni.
- Explore the possibility of making the Internship a required course.

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

As the number of admissions are regulated by the Ministry of Education in Greece, the Department is obligated to adhere to established government structures and guidelines. Accordingly, the Department is allocated with about 200 freshmen each year. The EEAP received data for the last five years regarding admissions, rates of graduation, student mobility rates within Greek and European universities, the number of enrolled and active students, and their gender breakdown. Over the last decade, and particularly since the 2014 external evaluation, the Department has initiated policies to measure and assess academic progress, graduation rates, and the post-graduation status of the students. However, the entire process is still in its nascent stages. Of particular significance is the low rate of students graduating in four years of study (21.48%), while 42.96 per cent are graduating after five years, and 25.19 per cent after six years. In the areas of post-graduation and alumni relations, the Department has also developed a vision, which is yet to be realized in a structured and formal manner. All the same, the alumni interviewed by the EEAP were impressive in regards to their caliber and location of placement, and expressed their deep gratitude toward the Department and their educational experience in it. Overall, the Department is making considerable strides forward, but there is still more work to be done.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The Department should increase the percentage of students graduating in four years.
- The Department should continue to build on what already has been established as far as data collection and its publication is concerned.
- The Department should prioritize the formalization of the alumni relations network, which would be vastly beneficial on many levels.

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 faculty of the Department (μέλη ΔΕΠ) consists of eighteen members of all ranks (eight full professors, four associate professors, and eight assistant professors). Their expertise, international background, high qualifications, and dedication provide strengths for classroom teaching and research. They have a fair teaching load (6-9 hours per week) and follow widely used pedagogical practices and instructional methods, which meet international standards. Some courses are also taught by faculty members from other departments, EDIP (Ειδικό Διδακτικό Προσωπικό), ΕΤΕΡ (Ειδικό Τεχνικό Εργαστηριακό Προσωπικό), and adjunct teaching staff (Διδάσκοντες με Σύμβαση).

The faculty is enthusiastic and skillful in utilizing new technologies, both in the classroom and in their interaction with the students. The faculty should be commended for their firm commitment, concentrated effort, and enthusiasm in maintaining high-quality teaching despite the obstacles and difficulties created by shrinking resources and other external factors for which the Department has no control over.

It should be pointed out that there is a collegial climate in the Department characterized by mutual respect and a collaborative spirit, which is also evident between faculty and students. During its interaction with students and the graduates of the Department, the EEAP received the impression that they think very highly of their teachers. All of them talked with respect and enthusiasm about them, the Departmental culture, and the learning environment. They confirmed that their teachers are committed, accessible, understanding, and ready to provide

support and guidance. The encouragement and advising provided by faculty members are plainly evident and highly appreciated by the students.

There are clear, transparent, and fair processes for recruitment and promotions of qualified teaching staff. However, there are lagging issues imposed by external restrictions. Because of shrinking resources, there have been no new faculty positions created. Increasing the number of faculty will definitely help for further improvement of teaching, more research and greater contribution to society. Still, the Department has managed to increase the number of teaching staff by inviting faculty from other Departments to offer courses.

The research output of the faculty is very good both in terms of quantity and quality. They have published books with well-known academic publishing houses nationally and internationally. They also publish articles in first class peer-reviewed journals. Faculty members seek external funding and, to a good extent, have been successful. They are also active in organizing academic events, promoting cooperation with the broader academic community and State authorities, and in disseminating research output. It should be pointed out that links between research, practice, and teaching add to the vibrant pedagogical culture of the Department and enhance its national and international reputation.

Panel Judgement

Principle 5: Teaching Staff	
Fully compliant	x
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- The excellent collegial atmosphere in the Department and accessibility of faculty by the students should be maintained and further enhanced, as it is instrumental in sharing experiences and receiving feedback. This is already a big asset for the Department and goes hand in hand with the commendable sensitivity and efforts in monitoring and improving performance of both faculty and students.
- The Department and the University may want to consider providing further encouragement, support, and incentives to faculty members to intensify their efforts for attracting external funding, especially through international and European projects.
- Faculty members should intensify their efforts and enhance their high-quality research output, especially by publishing more in high-impact, peer-reviewed international journals and international publishing houses.
- Looking at the big picture of higher education in the country, there is a need to address the general systemic problem of an inadequately funded public university system, especially for opening new positions. Addressing this issue will also help tackle challenges such as attracting and retaining more faculty of international caliber.

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

By Greek standards and in general terms, the infrastructure seems to be satisfactory. There is Internet access (wireless and/or wired) available in most buildings. There exists sufficient and updated IT infrastructure (e.g., computers, software) and other specialised lab equipment in support of the needs of the faculty and students. The Department's website is well organized and appropriately designed with useful information for students as well as for external visitors and observers.

Classrooms seem to be equipped with appropriate technology. A number of other IT services are available to enhance student teaching and learning. These include OPEN Class, MS Teams, Zoom, Skype, email, SPSS, etc. The Department employs its website extensively and decimates helpful information. Both faculty and students expressed satisfaction with the available range of services provided.

The library (both the central library and the Department library) is well organised with subscriptions to online journals, numerous e-books, archives and audio-visual material. The accessibility of the databases is excellent. However, the lack of separate study rooms and the insufficient number of individual study areas in the library limit the students' ability to meet and work together. Faculty offices typically serve that purpose. The library organizes seminars on

how to conduct catalogue and database searches, and teach students how to reference correctly along with advice as to what counts as plagiarism and so forth. It also offers plagiarism-control software.

According to students and faculty, the e-teaching platform operated efficiently during the recent pandemic restrictions. The Department has recently returned to face-to-face teaching. Given that a sizable number of students work to support themselves, it would be especially important to explore opportunities for flexible, hybrid forms of learning.

The Department provides additional services to students such as counselling and academic and career support. The internship programme functions well in the opinion of faculty members and students confirmed their positive assessment. Members of staff mentioned that many students find jobs as a result of having completed internships. According to the Department's records, there is an ever-increasing demand for internships.

The EEAP had the opportunity to meet with both current students and graduates who consistently expressed their enthusiasm about their studies. They commented on how their education transformed their world view and allowed them to function more effectively in their professional and personal lives.

The EEAP also had an opportunity to meet employers, both from the public and the private sectors, who played a very important role in arranging student internships. They all expressed their satisfaction with the Departments' cooperative orientation. The EEAP would like to recognise the emphasis on placing students with NGOs and other organisations in internships for longer periods.

Social services and support to students with special needs are provided by the central administration of the University.

In general, the working environment in the Department seems to be appropriate and collegial.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- As much as possible, the Department should expand the number of internships and possibly make the practice a required course.
- Consider creating enclosed areas in the library for individual or group studying.
- Make research papers for the students in upper-level courses a standard requirement.

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

One of the Department's strengths is its quantitative data collection and analysis. There is an established structure in place regarding information management and the monitoring of data concerning students, teaching staff, and course structures. The institution's MODIP and the Department's OMEA, along with other internal structures, do an excellent job gathering and processing data within established accreditation and institutional parameters. They make certain all data is collected and published and provide substantive information toward accurate assessment of student population profile, student progression, and graduation rates.

Panel Judgement

Principle 7: Information Management	
Fully compliant	x
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- Improve data collection regarding Department alumni.
- Improve data collection regarding student progress and implement solution to increase course attendance.

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

Public information on academic and educational activities is provided in direct, open and accessible ways. The main avenue of communication is the Department's website, which is well-structured, bilingual (Greek and English), comprehensive, and user friendly. It provides extensive and updated information about teaching staff, academic programmes, research, courses, practical training, and much more. It is worth noting that there is a section with information that is especially useful for Erasmus students. The website contains also informational videos and it is regularly used for departmental announcements and news sharing.

The Department's webpage is regularly updated and it is the main source where students are able to look up information about the curriculum and the various services that are available to them. There is an emphasis on providing as much information as possible in a functional and usable way while also considering the need for the webpage to appear modern in terms of graphic design.

The webpage of the University is also comprehensive and regularly updated. It includes information and links about quality assurance policies, actions, and related issues.

Digital platforms play an important role in terms of resource availability for the undergraduate programme. They directly support the educational process by providing both teaching and learning material as well as bibliographies, useful links, and digital open access resources. Digital platforms are also used to record registered students and their performance, providing useful information regarding the curriculum, specific courses, and grading history.

Panel Judgement

Principle 8: Public Information	
Fully compliant	x
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- It is recommended that a section of the website is dedicated to students, alumni and careers, and consider using it to showcase some of the work and achievements of students and alumni.
- Ensure that the content of the website's English version is further enriched and more regularly updated.

Principle 9: On-going Monitoring and Periodic Internal Review of Programmes

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE IN PLACE AN INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM FOR THE AUDIT AND ANNUAL INTERNAL REVIEW OF THEIR PROGRAMMES, SO AS TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES SET FOR THEM, THROUGH MONITORING AND AMENDMENTS, WITH A VIEW TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT. ANY ACTIONS TAKEN IN THE ABOVE CONTEXT SHOULD BE COMMUNICATED TO ALL PARTIES CONCERNED.

Regular monitoring, review and revision of study programmes aim to maintain the level of educational provision and to create a supportive and effective learning environment for students.

The above comprise the evaluation of:

- *the content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up to date;*
- *the changing needs of society;*
- *the students' workload, progression and completion;*
- *the effectiveness of the procedures for the assessment of students;*
- *the students' expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme;*
- *the learning environment, support services and their fitness for purpose for the programme*

Programmes are reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders. The information collected is analysed and the programme is adapted to ensure that it is up-to-date. Revised programme specifications are published.

Study Programme Compliance

The Department and the University have in place internal self-assessment procedures and mechanisms, which are part of an efficient quality assurance system, providing for regular monitoring, review and revision of the programme of studies. Both MODIP and OMEA play a central role throughout the various stages of self-assessment. It seems that both MODIP and OMEA are efficient and function well.

The curriculum has been reviewed and revised regularly in order to ensure that it is up to date and in line with the latest research. Revisions are also aimed at harmonizing its objectives and content with international standards and practices. The Department takes into account the changing needs of the society, the expectations of students who evaluate courses, the needs of the faculty, and the overall learning environment.

The outcomes of self-assessment are properly recorded, analysed, discussed, shared and utilized, especially in formulating and communicating recommendations and action plans. The sensitivity of the Department and the ongoing debate on issues of monitoring and improvement confirm that high quality research and teaching are firm and clear objectives embedded in the curriculum and the overall mission of the Department.

In general, the on-going monitoring and upgrading of the curriculum reflects an academically rigorous, open, and dynamic Department.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- OMEA may wish to consider having a more structured procedure, such as scheduled meetings and indicative timeframes, to ensure that ongoing monitoring and periodic reviews are sustained and further enhanced.
- Consider adding new thematic courses such as International Public Administration as well delivering more courses in English.
- Ensure that the theoretical education provided to the students find practical application or that students internalize the practical utility of abstract theory.

Principle 10: Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programmes

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

HAHE is responsible for administrating the programme accreditation process which is realised as an external evaluation procedure, and implemented by a committee of independent experts. HAHE grants accreditation of programmes, with a specific term of validity, following to which revision is required. The accreditation of the quality of the programmes acts as a means of verification of the compliance of the programme with the template's requirements, and as a catalyst for improvement, while opening new perspectives towards the international standing of the awarded degrees.

Both academic units and institutions participate in the regular external quality assurance process, while respecting the requirements of the legislative framework in which they operate.

The quality assurance, in this case the accreditation, is an on-going process that does not end with the external feedback, or report or its follow-up process within the Institution. Therefore, Institutions and their academic units ensure that the progress made since the last external quality assurance activity is taken into consideration when preparing for the next one.

Study Programme Compliance

The Department has actively worked to develop its academic milieu according to the recommendations of the 2014 external evaluation. It has considered the 2014 evaluation as the beginning of an ongoing assessment process. The members of the accreditation Panel believe that there is more space for improvement in order to reach even higher international standards. Further consolidation of the study programme is needed as more attention to the low level of progression of students through the programme. The impression of the EEAP is that the Department will likely maintain its efforts in the future, aiming to constructively revisit its current practices. It was declared that the Department has started a process to revise the curriculum.

Finally, EEAP wishes to praise the Department for the efforts to prepare the evaluation material and the interactive atmosphere of collegiality during the evaluation process.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- As the Department intends to revise its curriculum, EEAP suggests that the Department initiates its own external review of the revised program. The further consolidation of the curriculum and the measures to enhance the rate or student progression should be the major points of this evaluation.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

- Well established assessment structure
- Strong curriculum
- Dedicated faculty
- Collegial academic environment
- High quality student body
- Solid administrative and IT support
- Adequate facilities and student services
- Distinguished Alumni

II. Areas of Weakness

- Overlapping course content
- Disproportionately large number of electives courses
- Theory is overemphasized in relation to practice and application
- There is no undergraduate thesis requirement
- Not sufficient offering of courses in English
- High number of students not finishing their studies in four years
- No mandatory student attendance in classes
- High reliance in final examination for student assessment
- Syllabi not sufficiently developed in terms of specific topics covered on specific dates

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

- Continue with streamlining the content of the obligatory courses and reduce a number of content overlap among courses.
- Review course content of each course and when possible, consolidate courses to avoid repetitions and content redundancy between them.
- Create space in the list of obligatory courses for timely and thematic topics with less theoretical content and more practical application.
- Continue improving the process of course sequencing from introductory to advanced course content.
- Start implementing an optional fourth-year thesis where students have the opportunity to connect theory to practice.
- Provide more options for student assessment in the form of mid-terms and research assignments in a consistent way across the curriculum.
- Develop a system of monitoring the academic progress of all students throughout their studies.

- Consider making explicit clustering and sequencing of the elective courses into maybe four thematic areas with one academic year devoted to a specified thematic umbrella for students who wish to concentrate in specific thematic areas.
- Make research papers for the students in upper-level courses a standard requirement.
- Reinforce established structures, such as that of the *Academic Advisor*, student learning, and psychological support for students.
- Establish a pedagogical review process in the same manner as that of the annual curricular review process.
- Incentivize attendance by faculty in Teaching/Learning seminars at least once a year to explore different teaching approaches.
- Create stronger and more formalized links with Department alumni and improve data collection regarding them.
- Explore the possibility of making the Internship a required course.
- Prioritize the formalization of the alumni relations network, which would be vastly beneficial for the Department on many levels.
- Consider providing further encouragement, support and incentives to faculty members to intensify their efforts for attracting external funding, especially through international and European projects.
- Faculty members should intensify their efforts and enhance their high-quality research output, especially by publishing more in high-impact peer-reviewed international journals and international publishing houses.
- Consider creating enclosed areas in the library for individual or group studying.
- Dedicate a section of the website is dedicated to students, alumni and careers, and consider using it to showcase some of the work and achievements of students and alumni.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: **1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10**

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: **2, 3 and 4**

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are: **None**

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are: **None**

Overall Judgement	
Fully compliant	x
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname

Signature

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Salve Regina University, Newport, RI, United States of America

2. Prof. Emeritus Joseph Joseph

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3. Prof. Apostolis Papakostas

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