



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ

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ΑΡΧΗ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ
ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΑΝΩΤΑΤΗ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗ

HELLENIC REPUBLIC

H Q A

HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE
AND ACCREDITATION AGENCY

Accreditation Report
for the Undergraduate Study Programme of:
Balkan, Slavic and Oriental Studies
Institution: University of Macedonia
Date: January 19, 2020

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Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση
Ευρωπαϊκό Κοινωνικό Ταμείο

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



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION
FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Report of the Panel appointed by the HQA to undertake the review of the Undergraduate Study Programme of **Balkan, Slavic and Oriental Studies** of the **University of Macedonia** for the purposes of granting accreditation

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PART A: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE REVIEW

I. The Accreditation Panel

The Panel responsible for the Accreditation Review of the Undergraduate Study Programme of **Balkan, Slavic and Oriental Studies** of the **University of Macedonia** comprised the following four (4) members, drawn from the HQA Register, in accordance with the Law 4009/2011:

- 1. Prof. Symeon Giannakos**
Salve Regina University, Newport, Rhode Island, USA (Chair)

- 2. Prof. Anastassios Anastassiadis**
McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

- 3. Prof. Emeritus Constantine Danopoulos**
San Jose State University, San Jose, California, USA

- 4. Prof. Anthony Kaldellis**
Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, USA

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

The Accreditation Panel (AP) visited the Department of Balkan, Slavic, and Oriental Studies of the University of Macedonia from January 14 to January 16, 2020. In preparation for the visit, the AP reviewed the External Evaluation Report produced by the External Evaluation Committee in February 2014 and the Department's Proposal for Accreditation along with supportive documentation, provided to the AP by HQA electronically and by the Department during the visit.

Following a videoconference briefing with HQA, the AP arrived at the Department in the afternoon of January 14 and first met with the Vice-Rector of the University and President of Institutional Unit of Quality Assurance (MODIP) and the Department Chair. Next, the AP met with MODIP's staff along with the members of the Internal Assessment Committee (OMEA), and listened to OMEA's presentation.

On January 15, the AP met with members of the Department's teaching staff, with current and graduated students of the Department, and with employees and social partners. It visited classrooms, lecture halls, the University's Library, faculty offices, computer labs, and briefly attended a course lecture.

On January 16, the AP met again with MODIP and OMEA and discussed general findings and conclusions.

The meetings were held in a professional and constructive manner, the Department was most helpful in responding to the AP's questions and requests, and gave the unmistakable impression of having completely embraced the review process. Overall, the AP is completely satisfied with Department's positive attitude towards the evaluation/accreditation process.

III. Study Programme Profile

The Department of Balkan, Slavic and Oriental Studies was established in 1996 in the newly created University of Macedonia. In a merger initiated by the Greek government, the Department absorbed the Department of Balkan Studies of the University of Western Macedonia. This entailed the movement of the Department of Balkan Studies from Florina to Thessaloniki in 2013. The merger has been completed successfully and the Department now operates in a unified structure.

Graduates of the Department receive a Bachelor of Arts in Balkan, Slavic and Oriental Studies with the designation of one of two specializations: Economics and International Business, and Political, Social and Cultural Studies. Furthermore, students have the option of concentrating their studies in one of three areas: Balkan, Slavic, or Oriental studies determined by the language of preference: Russian, Serbian, Bulgarian, Romanian, or Turkish. Albanian and Arabic are offered as a second language option. The duration of studies is provided to last four years and students are required to complete twelve courses per academic year for a total of 48 courses. At least eight of these are language courses.

Each year the Department is allocated about 200 students by the Greek Ministry of Education. In addition, the Department accommodates an average of 20 transfer students per year. The total number of registered students in the Department exceeds 1300. The student population is served by 53 teaching faculty (34 of whom are tenured or tenure track professors). It should be pointed out that only a fraction of the registered student population actually attends classes and only a small percentage of them graduate in four years. The majority of graduating students do so in at least six years.

Regarding career placement of graduates, the Department's website lists a number of potential employers ranging from Greek state and intergovernmental organizations to the private sector, think tanks, and non-profit agencies. The Department has organized an alumnus website where graduates may register but concrete data are still not available.

Overall, students are satisfied with their studies and speak most favorable of their educational experience, especially in relation to acquiring foreign language skills.

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

Principle 1: Academic Unit Policy for Quality Assurance

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

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

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 has institutionalized a quality assurance process that is in line with the University's policy. The Department's OMEA is a well functioning unit and has established an effective communication link with the University's MODIP. Together, the two units amassed an incredibly large and detailed body of data. OMEA is clearly committed to the process of quality assurance and has been working diligently to implement it.

In addition, the Department has created a Curriculum Committee, which is designed to report to the Faculty Assembly and to recommend and substantiate proposals for curricular reviews and revisions in accordance with estimated market demands for the Department's graduates.

Specifically, since the external evaluation of the Department in 2014, the Department's quality assurance process has taken concrete steps to promote the quality and effectiveness of teaching by monitoring student evaluation, by encouraging teaching techniques emphasizing transferable skills, by making extensive use of the University's electronic teaching platform, and by instituting a student-advising process.

While the teaching staff has been consistently qualified to teach in their area of expertise, the Department is consciously aware of the need to link research to teaching. Overall, the Department is active in research and the AP confirmed that a number of the faculty are effective in linking their research to instruction. As stated previously, students are genuinely satisfied with the level of education they receive and this is confirmed by student evaluation of courses and anecdotal evidence provided to the AP by the students themselves. In addition, the support and administrative services are of high quality.

However, it is unclear if the Curriculum Committee has wrestled with all of the recommendations regarding continuous improvement of instruction offered by the 2014 external evaluation report. For example, there is no evidence of any concerted consideration given to reducing the number of required courses, or to systematically monitoring student attendance.

The Department does conduct an annual evaluation process, but it is not clear how comprehensive and in-depth it is. There is a clear need to link the yearly evaluation process to specific outcomes to avoid creating the impression that it is done for the sake of having it done rather than for the sake of recommending concrete steps for continuous improvement.

Panel judgement

The judgement of the AP regarding Principle One is for **Substantial Compliance**.

Principle 1: Institution Policy for Quality Assurance	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The quality assurance process should be undertaken with the view to constantly monitor and review all aspects of the educational experience for the students. The process should be undertaken with diligence and determination towards producing concrete practical suggestions for consideration and possible change. Student participation should be solicited at all levels and systematically so.

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

According to the Proposal for Accreditation of the Department, the “main objective is to cultivate and promote the knowledge for the language, the history, and the culture of the Balkan, Slavic and Oriental countries for the studying and development of the economic, social and political relations of these countries with Greece.”

It appears that the strategy for achieving this objective is primarily through curriculum design, instruction, research, internships, and professional cooperation across borders.

A key component of curriculum construction and instruction is the offering of languages and their effective teaching. This the Department implements admirably well. Graduates acquire language skills that are concrete and easily measurable. Such skills facilitate the study of the economic, social and political relations of the relevant countries with Greece.

The language skills are supplemented by a comprehensive curriculum that covers all aspects necessary to understand the political, economic and cultural realities of the relevant countries. Although students specializing in Economics and International Business do acquire the language skills, they have less exposure to the history, culture and politics of the studied countries. For example, they are required to take History of Eastern and Southeastern Europe in their first

year, and they might or might not take any of the electives outside economics. Similarly, students specializing in Political, Social, and Cultural Studies are required to take Microeconomics and Macroeconomics in their first year and it is doubtful they take any more courses from Economics in subsequent years, just because they lack the requisite mathematical skills.

It would appear then that the knowledge gap between the two specializations is considerable and there is no evidence that the quality assurance process has wrestled at all with curriculum design since its inception. Along with this, another knowledge gap is created by the small number of thesis completions by the students. In fairness to the Department, it is not clear how it can be logistically and motivationally possible for the Department to facilitate greater participation and completion.

The previous sections commented on instruction and research, both of which meet high standards, especially so since they include the teaching of language, which is the highlight of the Department's strategy to achieve its objectives.

The last component of the strategy are internships. Both students and the outside agencies involved spoke highly of the interaction and the mutual benefits derived. However, the majority of agencies the AP met are archives and museums, which, although they provide a great practical experience for the students, do not constitute a significant base for potential future employment. The AP saw no evidence of a comprehensive list of outside agencies accommodating internships, especially in the area of international business or the state sector.

Although it is possible that the Department continuously and systematically reviews the curriculum, it has not provided evidence of such a process in their report or directly to the AP.

Panel judgement: The AP's judgment for Principle Two is for **Substantial Compliance**.

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

Panel Recommendations

An established periodic review of curriculum design should be performed with a report delineating strengths and weaknesses of the specific design along with possible alternative curricular designs, including possible service teaching.

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 AP thanks the OMEA for its transparency and for providing a number of highly valuable material to it during the visit. The AP could visit only one "make-up" class because the site visit took place during the week just before the examination period. Beyond the information included in the Study Guide, the Department's webpage and electronic platforms, the generic declarations in the Accreditation Proposal, and the on-site interviews with a few students and faculty, the AP has gathered anecdotal evidence only regarding teaching methods and diversified teaching. The AP members did not have sufficient time to conduct in-depth discussions with students and members of staff on pedagogical issues.

Evidence for diversified teaching is provided in the Accreditation Proposal (also under Principle 4). However, the cases provided seem to be exceptional, and the overall impression is that teaching is in most cases based on traditional methods, just as had already been noted by the external evaluation report in 2014. The surrounding cultural environment offers rich possibilities for alternative approaches through fieldwork. A certain number of professors have adequately taken advantage of it, as is also indicated by the discussions with various institutional partners. Fieldwork could be more systematically included in the evaluation of student performance.

The CoMPUs electronic platform of e-class is generally well designed. There is a lot of potential to be explored. Syllabi are not systematically uploaded on CoMPUs, though this is mandated by article 17 of the undergraduate study regulations. When courses rely on alternative means of examination, these are not always adequately explained. There is no formal provision for alternative modes of examination in article 18 or elsewhere in the undergraduate study regulations. For the moment, this seems to be mostly a practice dependent on individual choice, and requires formalization. The available infrastructure limits the availability of practical exercise, though the Department's strait-jacketed program of study (see also Principle 4) is also partly responsible. This had already been highlighted during the evaluation report of 2014.

The diminishing rate of students graduating within four years of study (only 4 out of 104 in 2017-2018) cannot solely be explained by factors independent of the Department's will, such as the state-regulated mode of admission to Greek universities; the state-mandated number of admitted students; the state-imposed measure of maintaining "stagnating" students and allowing for a student to take a course and an examination numerous times; and the general social context. The heavy workload (24 hours of courses and mostly lectures, per week), as attested by students, and already signaled by the evaluation committee in 2014, is an inhibiting factor for student attendance and performance. A first-year student can have a timetable that looks like this: Mon 8-10am and 6-8pm; Tue 8-10am, 2-3pm, 6-10pm; Wed 11-12am, 4-8pm, Thu 8-10 am, 6-9pm and Fri: 2-4pm not counting an extra 4 morning hours for the languages. A second-year student can have two four-hour evening lecture classes although this is specifically prohibited by the Department's undergraduate study regulations (article 11.4). In general, students may spend 6-7 hours per day in class (especially since Friday seems to be underused).

Since students are allowed to sit for examination regardless of how many classes they have attended, attendance is not regular. Not attending classes encourages over-dependence on the written course material(s). State regulations allow students to take and retake exams regardless of attendance. Evidence from the examinations provided by the Department indicates that there are certain upper-level courses enrolled in their majority by students situated above their regular years of studies (n+1, n+2 and above), while at the same time these students do not sit for the exams. This should indicate that it is more optimal to focus on incentivizing students to finish within their regular years of study by easing their course load and diversifying their modes of examination as indicated above. This will allow the Department to use its human resources more efficiently.

As a rule, student assessment is conducted by one examiner in both written and oral examinations, the thesis being an exception (where two examiners are required). Evaluation is predominantly based on written final exams. Research papers, where they are available as a mode of assessment, are optional in most courses. There seem to be no seminars to prepare

students to write an undergraduate thesis. It is theoretically possible for a student to acquire a degree without having written a single research paper.

Assessment criteria and methods are included in the course descriptions. However, the AP members noticed that in some subjects success rates are high (sometimes with an average mark over 8), despite the large number of students examined. In some courses, the spread of marks is more regular; in others, the failure rates or the no-show rates at exams are very high. There is no specific norm on these issues but it may be a source of concern regarding consistency of standards applied for assessment.

Provisions for student appeals regarding grievances are included in the regulations but students do not seem well informed about them. The Department anticipates the creation of a student ombudsman at the University level. The good interpersonal relations between students and staff, as mentioned numerous times, may act as a mitigating factor. However, there should be a formal, established appeals process.

Panel judgement: The judgement of the AP for Principle Three is for **Substantial Compliance**

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

Panel Recommendations

Ensure that the CoMPUs platform is systematically used by all members of the staff and is regularly updated.

Increase the number of students who write assignments/papers.

Systematize alternative modes of assessment by incentivizing student attendance and by integrating fieldwork.

Reduce class sizes by offering more sections of larger courses (eventually reducing the number of elective courses offered every year)

The pass-rates and grade-spreads should be monitored. They should be discussed collectively but also individually with the staff members (perhaps by the Chair of the Department). A follow-up procedure should also be devised.

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

Greek universities have no control over admissions and the number of incoming students. This is a permanent source of problems and has negative effects on academic life, impacting the Department's teaching schedule, classroom size, and ability to cater to students' needs. Nevertheless, the Department prides itself on being accessible and student-friendly serving the needs of a sizable student population. The Department has a small number of foreign students (3%) as well as of students with disabilities. Measures are taken, mostly at the University level, to ease their transition into university life. The internal evaluation report and discussions during AP's visit show evidence that the Department is making serious efforts to accommodate their needs. A well designed process, which includes a fairly modern electronic data system, aims to help students familiarize themselves with registration, the Library, the Program of Study, the various labs, and other relevant facilities.

Students are informed they have access to an academic advisor and are encouraged to interact with relevant faculty. Incoming students have the opportunity to interact with their advanced colleagues, share information, and learn about university life. Much of this takes place in the first part of the school year. All the students the AP met were aware of the existence and role of academic advisors. They mentioned that the academic environment is friendly and supportive.

During its visit, the AP had the opportunity to meet with a group of pre-selected students and received valuable feedback. The AP believes that the students are highly satisfied with the clarity of information and advice with which they are provided. Students reported that faculty are easily accessible and respond regularly and promptly to email communications. In addition, the students feel that the Department's (and the University's) database system is good. Genuine

efforts are made to keep it up to date and improve its quality. The AP met with a good number of the 34-member Department faculty and is pleased with their commitment to students' needs. The administrative staff appear accommodating, courteous, and competent.

The increasing number of stagnating students, especially the alarmingly decreasing number of students who finish within 4 years of study, should be an issue that the Department needs to tackle collectively (see also principles 2 and 3). The Department is conscious of this issue and has set precise goals to reduce stagnation (decreasing the number of n+2 and above students to 18% of the total population; increasing the number of students graduating within their normal n years to 5% from 0%).

Other goals included in the list to be realized by the Department have already been reached and should either not be included in the list or their targets should be updated. For example, the goal of achieving a number of students participating in internship of 8% has already been achieved; the current rate stands at 9.34%. Another example is setting the goal of GPA graduation at 6.5 when the actual rate is already at 7.29. The fact that the average grade is already higher might indicate a grade inflation of which the Department should be conscious of and develop strategies to avoid. Regardless, the Department should clearly delineate the means by which a higher GPA average can be achieved without the possibility of creating grade inflation and through increasing quality of teaching and diversity of grade assessment.

The Department participates in the Erasmus program and is pleased with its record. A Department committee (with some student input) handles bilateral agreements with partner institutions. The Department has a considerable number of partnerships mostly with academic institutions situated in the areas it studies. The Department's website (as well as the faculty) inform students of Erasmus opportunities and requirements. Some students participate in the Erasmus program and the Department is making efforts to increase participation. Faculty involved in the program spoke positively of the Department's record and the success of the students who had the opportunity to participate. The few students who shared their experiences with AP expressed similar sentiments. It should be added that the Department offers every semester a number of courses in English to accommodate Erasmus students from other countries. As recommended by the 2014 evaluation report, these courses are open to Department's own students. The AP feels that the Department should do more to attract students to the program. The Department has fixed as a goal to increase the number of incoming and outgoing Erasmus students to 2%, which seems underwhelming since the current outgoing rate is at 2.16% and the current incoming at 3.30%.

The Department is actively seeking internship opportunities for their students and there is a committee in place to coordinate the process. The AP met with individuals representing the

French Institute, various museums, the local German Chamber of Commerce and others. They informed the AP that their respective organizations seek students from the Department and spoke highly of the interns' skills and high quality. Foreign language knowledge was mentioned as the most important asset.

The ECTS system is applied across the curriculum and the University does provide students with a Diploma Supplement issued upon graduation.

The Department has justifiably expressed its frustration with the reluctance of some public sector job announcements to include its degree and it is making serious efforts to ameliorate this condition by appealing with government authorities.

Panel judgement: The Judgement of the AP for Principle Four is for **Full Compliance**.

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

Panel Recommendations

Students' progress should be monitored more systematically in order to reduce failure and drop-out rates with appropriate actions taken like more advising and student-centered teaching. The scheduled revision of the Program of Study is an opportunity to evaluate the application of the ECTS system and make it more consistent across courses in the Program. Update the list of goals set by the Department and set realistic ones.

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 Department consists of 34 members: 27 male and 7 female. Even though several faculty retired in the last 7-8 years, the Department's strength has remained constant and in the last year or so, the Department even recruited two new faculty.

The Department's teaching load is three per year, which is in line with, if not below, research institutions in Greece and abroad. The sabbatical program is rather generous: half a year every three years or a full year every six years. On occasion, faculty are appointed to various government (national and local) agencies, boards, or commissions, and sometimes are selected for similar roles in the private sector.

Department faculty have a strong and internationally recognized scholarly presence. However, as is the case in nearly all institutions of higher learning in Greece, as well as abroad, the scholarly output is not uniform: some excel and others merely muddle through. Faculty publish monographs, books and articles in Greek as well as in other languages (mainly English) and present papers in national and international conferences. Many faculty have established and maintain connections with institutions and colleagues in most areas of the globe. A good number of them seek and often obtain valuable research grants. The University recently established a small grant-writing facility, which provides some technical and clerical assistance. Based on discussions with various Department members, the AP concluded that, generally speaking, older faculty are better acquainted with research-granting bodies while their younger counterparts are better skilled in the art of grant-writing proposal. The Department encourages research and makes an effort to collect data on the scholarly activities of its members.

The AP discussed with members of the faculty the link between research and teaching. It is worth pointing out that this is a universal issue and the extent to which research informs one's teaching is subjective and even controversial. Generally speaking, it is easier to make the link in advanced courses and much more difficult in the survey ones. Some Department faculty stated that they make every effort to incorporate their research in their teaching, and a look at faculty syllabi provides some evidence to that effect. The AP noted that there is an effort to give graduate students an opportunity to teach, but dearth of funds makes this rather problematic. It worth pointing out, however, that all Greek universities face similar problems.

The Department has institutionalized student course evaluations. The evaluation method is based on a two-part questionnaire. The first part consists of 19 questions where students are asked to rate the instructor on a 1-5 scale (the higher the better). The second part provides spaces for students to write comments on the quality of the course and the instructor. Department members assured the AP that every effort is made to improve the quality of the questionnaire as well as the rate of response. Compared to other settings observed by some AP members, the response rate is higher and appears to be improving. With few exceptions, the AP noted that the students like the quality of instruction they receive and have respect for their teachers. Extremely low scores may (and, we are told, does) trigger a meeting with the chair of Department. This means that the data are monitored and activate internal procedures, but not much more can be done beyond that if the instructor is tenured. AP interaction with students confirmed the results of student evaluations. In sum, the AP believes that the Department takes quality teaching seriously and should be commended.

Panel judgement: The Judgement of the AP for Principle Five is **Fully Compliant**

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

Panel Recommendations

The Department should seek ways to address the problematic teaching performance by the relatively small number of faculty who appear to receive consistently low teaching evaluations.

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

The Department has the essential facilities to ensure an appropriate learning environment, although it indicated a lack of sufficient number of offices for its academic personnel. Students are in general adequately informed through the University's and Department's webpages as well as through orientation meetings for newly enrolled students.

Space is an issue for the whole University, which has a long-standing requests for expansion, as had already been noted by the 2014 external evaluation report. This addition of new spaces is essential given the University's recent growth and increase in terms of both academic units in general and student enrolment. Still, the Department does provide adapted space for classrooms and laboratories. All are situated within one building. The course schedule indicates that classrooms are used at maximum capacity from 8:00 in the morning to 10:00 in the evening (with the notable exception of Friday).

There is a considerable effort to make the facilities, and a certain number of services areas, accessible to students with disabilities, despite the building's complex architecture. These facilities provide adequate IT infrastructure and resources for all students, including through the Internet platforms of the University. Students have access to two platforms: Student's Web, which allows them to follow their program of studies, choose their courses, and consult their marks; and CoMPUs, the on-line platform allowing students to consult their course material

uploaded by their instructors. The Department's IT lab is operational and new equipment has been purchased. It provides a whole series of services but is only staffed by a single member. The University's webpage indicated the possibility of using the function of the Wi-Fi network eduroam, but this did not seem to be operational during AP's visit.

The Library provides a good basis for undergraduate students in a research university. There is a variety of paper and electronic services available, as well as IT stations. The electronic resources available seem to be operational following a few-years gap due to the economic crisis, and the Library has a certain number of partnerships with libraries abroad in order to increase its services to its students. The Library's opening hours are highly convenient especially given the fact that students may have classes from 8:00am to 10:00pm. Its webpage is highly informative and regularly updated.

There are no dormitories on campus. The Department's students have access to dormitories at Kalamaria through the University's central services. During the AP's interviews with students the latter expressed their use of this possibility though they stressed the fact that disposing of student residences more centrally located and near the campus would be more convenient. The students also expressed their satisfaction with the quality of the University restaurant.

Generally speaking, there is also an adequate range of support of essential services to the students through the University. These include a new occupation and career structure (ΔΑΣΤΑ), a career-liaison office (though the difference between the two remains unclear), an internship office, a center for consulting and student support services, as well as a unit for accessibility supporting students with disabilities. The AP did not have the opportunity to visit these structures so it can only attest to their existence. It is to be noted that many of them have webpages under the University's main webpage but these webpages are unequally and irregularly maintained (some have regular postings, other are purely and passively descriptive, and some are completely blank).

Panel judgement: The judgement of the AP for Principle Six is for **Full Compliance**

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

Panel Recommendations

Update all webpages regularly.

Principle 7: Information Management

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

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

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

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

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

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

Study Programme compliance

The Department cooperates closely with the Institution's MODIP to compile an extensive array of data regarding the overall profile of the student body. The Department also collects detailed information from student evaluations of instruction, attendance rates at final examinations, grades, and the like. Student evaluations of instruction are regularly administered to all classes in the final weeks of each course; to AP's knowledge, no other kind of student satisfaction survey is administered. Most of the rest of the data come from the University's central information databanks. A web portal has recently been created where alumni can upload information about their current employment and activities. The collection of all this data takes place in a systematic and organized way, according to procedures that are part of the routine operations of the Department. Most of this information is then accessibly presented in the Department's Internal Evaluation and other documents. Often it is converted to the form of graphs so that trends can be made more visible.

Panel judgement: The Judgement of the AC for Principle Seven is for **Full Compliance**

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

Panel Recommendations

The AP has not recommendations for this Principle

Principle 8: Public Information

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD PUBLISH INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR TEACHING AND ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES WHICH IS CLEAR, ACCURATE, OBJECTIVE, UP-TO-DATE AND READILY ACCESSIBLE.

Information on Institution's activities is useful for prospective and current students, graduates, other stakeholders and the public.

Therefore, institutions and their academic units provide information about their activities, including the programmes they offer, the intended learning outcomes, the qualifications awarded, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to their students, as well as graduate employment information.

Study Programme compliance

The AP reviewed the Department's website and deems it of high quality. It is easily accessible, comprehensive, informative, and easy to navigate. The Student Guide, the External Evaluation Report, as well as the Department's own Academic Quality Assessment reports, are hosted on the website's main page. The site also includes a great deal of information on the Department and its various activities, a complete list of faculty members, including their specializations, publications, contact information, and office hours. The overwhelming majority of faculty CVs are also available, although some tend to be rather terse. On the website one finds plenty of information on the undergraduate (as well graduate) curriculum, examination schedule, the Erasmus program, the Department's labs, the Library and various other types of relevant information, in both Greek as well as in English.

The Department faculty post their syllabi, which can be viewed in CoMPUs. A great deal of the syllabi include detailed schedule assignments, course objectives and requirements, due dates, and evaluation criteria. A small number, however, tend to be less than clear and not comprehensive enough.

Panel judgement: The Judgement of AP for Principle Eight is for **Full Compliance**

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

Panel Recommendations

The AP recommends that faculty who have not updated their CVs to do so. They would be helpful to current students when deciding on a specialization and prospective students when declaring their university preferences.

The AP recommends that the Department Chair reviews the syllabi and should urge those faculty whose syllabi are wanting to upgrade them as soon as possible.

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 produces annual Internal Evaluations that are substantial, detailed, and thorough. All members of staff contribute their data to these Evaluations and understand the process of their creation to be integral to the work of the Department. The Evaluations are performed in close cooperation with the Institution's MODIP and are placed on the relevant webpage, where they are freely accessible (<https://www.uom.gr/modip/ektheseis/ethsies-ektheseis-tmhmato>). The Evaluations contain a great deal of data about the student body and the program, and reflect a sensitivity to social needs and the changing historical circumstances in which the Department operates (for example, section 15 of the Evaluation of 2017-2018). The majority of the Internal Evaluations consists of documentation, and it is remarkable that they reflect on the ways in which Internal Evaluations can be improved (section 31 of the Evaluation of 2017-2018). Data on low teaching evaluations, for example, can lead to corrective discussion between the Chair and a faculty member with low scores (the Accreditation Panel was assured that one such instance did occur).

Do the Internal Evaluations recommend specific actions for the improvement of the undergraduate program? That is hard to know. The Internal Evaluations of 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 contain sections for "Conclusions and Plans for Improvement," but those sections are empty, referring *forward in time* to the Internal Evaluation of 2017-2018, which does contain such a section, though it refers to actions for improvement that had, by then, already been taken. This means either that the Internal Evaluations *of all years* were produced together (indeed, they all bear the same date on the cover page: 30 December 2019), or the earlier ones did not originally contain a section for Improvement but those sections were added later (in 2019) to reflect an advanced understanding of the function of the Internal Evaluations. The

Department clearly did take actions to improve the program in the years 2014-2019 (see Principle 10 below for examples), but those actions were not yet integrated into the framework of the Internal Evaluations.

The Department appears to be substantially compliant at the present time, although it does not appear to have been so in the years 2014 to 2018.

Panel judgement: The Judgement of the AP for Principle Nine is for **Substantial Compliance**

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

Panel Recommendations

The Department should henceforth integrate program evaluation and improvement into its regular annual process of Internal Evaluation, and not conduct it on ad hoc basis outside the Evaluation process.

Principle 10: Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programmes

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

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

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

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

Study Programme compliance

As mentioned previously, the Department's undergraduate program underwent an external evaluation administered by HQA in early 2014. It resulted in a detailed External Evaluation Report. The program has not been evaluated by any other agency since then. Therefore, before the present accreditation report, the program has had a full five years to assess and implement the recommendations of the External Evaluation Report. There is evidence that the Department has implemented some of the recommendations of the External Evaluation Report, for example: to institute student advisors and to integrate the role of placements (or internships) in the student experience (A.1.6); to monitor student success on the job market (as far as that is possible through self-reporting); to offer more courses in English (B.1.4); to monitor student evaluations of teaching (B.1.5 – though the actions that can be taken subsequent to that are limited to nonexistent); to revamp the webpage in order to make it more accessible (D.2); and to open access to ERASMUS courses to both Greek and foreign students (A.1.5, B.1.3).

However, a number of recommendations made by the External Evaluation Report seem to have elicited little or no documented consideration, specifically a set of interrelated recommendations about how teaching is structured, from reducing the hours of classroom time, varying the skills that students cultivate in courses, to assessing and grading students through means other than examination (A.1.2-4, B.1.1-2). These are naturally the most difficult kind of reforms to implement. Already in the Department's Internal Evaluation of 2014-2015 the recommendation that courses be *reduced* from 48 to 40 (by raising the number of ECTS assigned to each course through the addition of workshops, discussion groups, etc.) was fundamentally misunderstood as a recommendation to *increase* courses to 48 (<https://www.uom.gr/assets/site/public/nodes/5589/4772-bsas-final-2014-2015.pdf>

p. 46), and the error has remained unchanged in the subsequent Internal Evaluations (for example, see Προταση Ακαδημαϊκής Πιστοποίησης ΠΠΣ, 2019, p. 39).

The members of staff seem fully aware of the importance of external review and its potential contribution to improvement. The Department's data-gathering is impressive and its Internal Evaluations are thorough, inputting data from all constituents and staff members. The entire Department participated positively in the AP's accreditation visit, provided all the data AP asked for, and answered all its questions. However, sometimes issues of procedure were confused with issues of substance. When asked about the mechanisms by which the Department's Curriculum Committee dealt with a certain matter, the answers AP received were usually about the matter itself, not the procedures that had been put in place to discuss and handle it.

Panel judgement: The Judgement of the AP for Principle Ten is for **Partial Compliance**

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

Panel Recommendations

The Department's Curriculum Committee should produce a consistent paper trail to document its discussion of those External Evaluation Report recommendations, which have not been taken up.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

- Comprehensive data collection
- Information and resources made readily available to students
- Faculty are easily accessible to students
- The Staff is reliable and efficient
- Strong faculty research is a benefit to undergraduate students
- The 2013 departmental merger was successful
- The Library resources are substantial, orderly, and user-friendly
- The Library provides facilities for the visually impaired
- The internship program is strong and supported by the Department
- The language program appears to be strong and is unique in its breadth
- Small but growing international Erasmus program
- Good relations with neighboring cultural institutions and the community at large

II. Areas of Weakness

- Too few students graduate in four years and an increasing number of students stagnate
- Too many hours of classroom time during the week, especially in lecture-mode
- More emphasis should be placed on alternative assignments for students beyond examinations
- Internal evaluations for 2014-2018 lack robust and documented sections on program revision
- Program revision should be handled regularly by the Curriculum committee and documented properly
- The recommendations provided by the 2014 external evaluation should be revisited and considered seriously

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

- The quality assurance process should be undertaken with the view to constantly monitor and review all aspects of the educational experience for the students. The process should be undertaken with diligence and determination towards producing concrete practical suggestions for consideration and possible change. Student participation should be solicited at all levels and systematically so.
- An established periodic review of curriculum design should be performed with a report delineating strengths and weaknesses of the specific design along with possible alternative curricular designs.
- Ensure that the CoMPUs platform is systematically used by all members of the staff and is regularly updated.
- Increase the number of students who write assignments/papers.
- Systematize alternative modes of assessment by incentivizing student attendance and integrating fieldwork.

- Reduce class sizes by offering more sections of larger courses (eventually reducing the number of elective courses offered every year).
- The pass-rates and grade-spreads should be monitored. They should be discussed collectively but also individually with the staff members (perhaps by the Chair of the Department). A follow-up procedure should also be devised.
- Students' progress should be monitored more systematically in order to reduce failure and drop-out rates with appropriate actions.
- The scheduled revision of the Program of Study is an opportunity to evaluate the application of the ECTS system and make it more consistent across courses in the Program.
- Update the list of goals set by the Department and set realistic ones.
- The Department should seek ways to address the problematic teaching performance by the relatively small number of faculty who appear to receive consistently low teaching evaluations.
- The AP recommends that faculty who have not updated their CVs to do so. Such data would be helpful to current students when deciding on a specialization and prospective students when declaring their university preferences.
- The AP recommends that the Department Chair reviews the syllabi and should urge those faculty whose syllabi are wanting to upgrade them as soon as possible.
- The Department should henceforth integrate program evaluation and improvement into its regular annual process of Internal Evaluation, and not conduct it on ad hoc basis outside the Evaluation process.
- The Department's Curriculum Committee should produce a consistent paper trail to document its discussion of those External Evaluation Report recommendations, which have not been taken up.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: 1, 2, 3, 9

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are: 10

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are: 0

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

**The members of the Accreditation Panel for the Undergraduate Programme Balkan,
Slavic & Oriental Studies of the University of Macedonia**

Name and Surname

Signature

- **Prof. Symeon Giannakos (Chair)**, Salve Regina University, Barrington, Rhode Island, USA
- **Assoc. Prof. Anastassios Anastassiadis**, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada
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- **Prof. Anthony Kaldellis**, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, USA