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ACCREDITATION AGENCY

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND EUROPEAN
STUDIES

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External Evaluation Committee

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the Department International Relations and European Studies of the University of Piraeus consisted of the following four (4) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by the HQAA in accordance with Law 3374/2005:

1. Professor Nikolaos Zahariadis (Coordinator), Professor and Director of Political Science, Department of Government, University of Alabama at Birmingham, USA
2. Professor Joseph Joseph, Professor of Political Science, Department of Social and Political Sciences, University of Cyprus, Cyprus
3. Professor Dino Kritsiotis, Professor, School of Law, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Nottingham, United Kingdom
4. Professor Savvas Katsikides, Professor of Sociology, Department of Social and Political Sciences, University of Cyprus, Cyprus

Introduction

I. The External Evaluation Procedure

According to the guidelines provided to the External Evaluation Committee (EEC), its mandate is to:

- verify the objectivity of information appearing in the Department's Internal Evaluation Report, checking, where necessary, the original data collected for evaluation purposes;
- assess and evaluate the results of the work done by the academic unit and to compare it with current, internationally accepted best practices;
- advise and suggest specific alternative practices and improvements.

The EEC visited the Department of International Relations and European Studies of the University of Piraeus (Department hereinafter) from January 13-15, 2014, and worked on its External Evaluation Report (Report hereinafter) until Friday January 17, 2014. Documentation in the form of the Internal Evaluation Report (IER) and ancillary material were made available to the EEC on January 2, 2014 and during its site visit. The EEC was under the impression that documents would be provided in English based on the language of communication between the HQAA and committee members, as well as the language of the invitation to be members of the EEC. Because the IER and supplementary documentation were written in Greek, and in light of the delay in providing the IER, the EEC had insufficient time to thoroughly read and assess the IER. The host department worked diligently and with very short notice to accommodate the request for presentations and material in English, and, again at short notice, to put on the services of an interpreter who was a member of the Department. This task was assumed with enormous efficiency and professionalism. The EEC's report acknowledges the stress imposed on the Department and thanks the Department for its work. The Report is based on the information furnished during the *in situ* meetings as well as information contained in the various documents supplied to the EEC.

The EEC met at HQAA headquarters for a brief introduction and logistical support at 9:30 am on Monday, January 13, 2014. It was then picked up by a member of the Department and driven to the University of Piraeus where meetings were held with various department members and the University Rector until mid-day Wednesday, January 15, 2014. The meetings included presentations by various faculty on activities they were engaged, presentations and a tour by secretarial staff of the facilities including the library, one meeting with students without the presence of faculty and two meetings with student in the presence of faculty. Presentations were followed by brief question and answer sessions.

II. The Internal Evaluation Procedure

The EEC was provided with the Department's IER on January 2, 2014. The very short time given to the EEC prevented the EEC from thoroughly and rigorously assessing the document. Nevertheless, several conclusions may be drawn from the IER.

- Despite the fact this is a very young and quickly growing Department, the host Department has made remarkable progress in achieving national prominence. It is to be commended for working with such exceptional speed and diligence to reach the type of academic success (especially among entering and continuing students) that it currently so richly enjoys.
- The IER sources of documentation were appropriate. The department used annual departmental and individual reports to document research, teaching, and service indicators.
- The IER was very long. It includes information required by HQAA, but it does not contain an executive summary or a way to highlight the important information. Because of its density, important information may be difficult to identify as it remains buried in a sea of data. Perhaps a page limit of 50-60 pages imposed by the HQAA in addition to appendices might serve as a useful guide as to the appropriate length.
- The IER stresses, and the EEC concurs, that the temporal dimension of the documentation requirements of the IER are inconsistent. For example, the IER notes discrepancies in being asked to provide information on the basis of the last two academic years (2011-12 and 2012-13) even though individual annual progress reports (Tables 15 and 16) are based on calendar years. This makes it comparisons difficult in order to adequately document annual progress. The IER is asked to draft the report on the basis of the last two available years although tables noting research accomplishments are supposed to reflect work done in the last five years. In some instances, the department also provided publication dates that went back seven years and in one instance sixteen years. Such inconsistencies pose significant challenges to the Department and the external evaluators in assessing progress.
- Two important items are missing. This is no fault of the Department because the IER does not require them, the legal framework does not facilitate their collection, and estimates are not routinely collected. Information on student/faculty ratios (both enrolled and active students) is important to assess the adequacy and stress on human and physical capital. Data are provided so one of these ratios may be calculated (enrolled but not active students over faculty), but there needs to be more singular focus on annual trends of this important information. In addition, the IER does not contain numerical data on resources either provided through departmental funds or acquired through external or internal research grants. The EEC was informed that funding for travel to professional conferences is provided, but no mention was made on additional resources. The EEC was orally informed the Department makes every effort to imaginatively find resources for worthy projects. The Department's research output is impressive but mention of actual funds relative to output would more easily and clearly point attention to potential institutional strengths and weaknesses that may be items for more systematic scrutiny and improvement.

- Despite serious problems associated with the external environment, especially in light of the current financial crisis, and the general paucity of funding of Greek higher education, the Department appears to have made significant progress in accomplishing its goal of providing high quality research and teaching in European and international affairs and to promote and enrich Greek presence and participation in many aspects of European integration and global society.

The atmosphere during the visit was cordial and collegial, while remaining at a professional level. Faculty were friendly and helped the EEC's work by answering questions, engaging in dialogue, and providing information and data wherever possible. The EEC expresses its gratitude to the leadership team, faculty, and staff of the Department and the University for facilitating the visit.

A. Curriculum

APPROACH

Undergraduate

- The goals and objectives of the Department's undergraduate curriculum are to provide high quality studies in the fields of International Relations and European Studies. Its main aim is to combine a strong social science background with emphasis to Political Science and Economics with the more applied elements of Public Policy, Law and Business. The curriculum is designed in manner that supports the education of highly qualified graduates that are able both to pursue careers in professions akin to the subject matters and to continue their studies at a graduate level. As has been pointed out during the interviews, the Department has shaped a fourfold plan to achieve its objectives: (1) a well-structured Curriculum, (2) the inclusion in the Curriculum of specialized skills that improve the qualifications of its graduates, (3) the attraction and enrollment of highly qualified academic staff able to support the Curriculum and the goals of the Department and (4) the incorporation of research and teaching as the basis of education offered.
- The objectives had been decided by the Department and are shared by all its academic community. During our site visit we had extensive discussions with the faculty members and the students of the Department and it was apparent that they shared a common vision well communicated. Both the Dean of the School and the Rector of the University shared the significance of the Department's objectives. The Department has successfully incorporated in its Curriculum all standards for offering high quality higher education in the disciplines of International Relations and European Studies that is provided in top European and American Universities.
- The Curriculum is directly linked to the general objectives set by the Department. Based upon the information derived from both the Internal Evaluation Report and our on Site Visit we have ascertained that the Department's Curriculum is able, realistic and effective in offering the intended objectives. It is this realistic dimension in the Department's objectives and curriculum that offers added value to society.
- As noted above, all constituents and stakeholders of the Department have a direct role in shaping, deciding, implementing and reviewing the Curriculum. The collective element is particularly strong in the Department.
- Every spring the Department reviews the Curriculum and discusses the recommendations of the Curriculum Committee. The Chair of the Department and the Curriculum Committee after consultation with the faculty members along with the evaluations reports of the students makes proposals to the General Assembly of the Department that is the responsible organ to decide on the matter. Additionally, the revision according to the functionality of the programmes is a standing process and the leadership of the department is aware and committed to new ideas, innovative concepts and new ways of thinking.

Graduate

- The Graduate Curriculum on International Relations and European Studies is equally successful in attaining its goals and objectives. It provides a cohesive Curriculum for an interdisciplinary graduate student body. It is a rich Curriculum designed to offer high quality graduate education on its scientific fields for both career and research purposes.
- The Graduate Curriculum is formed on a collective basis by the Department's academic community. In this case also our site visit offered us the opportunity to discuss this matter with the faculty members and graduate students. The Department's Graduate Programme is compatible with the international standards for two-year long Graduate Programmes .
- This two years graduate programme aims to produce leaders. It is highly intensive and in fact it may be considered as a three masters in the package of one since it covers in depth international relations, international political economy and international and European law/institutions. Every year between 100-200 candidates compete for 35 positions. Hence acceptance rate is between 15-30 percent.
- The graduates of this programme pursue either an academic path (doctoral programmes) or careers in the public or private sector and international organizations.
- This Graduate programme is comparable to the top graduate programmes offered by US and European universities. The department is encouraged by the success of this programme and plans to offer an international Masters in Energy Policy and Security targeted to professional from the Eastern Mediterranean. The Department has the resources in terms of personnel and infrastructure to run such a programme.
- As with the case of the undergraduate Curriculum the Graduate one is directly linked to the objectives set by the Department. The demand for enrollment to the Graduate Programme from its very first introduction till the academic year 2012-13 demonstrated its import to society.
- The Graduate Committee and the General Assembly of the Department are responsible for reviewing the Graduate Curriculum. This point was repeatedly emphasized to members of the EEC, and we think it is appropriate that admissions levels have been stabilized for the time being.

Doctoral Programme

- The Department offers Doctoral instruction according to the legal framework. It is very selective in Doctoral enrollment and always with direct reference to the availability of expertise in the faculty members.

IMPLEMENTATION

Undergraduate

- The Department's goal is effectively implemented by the Curriculum. On our on site visit the discussion and the very high level and motivation of the students confirms the success of the introduced by the Department Curriculum.
- The Curriculum can be compared successfully with any high standard undergraduate Curriculum for the specific areas of study. It may even be accounted for a benchmark in its discipline at other institutions, and, in the view of the EEC, it can be compared to any top American and European Curriculum in these fields of study.
- It provides high quality higher education in the fields of study offered by the Department.
- Apart from being up to date in scientific terms it is well structured, well balanced and coherent. In particular, it has no courses of general interest but courses directly linked to the objectives of the Department. The great majority of the courses is compulsory and is distributed in a gradual manner according to the degree of specialization they offer. From these compulsory courses a small number are foundation courses while the rest are on subjects on the scientific fields of study. For supporting further specialization, the Curriculum provides for a limited number of specialized elective courses in order to allow the students to pursue their own preferred field of study and to increase diversification of its graduate degrees. These are structured according to the three main fields of study that the Department offers: International Relations, International Economics and European Studies and Institutions. Along with the courses on the main fields of study the Curriculum pays particular attention in furnishing its graduates with all the necessary skills to pursue successful careers. It provides as compulsory the instruction of two foreign languages adjusted to the needs of its fields of study. In particular, the English language is obligatory while for the second language the students may select among three foreign languages: French, German and Arabic, while the Department plans to enrich this diet with Chinese and Russian. In addition, a further strength of the Department's Curriculum is the options of extracurricular instruction available for its students in order to enrich their skills. These include IT and a series of specialized applied seminars based upon developing innovative methods of studying IR and European Studies. The concept of the Department's curriculum is exceptionally strong and well-articulated. All students we met on our on-site visit (even the ones we met by chance) demonstrated enthusiasm for their studies in the Department, and members of the Department were especially keen to draw to our attention at regular intervals students who we could speak with. This additional facility was very much appreciated, as was the enthusiasm and energy of all of the students we came into contact with.
- The Curriculum displays a high degree of coherence. The courses are instructed by highly specialized faculty members. All faculty members teach courses according to their expertise safeguarding the high quality of course instruction. The Department has fully implemented the ECTS. The educational material and the duration of the courses are absolutely

satisfactory, view that is documented further by the student evaluations. The Department meticulously follows the system of student evaluations, and the system that is in place for this feedback seems exemplary and incorporates best practices. Another impression is that the students at all levels are involved in the main procedures at the Department.

Graduate

- The Graduate Programme's Curriculum is also coherent and lucid. It is relatively demanding but it is adjusted to the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary graduate student body that enrolls each year and the three main fields of specialization that it offers. The students are exposed to professionals (diplomats, CEO), visit international organizations (EU, UN, NATO) and participate in simulation games. Their instructors include personalities like the Secretary General of the banking association and a former general secretary of the minister of foreign affairs and ambassadors.

RESULTS

Undergraduate

- The Department is particularly effective and successful in implementing its goals and objectives. The high quality of studies that it offers is acknowledged by the student community. It is the Department with the highest ranking in entrance examinations in the country while it is the first choice for most of its students, some of whom actually considered law school before they elected to come to this Department. This must demonstrate a vital sign of the success of the Department's operations.
- The majority of its graduates have successfully entered either the market or the research arena after completing their studies.
- No implementation problems have been discerned.
- The Department is absolute conscious of its success and is determined to pursue this successful strategy further. The organization of a coherent, articulated and effective Curriculum was its main priority the last five years. Its success in this front allows the Department in the next period to focus both on communicating its success and on further increasing its already strong research profile.

Graduate

- The Department at the graduate level presents also a particularly effective implementation record.
- Its success is due to its ability to set rational goals that are well balanced and well communicated in the Department and the University.

Doctoral Programme

- The successful implementation of the Doctoral Programme can be measured by the achievements of its PhD Graduates. Of two recent PhD graduates of the Department, one has successfully pursued an academic career in a Greek University and the other has a top managerial position. We also learnt that a member of the a PhD program has recently been offered a visiting lecturing post in India.

IMPROVEMENT

- The Department is absolutely aware of the strengths of its Curriculum at all levels of study (undergraduate, graduate, doctoral) and stated explicitly that its main priority at present and in the coming years is to consolidate and further advance its already coherent and effective Curricula.

B. Teaching

APPROACH

- The Department follows widely used instructional methodology and pedagogical practices in teaching that meet international standards. The high qualifications, international background, expertise and enthusiasm of the faculty members go along with the high quality of students. It is noted that students are selected through national entry examinations which are administered by the state and are very competitive.
- It is obvious that there is a collaborative climate in the Department built on and reflecting mutual respect and collegiate spirit not only among faculty members, but also among students and teaching staff. This is facilitated by the satisfactory staff/student ratio. The EEC had several opportunities to talk and interact with students (undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral) – especially on our final day in the Department – and got a feeling of what they think about their teachers, courses and overall experience in the Department. All of them were enthusiastic about their professors and the teaching and learning environment. They confirmed that their teachers are accessible and always ready to provide support and guidance.
- Overall infrastructure and facilities, including classrooms, library, computer equipment and labs are satisfactory with Greek standards. However, due to increasing financial constraints, it seems that the University in general might soon be reaching a borderline situation unless additional space and resources are acquired. The prospect of renovating and using the huge Olympic premises in Nikaia (5 km from the main campus) looks very promising. But this is a State and University project and responsibility.
- Information technologies are extensively used to supplement and enhance traditional methods of teaching. Renewing, updating and utilizing IT is a constant challenge. Both the University and the Department are doing their best to meet this challenge with rather limited resources. It was noticed that there is great enthusiasm and skills in utilizing IT both in the classroom and also in interaction among faculty and students.
- Adequate examination methods are used and are largely based on written assignments and final examinations.

IMPLEMENTATION

- The EEC's feeling is that teaching procedures and the overall teaching environment in combination with the dedication and quality of academics produce very good results. Most of the undergraduate students are highly motivated and plan to go on to graduate school. They feel confident that with the skills and qualifications they acquire in the Department they will be successful in their chosen career paths. The encouragement and advising provided by faculty members is highly appreciated by the students.

- The quality of teaching materials and resources are excellent and regularly updated. Textbooks, further reading, course requirements and expectations from both teachers and students are similar to those in similar Departments in Europe.
- The Department favors and promotes faculty and student mobility, especially through the European Erasmus Programme. It is the feeling of the EEC that there is plenty of room for increasing the number of incoming Erasmus students from other countries, although there might be objective obstacles (not related to the Department) inhibiting this. The Department is well aware of the fact that increasing diversity is always a plus for a department and a university campus.
- It is noted that the Department is doing an excellent job in providing opportunities for practical training (internships) for students in the public and private sector.
- It was noticed by the EEC and reconfirmed by the Department that there is a strong link between research and teaching, as professors are, as a rule, teaching courses in their area of expertise and research. This theme came up under the rubric of research-led teaching, and the EEC believes it is essential to the continued success and evolution of the Department.
- Evaluation of teachers and courses, including content and reading material, is constantly carried out and provides useful feedback, in addition to the accessibility demonstrated by members of the Department for student visits and appointments.

RESULTS

- The EEC got the impression that students are happy with the education they are getting and well equipped to go on with post graduate studies at universities in other countries. They also feel that they are well equipped to enter the job market, although most of them are planning to go on with postgraduate studies in Greece or abroad. Indeed, some wish to return to this very Department for further study. The EEC was impressed by the maturity of students who seemed to be mature, articulate and intellectually energetic. They really like getting involved, engaged and voicing their concerns. As already mentioned, the EEC had the chance to talk to a good number of them. All of them spoke excellent English.
- The majority of students do not have any major difficulties graduating on time. “Eternal” students do not seem to be a major problem in the Department. This is to some degree explained by the fact that only highly qualified students (with high entrance scores) are entering the department on the basis of a rigorous national examination system.
- The Department is aware of the fact that students of such high qualifications also have high expectations and it is willing and able to meet them.

IMPROVEMENT

- The Department monitors teaching and performance of both faculty and students. Periodical internal departmental evaluations and constant student evaluations are part of the methodology and the process. The collegial atmosphere in the Department and accessibility of faculty by the students are instrumental in sharing experiences and getting feedback.
- The Department is encouraged to look for more options and possibilities to attract more funding for research, collaboration, teaching and networking—and to relate this to any strategic planning it may develop..
- European programmes could be the first obvious option, but a more aggressive strategy and practices are required by the Department and the University.
- The large number of courses required for the undergraduate degree (52 but with additional coursework acquiring or sharpening language skills) and the heavy teaching load might be a problem that has to be addressed sooner or later, taking account of the finite working hours of each member of the Department. Along these lines, the Department should make the total tally of courses required for the undergraduate degree clear and explicit on its web site and the catalog.

C. Research

APPROACH

- The Department's research output is clearly voluminous and impressive. It is very good by Greek and international standards. The Department is to be commended for its efforts. However, there is neither a departmental research policy statement in the internal evaluation report, nor objectives set at any collective or individual level. It is clear that individual faculty members are highly motivated and very productive in their respective outputs but much depends on individual temperament and general financial circumstances that are currently very unfavorable despite valiant departmental efforts to creatively find resources.
- Although the EEC acknowledges that persevering on an individual basis is highly commendable, it also underlines to a certain degree the need for a more systematic evaluation of worthy publications outlets. This is particularly important in light of the intention of the Department to be outward looking and reach the top three ranked departments in Europe in terms of academic reputation. The summary publication table included in the IER does not permit evaluation of the various levels of national and international research contributions. To an extent, this is a function of the demands of the IER itself as expressed by HQAA. Certainly citation references are a very good way of assessing quality, but impact factors, regularity of research visibility and the reputation of outlets also contribute to creating an overall picture of excellence.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Based on the internal evaluation report, the EEC finds evidence of some success in internal promotion and assessment of research. There is a quarterly departmental newsletter to keep Department members and postgraduate students informed of each other's progress. There are thematic units that are active and highly motivated—: the units on rhetoric, Turkey, the Jean Monnet chair, developing economies (BRICS), cinema, and of course international relations--which discuss research with and engage doctoral and postgraduate students. Particular mention also ought to be made of the Ambassadors' Forum which, to members of the EEC, seemed a highly valuable intellectual exercise and which (as was intimated to us) yield indirect and quality research results. What appears to be missing are overall visible and explicit connections between the units. The planned center (KEDEY) may facilitate in this endeavor by providing the organizational space, but effort and a plan are needed to maximize synergies. The lack of institutional implementation of KEDEY is no fault of the Department. The EEC urges the University to promptly and expeditiously permit the establishment of the Center to facilitate the process of synergy creation to take place so that the Department may fully maximize its potential.
- Staff spaces are modern, adequate, and well equipped and used. The really important problem is the threat of access to international bibliographic data

bases being interrupted, which is a fatal blow for any researcher. The library appears to be antiquated and inadequate in breadth of material both in terms of books and journals. Again, this is no fault of the Department, and it is being affected by the general funding difficulties besetting Greek higher education. Having said this, the EEC is compelled to note the difficulties to maintain the high quality standards the Department has set for itself without access to major library facilities. Perhaps digital formats provide one possible way forward but the EEC believes this can only be related to an overall strategic planning.

- Despite these difficulties, in 2013 the University ratio of competitive (not strictly peer-reviewed) funding per academic member is approximately €2,000 (€1,500 for domestic conferences) for purposes of conference participation. While it is not voluminous, it is not unreasonable in light of experience at other institutions outside Greece.

RESULTS

- The EEC notes with satisfaction that funding and research output is very high. In terms of overall publications, there is clearly an upward trend in quantitative indicators both in absolute terms and in per person terms. Nevertheless, there is no way to assess the value of each type of publication, such as peer-refereed journal articles, books, edited volumes, book chapters, conference participation, and other research items. The Department is encouraged to develop such a list that differentiates between various outlets and the various tiers within each type of publication. Moreover, while publications in Greek are both important and necessary, there is a need to more systematically encourage publications in major international outlets (whether in English or other languages) that will enhance and promote the visibility of the faculty's research agenda.
- Faculty are involved with international research programmes. However, the EEC does not have the data to be able to assess the amount of funding involved and the specific level of involvement. Nevertheless, there is also an upward trend over time in such involvement, which is impressive and should be continuously encouraged.
- There is strong evidence of participation in many international and national conferences as well as involvement in editorial boards and leadership positions in professional associations. The EEC commends the Department and encourages it to continue along this trajectory with emphasis on training and assisting junior colleagues in realizing the value of such involvement.
- The EEC notes that the Department's recruitment policy is not fully legible. The thematic areas of members recruited in the last five years or so do not indicate any specific planned approach, either in terms of teaching or research. While the EEC knows that many very good hires have been made, it is not possible to assess how influential they may be in coloring the overall

direction and visibility of the Department. It is noted that the interdisciplinarity explicitly incorporated in the Department permits a wide range of interests and skills that magnify benefits to students and overall research output. Nevertheless, such conditions also necessitate careful nurture and evaluation to ensure curricular and research coherence and efficiency.

IMPROVEMENT

- There is no institutionalized process to develop a departmental plan for encouraging and improving research, although such a collective endeavor is more necessary today than ever before, given that vital public research resources are threatened. In addition and following a transparent procedure, the Department needs to develop a list of Tier 1 and Tier 2 publications (both in terms of journals and book publishers) that are typically considered the best outlets of political, economic, and legal research. Of course, it may use the indicia used in other quarters (such as the Australian Research Council's ranking of research outlets: www.arc.gov.au/era/era_2010/archive/era_journal_list.htm). While there are no perfect ways of constructing such lists and while some individual faculty may disagree with elements of Tier 2 journals (presence or absence of a specific journal), the Department should undertake this task in order to set high standards that are clear, explicit, and achievable. This list should also explicitly mention the value of the various types of publication outlets and explicitly encourage, in line with international best practices, certain types over others, such as articles in refereed journals over book chapters or chapters in conference proceedings. In general, the EEC hopes the existence of such a list will cultivate a culture of generating consensus and intellectual awareness among the faculty, setting higher standards and expectations for the younger faculty.
- The Department may wish to implement a monthly "brown bag" lunch. It is an informal gathering of staff where faculty or students present their ongoing research as works in progress. The aim is to provide valuable feedback to these faculty, create potential synergies, and to introduce others to exciting and interesting things everyone is doing.

D. All Other Services

APPROACH

- The impression cast by all members of the Department on this matter is that they take the provision of services provided to the academic community extremely seriously: whether this provision related to the needs of members of the Department in terms of secretarial or administrative support, or the needs of students (e.g. for teaching and study (library) purposes, food or medical and career services, language laboratories), the EEC found a clear commitment to this aspect of the daily operations of the Department. Additionally, as part of the tour of facilities that included central University facilities, the Secretariat of the Department and the union for students on January 14, there was every indication that these facilities met—and were able to meet—the demands of students. Occasional comments from students prompted on these matters confirmed this impression.
- As part of our visit to the Rector on January 14, we were given some initial information on the acquisition of the Nikaia Campus and the projected transfer of a good part of the University's operations to this site once appropriate funds have been secured to ensure the conversion of the buildings onto premises for academic use. The impression given was that this part of the University's strategy—very much welcomed by the Department—is to provide a much-improved space for various departments of the University, including the one currently under review. This may suggest that the current provision of facilities for the operations of the Department fall below par, but it would appear that the University has met this challenge by increasing the number of properties it has recently rented in the vicinity of its main building (in order to house, for example, offices for members of the Department or to relocate the careers' service).

IMPLEMENTATION

- Our visit to the offices of the Secretariat of the Department created very favourable impressions indeed; we were given a detailed explanation of various aspects of daily operations—including the maintenance of student records, the electronic release of examination results, and the provision of printed matter to support classes. Although the Secretariat is located in a separate building to the Department, this did not appear to create any major difficulties for either the Department or the Secretariat. In response to various questions, it was clear that the Secretariat had made full use of the digital revolution to simplify its activities. One matter stands out for comment, however, and this relates to the nature of the secretarial support given to members of the Department: while the Secretariat seems to take on various tasks related to student affairs and to the provision of teaching material, there was some sense from members of the Department that an expanded Secretariat may be able to provide additional support to colleagues—in terms of assistance with student references and organizational help as and where needed. This would free up more time for members of the Department to concentrate on their teaching preparations or research activities.

- The EEC also had occasion to visit the Library of the University, where we were informed that its operations occur within the framework of much-reduced financial resources from the Government. Nevertheless, the EEC was struck by the enthusiasm and attentiveness of the Library staff who were most eager to field the various questions that were asked of them (in terms of the truncation of certain periodical subscriptions, the availability of an inter-Library loan service and the general impact of the financial crisis on Library use which has increased).
- The provision of language services was described by one member of the EEC as ‘innovative, unique and brave’, brought on by the fact that the particular outlook and mentality of the Department suggests this need is met in a useful and sufficient way bearing in mind the overall commitment of the Department—i.e. in a way that may not occur if this responsibility was handed over to the University as a whole. One view might be to see this as a provision that is surplus to requirements; another is to regard it as appropriately met by the hiring of contract staff to take on particular languages as and when particular needs arise.
- The EEC found that the provision of internet access was first-rate throughout its visit, whether because of personal use or because of the observation of other members of the academic community making use of this facility.

RESULTS

- The EEC formed the view that administrative and other services were adequate and functional, very much helped by the impeccable courteousness and helpfulness of all members of the University staff we spoke to. At the level of strategy, there is also an important aspect of vision of the University with the move to its new campus, though it remains to be decided which of the nine departments will be selected for this transfer.

IMPROVEMENTS

- Given the strength of this side of the University’s and Department’s services, as well as the fact that we are in an interim period of change, there does not appear to be any major scope for reform. One issue that deserves to be highlighted is for greater use of the career services to achieve synergies with the internship scheme run by the Department.

COLLABORATION WITH SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND PRODUCTION ORGANIZATIONS

- The EEC was highly impressed by the extent and level of interaction with social, cultural and production organizations. Activities such as the training of teachers on Europe, contacts and discussions with the group Heritage and Museums, Youth Activ, presentations to local chambers of commerce, interviews in newspapers and television stations, teaching about Europe

through comics are just a few examples of the voluminous and high-quality engagement. In particular, the student initiative of EURO.PA.S (European Parliament Simulation) is exemplary of the kind of initiatives that put this Department on the European and world map. Furthermore, there seemed to be a range of relationships developed with the business sector and with other universities (particularly for the ERASMUS Scheme) that should be given special mention in this report.

E. Strategic Planning

As far as the EEC is concerned, the clearest statement of the goal set for the Department was to be one of top three IR institutions within Europe. The EEC has formed the view that, quite apart from the assessment of whether this stands as a short (or immediate) term goal, a medium or long-term goal must depend—and depends fundamentally—on the development and articulation of a coherent strategy for the Department. Despite repeated questioning from members of the EEC, it became apparent over the three days of visits to the Department that the issue of strategic planning was regarded with considerable skepticism, mainly in terms of how much of a ‘straightjacket’ that this would produce for future activities of the Department.

The EEC wishes to respond in some detail to this skepticism. It is perhaps worthwhile to explain what is meant—what *we* as the EEC mean—by the term of strategic planning, as we can appreciate that it has as many meanings as it does for those who make use of it. By this term, we do *not* mean setting out in concrete or semi-concrete form all of the detailed projected activities of the Department over a specified (e.g. five-year) period. This is **not intended to mean** that the Department sets out the projected number of staff it will promote, students it will graduate, books and articles it will publish, speakers it will invite etc. in a set or defined period. This conceptualization of strategic planning is a deeply unrealistic and unattractive model to follow, and is *not* one that any member of the EEC is familiar with.

By this term, we *do* mean that the general themes and major ambitions of the Department (one member of the EEC described it as setting the ‘mood music’ of the Department) are set out for the purposes of providing guidance and instruction to the leadership of the Department—but also to all faculty members—about the kinds of personal and policy choices that will need to be made at regular points in the life of the School. The components of the strategic planning will also serve as the yardstick for any exercise of introspection that the Department may wish to carry out regarding the full breadth of activities in any given year or period; it should *not* be the case that the Department or its members only becomes aware of the Department’s activities on the production of an IER produced for the purposes of an outside audit as this is done only once every four years (at least in theory).

In terms of policy development and strategic planning, practical measures may include:

- A stocktaking of the size and future development of the Department. Indeed, it is clear that there may well be a strategic plan for the Department but not one that has been articulated in writing because it was mentioned that the current size of the Department was sufficient for the time being.
- The Department offers courses to its students in foreign languages in English, French, German and Arabic. In the future it intends to offer also courses in Russian and Chinese. This apparently is due to the lack of a Department (or Center) of foreign languages at the University. Offering these courses is

indeed a “must” for the programme and the Department should be commended for the good job it is doing. However, fragmentation of efforts and resources at some point might raise questions of sustainability and efficiency. The idea could be entertained and consultation should begin about tackling the issue at the University level and pulling together foreign language courses under one roof. Of course the Department may continue to offer some specialized language courses consonant with its strategic planning.

- Staff should be encouraged to produce less of one kind of research publication (e.g. submission to conference proceedings) and more of another (e.g. publication of an article in a peer-reviewed periodical), assuming of course that the Department develops (or wishes to develop) a taxonomy of research output that it values and holds dear to its heart. Such taxonomy may valuably include a sense of the preferred language of publication (e.g. English and French as opposed to Greek), especially taking account of the fundamental Departmental ambition to place high amongst its competitors and the importance of research visibility outside of Greece and the Greek diaspora.
- If this is not done so already, an annual assessment presented to the Department by its leadership regarding the overall balance of its activities (its ‘one thousand other activities’ as mentioned by one member of the Department)—which we would register in the three columns familiar to the Anglo-Saxon experience of research, teaching and service or administration—in order to determine whether the Department is overdoing too much of one activity at the expense of another. Clearly, such an estimation can in the end only be an estimation, but if there is any ability to undertake such an exercise, it will be uniquely in the determination of the leadership of the Department and it is an estimation that will allow a general sense to prevail as to whether more needs to be done in one of the Department’s columns of activity as opposed to another.
- Strategic planning will remind the Department of the full berth of its intellectual enterprise—that it has concerned itself with an interdisciplinary approach to the study of IR—so that it may wish to ensure additional representation of related disciplines in terms of the high-level speakers that are invited to visit the Department (relating, for example, to law (including European and international law), history, economics and so forth).
- Bearing in mind the crucial element of the research visibility of the Department mentioned earlier, the leadership of the Department may need to be more aggressive to ensure that individual workloads of colleagues are fair, transparent, equitably distributed to the extent possible, and of an order that ensures quality and regularity of research output. From the experience of the EEC’s respective institutions, one can only proceed with appreciating the finite number of hours within the working week. We learnt from members of the Department and the IER that weekly teaching loads often exceed the minimum of 8 hours required by law. These are unacceptably high hours for an institution that is committed to an international research portfolio, and,

while we appreciate that certain aspects of the economic crises may have caused or brought on this phenomenon, it remains the responsibility of the leadership of the Department to ensure that the research and writing time of colleagues is protected. It is our firm belief that this factor of the Department's activities is one aspect—and it cannot be discounted that it is or becomes *the* main aspect—that guides students in applying to the Department at the graduate level (though we appreciate the intention of the Department to keep the Ph.D. program deliberately small).

- The components of the strategic planning can and should help inform the guidelines for promotion set out for staff. We were very surprised to learn that no such guidelines exist—or that it might be problematic for such guidelines to be produced. In our view, the absence of the articulation of criteria for promotion is equally, if not more, problematic because it means members of the Department may have (perhaps grave) difficulty in thinking or setting their own personal targets for action and achievement. A document that outlines the strategic plan of the Department and identifies specific preferences for research output (monograph versus textbook, for example) and for teaching methodologies and innovation would be invaluable for colleagues to shape the trajectories of their own career development, choices and evolution.
- The internationalization of the Department's activities—in accordance with its ultimate ambition—may include a speedier translation of its website (i.e., into English) as well as the provision of Greek-language/IR summer school (which will bring students and scholars of the subject other than those from Greece or the diaspora) to the Department.
- The Department could take the initiative in establishing an alumni association for its graduates. This can be done in connection with other efforts at the University level. The benefits of such an initiative are obvious as it will make it possible to foster lifelong connections among students, friends, faculty and the institution, and would coincide with the Rector's remark that this is a 'family University'. Cultivating goodwill and maintaining a societal network makes cooperation and involvement easier and more meaningful. In this vein, an advisory council for the Department might be set up to provide advice to the leadership team (composed of the chair and at least one member of each academic level) on issues of overall direction, contacts, and more importantly fundraising.

F. Final Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC

The general impression of the EEC is very positive. The Department is open, entrepreneurial, and academically rigorous. It certainly is one of the top Departments of its kind in Greece. It has been an early adopter of educational technology with heavy reliance on innovative curricula, linguistic skills, and computer laboratories. It has demonstrated the ability for constructive self-assessment and has introduced innovative Masters programmes (with more planned in the near future) that not only provide a valuable service to Greek society in terms of addressing the need for highly qualified professionals but at the same time generate revenue for the Department that is put to good use (it finances research, supports graduate students, etc.). The Department's entrepreneurial spirit with emphasis on providing high value-added services and an eye toward open competition are tremendous assets and stand to be highly praised. We urge the Department to maintain and further strengthen its standards of excellence in all areas of its endeavors.

CONCLUSIONS

- Taking into consideration that this is a young Department (the newest in the University) it should be pointed out that it has made remarkable progress in consolidating and establishing itself as one of the leading department in the areas of International Relations and European Studies in the country. Now the challenge is to gain more international recognition of which it is eminently capable. It is on the right track and the prospects are excellent for achieving that too.
- The Department is ready and capable of changing and moving forward in the right direction. The majority of the faculty is young and promising scholars with motivation, enthusiasm, energy, excellent credentials and international academic background.
- The EEC felt that the overall climate and departmental culture are very good and conducive for collaboration among colleagues, fields and disciplines. This is especially helpful and encouraging (if not inspiring) especially for younger faculty members. In that sense, it is an important asset which must be sustained and reinforced in order to support creativity and contribute in further consolidation of the Department.
- There is sensitivity on issues of quality assurance within the Department and the central administration of the University. This is reflected in the preparation of periodic internal evaluations and ongoing debates on ways and means of sustaining and improving quality in teaching, research and contribution to the society.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE DEPARTMENT

- Initiate a strategic plan, as outlined above, setting in motion a process that proceeds with transparency and involvement by everyone within the Department. The potential benefits are enormous as they will provide the

opportunity for multiple voices to be heard, stakeholders to be created or strengthened, and an overall sense of collaboration and collegiality to be institutionalized.

- Continue to strengthen the curriculum and strategically develop innovative curricula that heighten visibility, attract students, but also do not stretch available resources (both material and human) beyond reasonable levels.
- Develop a departmental plan for encouraging and improving research quality and output, and, following a transparent procedure with consultation of relevant faculty, a list of appropriate publishing outlets and highly valued types of outlets.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO HQAA AND BEYOND

Poor funding, external environmental complications, and institutional sclerosis are to be mentioned as three prominent problems that are unfortunately beyond the control of individual departments yet they affect their operations in profound ways. The EEC emphasizes the need on the part of University administrators, national legislators, and the Ministry of Education to heed its (and other EEC's) advice and address the issues expeditiously to minimize the damage caused to departmental and individual performance. Beyond these impediments, the EEC notes the following:

- The evaluation process is beset with unjustifiable problems. Departmental staff informed the EEC they had little time to prepare the IER. While such preparation should be part and parcel of departmental culture and not the result of specific assessment exercises at particular moments in time, the fact remains the law and HQAA's website clearly and explicitly state the IER is a prerequisite to activate the external assessment procedure. The two appeared to happen concurrently leading to frustration, confusion, and last minute preparations, placing an unacceptably high burden on members of the Department. The EEC urges HQAA staff to seriously review the process and ensure it happens the way it is prescribed to give external evaluators enough preparation time to accomplish their task as rigorously as they should, and to avoid frustration and last-minute logistical complications on the part of hosting departments.
- Higher Education policy design at the national level should drastically move towards a more flexible and bottom-up approach. To give an example of the current top-down approach, during this evaluation the EEC was surprised by the fact that the current legal framework prescribes requirements of promotion and tenure for individual faculty. This type of micromanagement by the legislator does not and cannot anticipate the dynamic and varied environment of higher education, leading to dysfunctions and sclerosis. More autonomy (and consequently responsibility accompanied by robust accountability mechanisms) at the University and departmental levels is a must in order to maximize the academic potential that Greek higher education so richly deserves.

The Members of the Committee

- | Name and Surname | Signature |
|--|-----------|
| 1. __Nikolaos Zahariadis_(Coordinator) | _____ |
| 2. __Joseph Joseph | _____ |
| 3. __Dino Kritsiotis | _____ |
| 4. __Savvas Katsikides | _____ |