



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ  
**Α.ΔΙ.Π.**  
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ΑΝΩΤΑΤΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ

HELLENIC REPUBLIC  
**H.Q.A.A.**  
HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY  
FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

## **EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT**

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS  
ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY OF THESSALONIKI

FEBRUARY 28, 2014

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### **External Evaluation Committee**

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the Department of Economics consisted of the following five (5) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by the HQAA in accordance with Law 3374/2005:

1. **Effrosyni Diamantoudi**, *Associate Professor, Department of Economics, University of Concordia*  
*e-mail:diamantoudi@gmail.com*
  
2. **Ioanna Papasolomou**, *Professor, Department of Marketing, School of Business, University of Nicosia*  
*e-mail:papasolomou.i@unic.ac.cy*
  
3. **Constantine Passaris**, *Professor of Economics & Onassis Foundation Fellow, Department of Economics, University of New Brunswick*  
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4. **Emmanuel Thanassoulis**, *Professor in Management Sciences at Aston Business School, Aston University (coordinator)*  
*e-mail:e.thanassoulis@aston.ac.uk*
  
5. **Panayiotis Theodossiou**, *Professor of Finance & Dean Faculty of Management and Economics, Cyprus University of Technology*  
*e-mail:theodoss@gmail.com,*

The Evaluation took place from 27 to 31 January 2014

**GLOSSARY**

ABS	Association of Business Schools
EEC	External Evaluation Committee
HRM	Human Resources Management
HQAA	Hellenic Quality Assurance Agency
IER	Internal Evaluation Report
MODIP	Quality Assurance Agency (University level)
OM	Operations Management
OMEA	Internal Evaluation Committee
OR	Operational Research
PG	Postgraduate
The Committee	External Evaluation Committee
The Department	Department of Economics, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
UG	Undergraduate

**N.B.** The structure of the “Template” proposed for the External Evaluation Report mirrors the requirements of Law 3374/2005 and corresponds overall to the structure of the Internal Evaluation Report submitted by the Department.

The length of text in each box is free. Questions included in each box are not exclusive nor should they always be answered separately; they are meant to provide a general outline of matters that should be addressed by the Committee when formulating its comments.

## **Introduction-**

### **I. The External Evaluation Procedure**

The External Evaluation Committee ( **EEC** ) received the Department’s Internal Evaluation Report ( **IER** ) covering the period 2010-2013 dated January 2014 prior to their on site visit to the Department of Economics at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki ( **AUTH** ).

The Committee was favourably impressed with the comprehensiveness, thoroughness and professionalism with which the OMEA (Internal Evaluation Committee, *Ομάδα Εσωτερικής Αξιολόγησης*) prepared the IER and with the information, documentation and overview presentations contained therein.

After an overview and orientation meeting at the Hellenic Quality Assurance Agency (HQAA) offices conducted by Professor Peter Soldatos on Monday January 27 , 2014, the EEC travelled to Thessaloniki for their on site visit to the Department during the period Monday to Wednesday 27-29/01/2014.

The detailed schedule of the External Evaluation Project for the Department of Economics at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (27 Jan-01 Feb, 2014) included:

#### **Monday, 27 Jan. 2014, 1st Day of the Evaluation Process**

On site welcome remarks and presentation by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki’s Vice Rector, Academic Affairs and Vice President of MODIP, Prof. D. Lialiou.

On site welcome remarks and brief presentation of the School of Economic and Political Sciences by Dean Prof. E. Petridou.

On site brief introductory meeting by the Head of the Department of Economics Prof. C. Katrakilidis and the Directors of the Divisions and the members of the Departmental Internal Evaluation Committee.

The EEC also received a folder containing the following documents:

1. The Organizational Chart of the Department of Economics
2. The Study Guide 2013/2014
3. The Internal Evaluation Report IER 2012-2013.

#### **Tuesday, 28 Jan. 2014, 2nd Day**

On site detailed presentation by the Head of the Department, Prof. C. Katrakilidis.  
On site presentation of the Quality Assurance Procedures of the Department, Prof. Ch. Spathis, OMEA co-ordinator.

### **On Site Presentation of the Undergraduate Programme of Studies**

On site presentation of the Programme of Studies of the Department - Prof. C. Katrakilidis, Head of the Department.

On site presentation of the Divisions, Directors of the three divisions (Assoc. Prof. D. Kousenidis, Assoc. Prof. G. Papachristou, Assoc. Prof. P. Tsaliki).

### **On Site Presentation of the Programme of Graduate Studies "Economics and Management" Presentation of Doctoral Programme**

On site presentation of the Master's Programme in Economics and Management and the Ph.D. Programme of the Department of Economics by Prof. Chr. Papadopoulos, Director of the Graduate Programme.

Specialization: 'Logistics Management' presentation by Asst. Prof. Em. Plakoyiannaki, Programme Coordinator.

Specialization: 'Master of Business Administration' presentation by Asst. Prof. V. Polimenis, Programme Coordinator.

Specialization: 'Economic and Regional Development' presentation by Prof. P. Fousekis, Programme Coordinator of this program.

Specialization: 'International and European Economics' presentation by Asst. Prof. Chr. Emmanouilidis, Programme Coordinator.

Joint Graduate Programme in 'Informatics and Management' presentation by Asst. Prof. Chr. Boutsouki, member of the Programme Coordinating Committee.

The Ph.D. Programme of the Department of Economics: Presentation by Prof. Chr. Papadopoulos and Asst.Prof. Em. Plakoyiannaki, Coordinator of the Research Methodology Course.

### **Research Activities of the Department**

On site presentation - Research Committee Representative AUTH and Assoc. Prof. N. Varsakelis:

Research Activity at AUTH  
Research Programmes and funding  
Publications and Citations of the staff of the Department

### **Mobility Programmes and Student Internships**

On site presentation - Asst Prof. St. Kostopoulou, Assoc. Prof. D. Mardas:

1. Erasmus programme
2. Internship Programme

### **On Site Presentations Support Units of the Department**

1. Library – Asst. Prof Em. Plakoyiannaki
2. IT Lab – Asst. Prof A. Tsadiras
3. Lecture Rooms – Asst. Prof A. Tsadiras
4. Website of the Department – Asst. Prof A. Tsadiras

### **Wednesday, 29 Jan. 2014, 3rd Day**

#### **On Site Meetings with staff, students and graduates of the Department**

On site meetings with academic staff groups by seniority.

On site Group Meetings with students (undergraduate and graduate) - discussions on Ph.D theses and post graduate dissertations.

On site Group Meetings with scientific, technical and administrative staff of the Department.

On Site Group Meetings with alumni of the Department.

On site visit to the Premises and Facilities of the Department including Lecture Rooms and theatres; Staff Offices; Laboratory Facilities; Library Facilities and the Secretary of the Department.

#### **On Site Presentation of the Contribution of the Department: Academic and Public Outreach**

On site presentation – Asst. Prof. G. Zarotiadis and Asst. Prof. St. Kostopoulou.

1. Honors, Awards
2. Honorary Doctorates
3. Conferences, Seminars
4. Bilateral Agreements, participation in scientific organizations
5. Unit of Innovation and Entrepreneurship at AUTH
6. Contribution of the members of the Department to local and national initiatives.
7. Links with the industry and research institutes.
8. Students' Activities (ASECU YOUTH, AIESEC)

#### **On Site Summary of the Presentation of the Department – Closing Session**

Discussion with the Head of the Department and selected faculty members by the EEC about the problems, challenges opportunities and prospects of the Department of Economics.

At the completion of the on-site visits the Committee received a USB stick containing all the presentations that had been made during the on site visit.

**The EEC spent Thursday & Friday, 30-31 Jan. 2014 writing their final report at their Thessaloniki hotel.**

The EEC is of the opinion that the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki plays an important pedagogical, economic, social and cultural role in the City of Thessaloniki and the greater geographical area of Northern Greece. This is especially true of the Department of Economics at the AUTH. Indeed, the Department of Economics provides important services and significant contributions with respect to teaching, research and community outreach for an extensive geographical area.

At the present time when the dissemination of knowledge and the accumulation of human capital in the form of education, knowledge, technological competence and specialized skills are vital for navigating the new global economy and enriching our modern civil society, the Department of Economics is a key contributor for the economy and society of Northern Greece. In this regard, the EEC believes that the Department of Economics at the AUTH should receive adequate funding, financial and human resources in order to accomplish its academic mission. The EEC is cognizant of the fiscal constraints that confront government funding for universities in Greece. However, the EEC is of the opinion that the Department of Economics at the AUTH should be considered a high priority in the disbursement of government funding. The EEC has come to this conclusion because of the Department of Economics' geographical location in Northern Greece, its important role in the economy of Northern Greece, its unique academic and pedagogical mission, its distinctive contributions to Greek civil society and its global network and international outreach.

**A. Curriculum-***Undergraduate program.***UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMME IN ECONOMICS****APPROACH**

The mission of the undergraduate programme in Economics is to provide and develop knowledge in the areas of economics and business administration. The department's goal is to generate well trained economists that fulfill the requirements of state-of-the art business executives. The programme is geared towards serving the needs of the local and Greek economy by developing economists and managers with international orientation. The department attracts students with high potential.

The programme comprises 38 compulsory and 8 elective courses. It is structured in three streams: (i) *Development and Planning*, (ii) *Economic Theory and Policy* and (iii) *Business Economics*. The three streams echo the three academic divisions of the department and are managed accordingly. 22 out of the 38 compulsory courses comprise the common core of the three streams. The remaining 16 compulsory courses are stream-specific. At least 4 out of the 8 elective courses are also stream specific and only at most 4 elective courses can be taken from other streams. Although the three streams appear to be well detached they are not disconnected on the basis of content. The difference in scope between the Economic Theory and Policy is not evident, while there are serious contextual overlaps in all three programmes besides the common core and the obvious common courses in the stream cores (see the relevant comments under Improvement). The courses are taught by well qualified academic staff most of whom are research active in the areas they teach.

There is an optional internship scheme available to the programme that facilitates the transition from university studies to employment for those that follow it. The Department has in place an informal procedure that involves an 'academic curriculum committee' which in consultation with the each division revises and adjusts the curriculum.

The general design of the programme curriculum is compatible with equivalent international programmes and it has been adjusted, where necessary to address requirements of the Greek socio-economic context after consultation with the economics, commercial and industrial associations. Updating of certain course offerings may be warranted as certain topics are no longer considered fundamental enough to be part of the core. At the same time the undergraduate programme committee may consider the design and inclusion of new courses (at least as electives) that are offered in most state-of-the art programmes abroad (see more on this under improvement).

**IMPLEMENTATION**

The Programme is an effective implementation of the intended goals and objectives.

Most of the syllabi of the taught courses are up to date and comparable with equivalent courses of highly reputable universities. Having said that, reading materials could be updated. The programme is clearly described on the web site of the Department, the course guide, and brochures, thus effectively communicated to various audiences, including students, staff and visiting academics, employers and prospective students.

The Programme's international orientation is strengthened by participation in the Erasmus exchange Programme. The Department offers 29 courses in English to incoming Erasmus students. Only those with sufficient registrations are actually taught. The Department has 30 bilateral agreements with foreign universities within the Erasmus framework and 32 within the Erasmus-plus.

The undergraduate programme is quite intensive in comparison to equivalent programmes in Europe and abroad. It has a large common core as well as stream-specific cores that result in many course and hence lecture hours per week. This has implications both for time left for research by staff and for students to develop their own critical thinking. These points are touched upon in our recommendations later.

Recently, the number of staff teaching on the undergraduate programme has declined due to various reasons. Moreover, due to legal amendments teaching by part-timers was very limited. Although the Department managed to adequately resource the full programme with well qualified, albeit overloaded teaching, staff, quality of teaching (see relevant references in Teaching section) inevitably suffers. Appropriate restructuring of the curriculum and merging two of the three streams with overlapping topics can decrease the additional load and thus increase the time spent by instructors on each course (see relevant recommendations in the end).

## **RESULTS**

Student evaluation survey results as well as feedback from alumni and students that the Committee had the opportunity to randomly select and interview provide convincing evidence that the Department of Economics' undergraduate programme is highly regarded by its students and graduates. The programme has achieved high demand, requires high marks from university entry exams and as a result attracts highly capable students. It has consistently the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest aggregate entry points among 25 Economics and Management and the 4<sup>th</sup> highest among 28 Informatics and Telecoms Department in Greece. According to a recent study by the AUT alumni office there is clear evidence of the fast absorption of the Department's graduate by the job market. In short, the Department is reaching its goals and objectives by appropriately preparing its graduates for the world of work.

## **IMPROVEMENT**

The Department could consider the disassociation between the programmes of study from the three staff Divisions (Τομείς). There seems to be an overlap between all three but it is more intense between the two streams: (i) Development and Planning and (ii) Economic Theory and Policy. At least 6 courses are common in these two stream cores and quite a few others are very similar. Such proximity between the

two suggests little scope for separation. A merger of the two programmes would decrease the total number of courses offered by the Department. Another endeavor in the same direction would be the careful inspection and consolidation of very similar courses, across *all* three streams that appear under slightly different titles. These efforts would, in turn, alleviate the load from overworked staff and allocate it more efficiently among all Department members. It can possibly allow for the creation of multiple sections for the very large 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year courses.

The Department may also consider updating its curriculum. For example Development Economics and Economic History during the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle (the common core) are no longer considered “fundamental” in a degree that may lead to either a business or an economics stream. Such courses can be moved to subsequent years within the “economics” stream. A similar example, Spatial Economics, is also outdated and can be moved to the electives section. On the other end, economics as a science has evolved and new and exciting fields have emerged that have established their significance through high impact factor journals, Nobel prizes, etc. (a couple of examples that come in mind are experimental economics and sustainable development). It may not be a bad idea for the “theoreticians” of the department to revamp their course offerings and hence attract more students.

## **POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES**

### **APPROACH**

The Department presently offers a Masters Programme titled “Management and Economics” with four streams: (i) Business Administration, (ii) Logistics Management, (iii) International and European Economics and (iii) Economic and Regional Development. Moreover, the Department participates in an interdepartmental graduate programme, Informatics and Management.

In general, the Masters programme serves two primary goals. Firstly, it complements the inadequacies of the undergraduate programmes due to large classes, low participation, and minimal opportunity for practice, and thus, it better prepares candidates for the job market. Secondly, it prepares undergraduates that wish to pursue Doctoral studies by deepening their knowledge of the subject matter.

All four streams are taught in Greek, although appropriate steps have been taken so that some of these streams can be offered in English. Each stream comprises 10 courses and a thesis. In these graduate programmes attendance is compulsory, class sizes are small (min 7, max 18), and courses involve tutorials, midterm examinations and homework.

Business Administration and Logistics and Management have no electives and a slightly higher demand while the remaining two programmes have 3 compulsory courses and 7 electives.

None of the programmes has tuition fees and therefore the programmes are essentially not funded apart from the minimum support they receive from the

Research Institute. These results in many inadequacies such as faculty teaching pro bono, few courses offered, no administrative support and no international exposure by means of invited speakers among others.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

All four Masters programmes implemented their curricula and they are of comparable standards with equivalent Programmes in established universities in Europe and abroad.

The admission procedures are thorough, fair and transparent ensuring the high quality of those admitted in the programmes. Students are well informed ex ante of what their programme entails and what is expected of them. By meeting with a sample of students from the graduate programmes we concluded that they particularly enjoyed and appreciated small class sizes, course work during the term and a hands-on approach by staff.

### **RESULTS**

The results and effectiveness of the taught graduate programmes is manifested in the success with which the graduates enter the job market. Unfortunately, there is no system in place that traces the success and growth of graduates. By meeting with the alumni we concluded to that effect that students are trained effectively and find jobs quite quickly, especially under present circumstances with unemployment in Greece at its highest.

### **IMPROVEMENT**

The Department can improve the graduate programme in the following ways.

The creation of a flagship programme, possibly in English, can attract a large number of students from Greece and abroad. Such a programme can be provided with tuition fees, possibly different among domestic and foreign students. The generated revenues can serve multiple purposes: (i) free resources for the undergraduate programme by recruiting external instructors, (ii) fund all the elements that make a flagship programme such as reputable lecturers from abroad, choice of courses, facilities among others, (iv) provide scholarship to successful students in financial need and (v) fund other graduate programmes that may be offered free of tuition fees.

The four streams seem to spread the resources of the department somewhat thin. A concentration of the four streams in, may be, two with solid cores (possibly partly common) and remaining electives could fit the dual identity of the department, economics and business, better.

### **PhD PROGRAMME**

The goal of the PhD programme is to prepare future academic teachers and

researchers in the thematic areas of the Department. The taught components of the programme (on research methodology I and II) are intended to provide research competencies and a common conceptual foundation for all PhD students of the Department. PhD research is conducted under supervision by members of staff with expertise in the domain of the doctoral study.

The students' progress is closely monitored with annual progress reports submitted by the students and signed by the supervisors. The acquisition of knowledge is secured through the comprehensive exams (rigorosum exams). They have a written and an oral component and they are pass/fail. A 7 member committee consisting of internal and external to the university academics examines the thesis. A publication (or an acceptance letter) in a refereed journal registered in one of the widely accepted lists is required prior to conferment of the thesis.

Doctoral students also do not pay any fees in exchange for their studies. Instead, they provide their services in assisting Professors with grading in undergraduate classes and offering tutorials and lab sessions. Doctoral students are aware of this exchange upon admission and they welcome it as it provides them with experience towards an academic career. However, this exchange is done in non-systematic way that results in uneven workloads among students depending on the supervisor and the courses they are assigned. The programme can be improved in this matter, by formalizing this exchange of labour in terms of hours of work, or something similar to ensure equal treatment across students.

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## ***B. Teaching***

### **UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMME IN ECONOMICS**

#### **APPROACH**

In general, the teaching methods used are primarily 3 hour lectures supported by weekly seminars/tutorials offered over a 13 week period for each course. Many of the tutorials/seminars are often taught by PhD students. This is followed by an examination period in which the students can take a final exam in all the courses they have registered for.

In the face-to-face group meetings that the EEC had with faculty they emphasized that although some courses have small numbers, several of the classes offered in the first two years of study are attended by large audiences, of over 400 students.

Many of the courses are taught in the two amphitheatres that can host 430 and 800 students respectively. These amphitheatres are shared with the Law Department. The faculty also use smaller classrooms that can accommodate up to 120 students each time. Out of the 8 classrooms shared with the Law Department only 3 are utilized exclusively by the Department. The large number of students and the small number of classrooms available creates a situation where the weekly teaching time assigned to each lecturer is broken down and scattered during the course of the week. This creates difficulties both for faculty members and students.

Undergraduate students have the opportunity to have an internship in a local company or public organisation in order to gain practical experience. This internship is offered as an elective. The internship enriches learning adding a more practical perspective to the student experience.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION**

The large size of classes creates a situation where it is practically impossible to monitor the academic performance of students or to encourage students to participate in class. It can also create a situation which demotivates lecturers from using “continuous assessment” through the use of multiple assessment methods such as: mid-terms, tests, assignments, and homework exercises. There was also no evidence that faculty use group work/projects which could enhance teamwork, create a team spirit and encourage cooperation between students. Further, there was no evidence of the use of multiple assessment methods. Indeed the “Study Guide” showed that the vast majority of courses are assessed through the use of a final examination equivalent to 100% of the course grade. Using multiple assessment methods enables faculty members to monitor student performance, identify weakness, give regular and timely feedback, encourage students to study systematically and enable them to improve their academic performance and grade for the module/course. Some faculty have incorporated mid-terms in the assessment of their course(s). However, in some cases they have not used this type of assessment effectively. Instead of giving an incentive to the students to participate

in the mid-term exams they may have disincentivised them by saying that if they do not perform to a certain threshold they will suffer a penalty in their overall mark. Similarly there may have been a disincentive to some students to take mid-term tests where faculty members imposed an “unwritten rule” that students had to attend classes regularly to be given the right to take the mid-term tests.

Several exam papers were seen by the Committee. They gave clear instructions and had a clear layout. However, there were cases where the exam paper only covered three different topics of the course material. It is advisable for the exam paper to cover a significant range of the topics in a course. In addition, for the majority of courses the students are assessed solely on the basis of the final exam. This can be seen as anti-pedagogical as it puts too much pressure on students who in essence know that their ability to pass or fail the course depends on how well they perform in the final exam. Since students in each semester can take 5 final exams and in addition they may be taking other examinations on courses they might have failed on previous occasions the load can be too high for them to pass all the courses or get good grades. This could be one of the factors that lead to a minority of students graduating in 4 years which is the normal duration of the UG programme.

#### Additional Points regarding Implementation

1. **Accessibility of Lecturers:** students the Committee met commented that faculty members are accessible, they maintain weekly office hours and student consultation hours, and reply to emails enabling good communication between students and teachers.
2. **MODIP runs student evaluations of the courses and the lecturers:** However, the student participation rate in this assessment exercise is low especially among first and second year undergraduate students. For example in 2012-2013 only 17% and 4% of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year students respectively participated in the evaluation exercise.
3. There is no formal follow up procedure and a paper trail of action taken in response to student evaluations of courses and faculty.
4. There is no formal procedure for dealing with student disputes of marks save speaking directly to the faculty member concerned. This is unwieldy from the student perspective.
5. **Course Material:** The course material is placed on line and is accessible through the use of online educational platforms (blackboard) or through the website for each course. This is consistent with practice in Universities elsewhere.
6. **Course Outlines:** there was inconsistency between course outlines examined during the EEC visit primarily in terms of the format and layout. There is a need for consistency in the way the course outlines are structured, in the way the various sections are presented, and the order in which the sections are presented.

7. The course syllabi included in the “Study Guide” had no reference to the “Learning Outcomes” of each course. The ECTS guidelines clearly state that courses and programmes need to have a section on expected learning outcomes.
8. The premises and the infrastructure are in very poor condition and hardly maintained. The Pcs in the computer labs are too few compared to the number of undergraduate students.
9. Most classrooms lack basic equipment (PCs, projectors, sound systems etc.), are not properly heated and are run down. Classrooms also have poor hygienic conditions.

### **RESULTS**

Overall the EEC believes that while the learning experience of students is good in terms of course content, access to staff and the option of internships there are nevertheless some weak points. These are primarily the result of poor funding, poor infrastructure and security weaknesses. The high student to staff ratio, the large classes at undergraduate level, the increased teaching loads, the lack of in theatre teaching equipment, and the poor infrastructure have a detrimental impact on faculty and student experience.

The pass rate in the exams for the 2012-2013 examination periods was: 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year: 57%, 3<sup>rd</sup> year: 61% and 4<sup>th</sup> year: 65%. These pass rates are low by comparison to Institutions the Committee is familiar with. However, these low rates may be an artefact of the Greek legal framework whereby students can sit as many times as they wish before they pass an examination. For this and other Greek-specific reasons (such as soldiers registering for an exam simply to get leave from the army) can contribute to the low pass rate. The same factors may also contribute to the relatively low percentage of students graduating within the 4 years which is the normal duration of the UG degree. The average duration of UG studies is 5,66 years (based on Table 7 of the Internal Evaluation Report for the academic year 2012-2013). The average graduating grade (6.7) is relatively low compared to other good Greek Universities.

### **IMPROVEMENT**

There is at University level the Quality Assurance Agency (MOΔIII). However, the agency is relatively recent and the operational links between it and the Department not yet developed. The Department could consider how to utilise the QAA (MOΔIII) to significantly improve the quality of teaching and learning. There is a need to instil and utilize within the Department internal mechanisms for quality assurance in line with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. These internal mechanisms could in essence encompass Quality

Assurance (QA) policies, procedures, and guidelines. The establishment of the Internal Quality Assurance Committee at a departmental level should act as the mechanism for strategically and formally implementing, managing and evaluating this effort.

In the presentation given by the vice rector, Prof Lialiou, the EEC was informed that the University has applied for the ECTS Label certification but the application was not successful. This should be seen as an opportunity by the University and subsequently by the Department to re-engineer and fine-tune all its programmes using ECTS, Learning Outcomes, and the Tuning Methodology. Each completed ECTS Programme Portfolio can then be audited by the Internal Quality Assurance Committee based on international guidelines (i.e. Tuning Methodology).

There are other mechanisms that could also be pursued for quality assurance but these should be pursued at a University level. For example: the *Investors in People (IIP) Standard*, and the *European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Committed to Excellence Award*.

### **Recommendations for Improvement: Department focus**

#### ***1. Internal Regulations***

The Committee understands that the newly created School of Economic and Political Sciences is in the process of creating a Guide (Κανονισμός). In this context the Department could prepare a Guide of Internal Regulations giving information on rules, regulations, policies and procedures and could serve as an instrument for quality assurance.

#### ***2. Programme Monitoring and Review.***

The Bologna Process can serve as a reference point for the monitoring of the degree programmes and for their periodic review. The EEC recommends to the Department to adapt its curriculum development mechanisms and procedures to be in line with for example the Tuning Methodology of the Bologna Agreement/Process for curriculum development.

#### ***3. The Use Of Faculty Mentors for Students***

The Department could consider setting up a Personal Mentoring System designed to ensure that all students have regular opportunities to review their personal, academic and career development with an academic staff member (personal tutor). Personal Tutors listen to students and provide encouragement and support as appropriate; they help students develop personally and professionally.

#### **4. Faculty Self-Evaluation, Peer Review And Teaching Observations**

The Department could consider setting up a system whereby each member of the faculty will participate in a teaching performance appraisal and evaluation as part of an ongoing process of professional development. It is designed to solicit feedback on the effectiveness of a faculty member as a lecturer and scholar by drawing attention to strengths and weaknesses and relating them to his/her personal goals and objectives and the University's mission. This could form part of the Annual Review of staff suggested under Research below.

#### **5. Peer Review Of Assessed Assignments and Examination Papers**

Peer review of examinations provides one of the principal means for maintaining academic standards within autonomous higher education institutions. It is an integral and essential part of institutional quality assurance. The Department could consider setting up a formal system whereby examination questions and assessed assignments are vetted internally for the standard they set. Similarly a system of sample second marking can be instituted to ensure the marks awarded are appropriate for the standard of the work submitted by the students.

### **Recommendations for Improvement: Faculty focus**

- The Department could encourage existing faculty and require new recruits to attend courses on teaching effectiveness. Such programmes as the Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education for example are a requirement for faculty members teaching at several UK Universities. These courses and programmes are designed to enhance teaching skills, help faculty members identify their weaknesses and improve, learn methods and techniques that can make teaching more interesting for students, and develop/adopt a more pedagogical approach towards their students.
- The Department could encourage stronger cooperation between faculty with the same expertise and specialization irrespective of the division (τομέα) to which they belong. The re-designing/re-engineering of the programmes offered which is clear and necessary (see Part A: Curriculum) will enable the Department to eliminate courses with small student numbers and enable faculty members to co-teach the same course(s) that fall within their area of expertise. In this way large classes can be broken down into smaller sections with smaller student numbers and taught by more faculty members. This will be greatly beneficial for both the students and faculty members and can potentially improve the quality in teaching. It can also help rebalance the current disparity between student preferences in years 3 and 4 and available staff by division.
- Multiple-assessment methods: As noted earlier there is a need to introduce and use multiple assessment methods to encourage students to study systematically, monitor their academic performance, enable students to perform better and improve their grades.
- Recommended Course Textbooks:

(1) there is a need to use new/updated editions of textbooks. Currently several courses have recommended textbooks that are old published from 1997 to 2008. The Committee suspects that the financial incentive a staff member has from the adoption of his/her book as the one delivered to students at state expense can potentially be inimical to the regular update of recommended textbooks for students or of securing the most appropriate combination of courses for the intended learning outcomes. The Committee is not taking a position on the financial incentive for the staff member whose book is recommended. However, it would recommend to the Department to be aware of potential unintended consequences for students due to the said financial incentives such as for example irregular updating of course content.

- (2) Related to the foregoing recommendation is the advice where possible, to use Greek translations of well-known international textbooks where they cover a course. This will give students a broader perspective of the various subjects and disciplines.
- Erasmus: there is a need to offer more undergraduate courses in English in order to promote the Department and the university to Erasmus students. These courses can also be offered to home students. The students and staff will benefit from the mobility of staff and students both into and out of the Department.
- Courses: Re-engineering of the undergraduate programmes is needed in order to: (1) eliminate courses that are 'outdated'/'old fashioned', courses that are the same or very similar and are currently offered under different names, and (2) introduce courses that reflect the latest trends and developments in each discipline. The re-engineering/re-designing process should take into consideration the interests of students, competitive programmes offered by local and foreign universities, as well as the strategic goals of the Department.

## **POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES**

### **APPROACH**

As noted earlier at postgraduate level, the Department offers a Masters Programme titled "Management and Economics" with four streams: (i) Business Administration, (ii) Logistics Management, (iii) International and European Economics and (iii) Economic and Regional Development. In addition, the Department participates in an interdepartmental graduate programme, Informatics and Management.

The postgraduate students take five (5) courses every semester. In total the programme is divided into 3 semesters. In the first two, the students attend classes and in the third students have to do their final dissertation. Weekly lectures for the required and elective courses last for 3 hours over a thirteen (13) week time period. Tutorials, labs, exercises, and other activities are scheduled in addition to the 3 hour lectures. For some courses, in addition the lecturers arrange site visits to collaborating business or public sector organisations. The site visits enable students

to gain a more practical perspective in addition to the theoretical understanding that they gain through the in-class discussion and analysis of the course material. Also, when possible, given the financial constraints imposed on the Department by the government, the teaching is enhanced by guest lectures offered by academics invited from foreign or Greek universities. The relatively small student numbers attending postgraduate classes strengthens the student/lecturer communication/interaction and motivates students to work harder to improve their academic performance as well as gain as much as they can from the course and the degree programme. The small class sizes also enable the creation of a more student-centred approach where the needs, concerns and expectations of students can be effectively addressed.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

### **General Points regarding Implementation**

1. **Accessibility of Lecturers:** Postgraduate students have formed strong professional relationship with their lecturers, which have contributed to the creation of a more student-centred culture. It should be noted a large proportion of the PG students are former UG students of the Department and so they are already known to their teachers. Social events organized by the Department such as the “Logistics Night Out” have created a sense of camaraderie between students and have strengthened the relationships between lecturers and students.
2. The points on implementation made in respect of the UG Programmes earlier apply to the PG Programmes too with one modification. The rate of student participation on course and staff evaluation is much higher than in the UG programme. Further, there is an informal follow up of surveys in that the PG Programme Director reviews the student feedback with each staff member concerned.

## **RESULTS**

The PG Programme is very small on account of the fact that fees are not charged. Further, it appears to be very local with the majority of students being former UG students either of the Aristotle University or of other local Universities.

The students the Committee met were highly motivated, satisfied with the Programme and appreciative of it. Similarly alumni of the Programme had found it very helpful in securing employment despite the current economic crisis and high unemployment in Greece.

Nevertheless, while the Programme is undoubtedly valuable for the small numbers of students who can avail themselves of it, the Committee feels the Department has scope to be a much bigger player in the PG market both locally, nationally and even internationally. We come to this point under our recommendations in Section F.

## **IMPROVEMENT**

A number of recommendations were made above for improvement of the UG Programmes focusing both at Department and at faculty level. As both of these are shared between UG and PG programmes the recommendations apply fully except that there is less need at PG level to look to re-engineer programmes to eliminate overlaps.

However, at PG level there is a need to review recruitment policy and scope of Programmes on offer. The Committee is mindful of the fact that at present in effect the UG Programmes subsidise the PG programmes as there is no staff provision by the state for PG students. This context of no state funding for PG education is generally widespread and is unlikely to change in Greece. Other Greek Universities have turned this to an advantage using PG programmes in Business, Management and Economics areas as income generating avenues while offering good quality education to students. The income in turn is invested in improving infrastructure for all and subsidising research. This is a widespread international model which has also been used in Greece elsewhere.

Thus the Committee believes what the Department does at PG level it does well but it can do much more under a fee charging policy. We return again to this point under our recommendations in Section F.

## **PhD PROGRAMME**

### **APPROACH**

At a PhD level, the taught “Research Methodology I and II” course is offered in the first year of the Programme over a two semester time period. The course is designed to simply introduce students to the various methodological concepts/models to make them aware of their scope and possible use in their research. The students have the opportunity to attend courses on some of these topics if it is perceived as necessary for their research.

The “Rigorosum” phase which is an integral part of the PhD programme provides the foundation for ensuring that the student gains an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the selected research topic since it is based on an extensive literature review on which the student is examined before he/she is allowed to proceed to the next stage of the programme.

At the end of each academic year, the ‘lead’ supervisor has to complete a formal progress report in relation to the student’s academic performance.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

In the meeting that the EEC had with the PhD students it was widely noted that

students are asked to teach two 3hrs lectures each semester by their 'lead supervisor' at an undergraduate level. In addition they are required to run weekly tutorials/seminars, mark examination papers and also invigilate exams. Even though this requirement is communicated to them in writing when they register to the specific PhD programme there is no specific information in terms of the number of weekly tutorials they will have to teach each semester, the number of sessions they will invigilate or the number of examination papers they will have to mark. The students felt that the requirements/demands imposed on them by their supervisors are significantly higher than what they had expected. In addition, these teaching, marking and assessment requirements are unevenly distributed among students since it is left at the discretion of each supervisor and also depends on the size of classes that each supervisor teaches.

## **RESULTS**

The use of PhD students in teaching is welcome to the point that it gives them some teaching experience. However, if the load becomes excessive it puts pressure on PhD students, limits the amount of time that can be invested in their PhD research and delays their progress.

PhD students are expected to publish at least one paper in a 'listed' journal before their PhD can be conferred. While all PhD programmes the Committee is aware of do encourage PhD students to publish, they are not aware of Programmes where de jure the student cannot be awarded their PhD unless they have published at least one paper. In that sense the requirement is quite strict.

## **IMPROVEMENT**

- PhD Supervisory Team: (1) the student can receive constructive feedback from all members of the supervisory team and not only from the 'lead' supervisor.
- More even allocation of teaching loads among students: there is a need to ensure a more equal and fair allocation of teaching responsibilities (tutorials, invigilation, marking) among PhD students and ensure that students are not overloaded with responsibilities.
- Equipping students with the necessary teaching skills: where PhD students are used to deliver lectures or tutorials the supervisor needs to ensure that the student is confident and capable of delivering the lecture in an interesting and stimulating manner and not at the expense of undergraduate students. PhD students can also be given the opportunity to attend courses related to teaching and learning in higher education if these are available.
- Regarding the requirement for a PhD candidate to publish before their PhD can be conferred the Committee would recommend that support be given to PhD candidates specifically in the skills of writing publishable

papers as distinct from writing a thesis. Further, supervisors should be alerted to the tension between the student looking for a less risky journal to fulfil the requirement which can be at the expense to publishing the research in a more highly rated journal.

## **C. Research**

### **APPROACH**

The declared aim of the Department is to pursue research of good quality for the benefit of society under academic freedom and to nurture the development of new researchers.

The department conducts its research in a superstructure of 3 research 'labs':

- Business Economics
- Economic theory and policy
- Applied Economics and Development

Each faculty member belongs to one of these research labs with very few, if any, belonging to more than one research labs. The PhD students are also members of the lab to which their supervisors belong. The research lab membership echoes that of the membership of the Divisions (τομείς) of the Department. In addition there are three research groups researching specific themes, namely Growth and Development, Operations Management including Operational Research and Information Systems and Management focusing on entrepreneurship and human resources. These grouping too, largely echo those of the Divisions. Thus on the face of it research is for the most part within rather than across Divisions.

The research themes are too varied to list here. Suffice it to say they cover a variety of micro and macro-economic issues including fiscal, military expenditure and infrastructure investments. Looking more specifically at the titles of the publications listed in the IER the research from the Growth and Development research group deals with Foreign Direct Investment and related themes. The second grouping (Operations Management, OR and IS) has researched technical and methodological issues for optimising the operation of production lines. Finally the grouping in Management has focused on gender and entrepreneurship issues in the work place.

As noted already the Department has made it mandatory for PhD candidates to publish at least one paper in a 'listed' journal before their PhD degree can be conferred. This incentivises PhD students to publish and this in turn contributes to the research output of academic faculty of the Department.

In order to support its research effort the Department pursues the generation of research funding. So far this has met with some success. The bulk of the funding in monetary terms is from the European Union and this is commendable given the competitive nature of such funding Programmes. The IER lists some 33 funding projects, seminars and scholarships that were carried out or were live over the assessment period (2008-2013).

Research is disseminated primarily through publications in journals and conferences. In addition seminars within the department act as channels for communicating the research outcomes and where appropriate internet pages, the local press and information leaflets are used.

The key instrument of dissemination however, remains the refereed journal paper and the Department is encouraging submissions of papers to highly ranked journals. In the past it would appear that significant numbers of papers were sent to unranked journals and the Department is attempting to reverse this trend.

In terms of infrastructure the nature of the research does not require laboratories in the sense of science subjects save for computer laboratories for staff and students. However the research does require infrastructure in terms of a well-functioning library with subscriptions to top journals in the areas of the Department. It also requires access to up-to-date databases and software in the areas academic staff research. Unfortunately, under the current economic crisis in Greece funds are very limited for access to journals, databases and software.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

The research is carried out largely in a collaborative manner but not so much between members of the Department. Looking at the publications listed in Appendix I of the IER the vast majority of papers are jointly between one author of the Department and other non-highlighted persons. This level of collaborative research is commendable both where joint authors are research students and when they are persons from other departments. Indeed now that the Department is part of a School including another 2 Departments, in time there may be even more research collaboration with persons from other Departments. Similarly engaging the research students in publications is highly commendable.

Most staff members are research active in the sense of having some form of research output listed in the assessment period. However as might be expected they differ in terms of the quantity and indeed quality of output as might be expected. We return to this point under results below.

It is not possible to judge from the detail given (pp68-69) of the IER the degree of participation of each staff member in research grant generation. However, it is possible to suggest that while some of the research projects are substantive in terms of content (e.g. those involving funding from the EU) others are lighter, bordering on specific issue consultancy type projects. Both types of project (research and consultancy) are desirable in a Department wishing to conduct theoretically rigorous and application relevant research. However, care is needed to ensure consultancy type projects do lead to research questions that can be addressed and they do not render the Department susceptible to doing simply consultancy commercial companies may do.

The PhD students are well integrated in the research endeavors of academic staff. This is no doubt in large measure due to the incentive they have to publish as their PhD cannot be confirmed before they publish at least one paper as noted earlier.

Indeed to the extent that PhD students have 3 co-supervisors in many instances they may constitute a research link between two or more academic staff of the Department.

PhD students are mostly self-funded except for some on scholarships or funded out of research projects. This part is in line with what one might expect in other Universities. The students do not pay tuition fees but are expected to deliver pro bono support to the Department in terms of some tutorials, teaching and marking. The absence of fees on the one hand and payment for services delivered by students is not in line with what one might find in other Universities. PhD students that the Committee met were happy with the system but they preferred to have a clearer understanding in advance of the work load they may be expected to carry.

PhD students can if they wish apply to write their thesis in English instead of Greek. This should be communicated clearly to all PhD students. The Committee believes that permitting PhD students to write their thesis in English would be a positive step. It would enable them to publish in international journals and to present more confidently at international conferences.

Implementation of research where infrastructure is concerned is between very problematic and dire. The current economic crisis has reduced funding for Universities which in turn has reduced funding for access to learned journals, especially those highly ranked. Staff and students are left to improvise as best they can through begging friends and acquaintances to send them copies of papers which they need in order to progress their research. It is also possible often to be forced to change the desired direction of the research in order to fit with access to data in the absence of funding.

Similarly the IER reports the complete absence of funding for research which has virtually cut off staff from attending conferences to disseminate their own research and find out about the latest research of others in their field at international level. Under these conditions it is to the credit of the Department that several of its faculty have published in some of the top journals (e.g. ABS 3 \* journals).

## **RESULTS**

The key criterion of research output is first the quality and then the quantity of research. There follows then the degree of integration of the research with the national and international research community.

The Department certainly meets the quantity criterion. There is a core of staff that also meets the quality criterion but there is scope for improvement here in other cases. Similarly there is scope for improving the level of visibility of the Department's research at the national and the international arena.

More specifically in Appendix I (p172) the IER lists the research output of staff over 4 years. There is some output listed virtually for all members of staff. In terms of quantity one might expect about one refereed research paper per academic staff member per annum. Table 15 on p. 162 of the IER lists over the years 2010-2013 inclusive some 150 refereed publications which assuming the staff complement is 28 corresponds to an average of 1.4 refereed papers per member of staff per annum. This is very good so far as quantity of research output is concerned.

The criterion of research quality is met in a more varied way across staff. Two generally accepted measures of research quality are the ranking of the journal where the publications have appeared, their impact factor and the citations. A random sample of the publications listed in Appendix I (p172) of the IER shows that several of them have appeared in journals rated 3\* in the ABS list where the top rank is 4\*. In addition a good number have appeared in 2\* journals. These are generally papers of good international standing and so the Department undoubtedly has a core of strong researchers that would be comparable to academics at other top Universities.

It is not within the remit of this report to proceed to assess the research profile by member of academic staff. Where there are refereed papers where the author is sole or the first named and the paper is of good quality a conclusion can be drawn that the staff member concerned can produce research of good quality. A large proportion of staff fall in this category. However, where a staff member has not sole authored or been the lead author for papers appearing in good journals over a long period the Department needs to support them to develop a self-sustaining research agenda. There may be a very small minority of staff members in this category in the Department.

The IER did not offer information on membership of Editorial Boards or Editorships of top journals. A subsequent request for such information produced several Editorships, Guest Editorships and Advisory memberships of journals. This is commendable presence which the Department should encourage and support so as to achieve visibility of the undoubtedly strong research of its academic faculty at the international stage. This is also important for the reputation of the Department which can support its effort to generate research funding both through applications to funding bodies and through recruitment of fee paying post-graduate students should the Department choose to go in that direction.

The Department has developed good research collaboration with a large number of institutions both within Greece and abroad. It is noteworthy that many of these research collaborations are with Departments of Economics and Management, Accounting and Finance mirroring its own internal composition.

### **IMPROVEMENT**

The Department has a core of staff publishing good quality research in refereed journals with good impact factor and wishes to improve on this. Further the Department has had successes in the past in generating research funding and wishes to maintain and improve this. The Committee welcomes these aims. However, the Committee would recommend that the Department goes further on both these fronts and indeed add additional objectives.

Specifically the Committee would recommend that the Department:

- Set up an annual review process where staff attainments in research in the preceding year are assessed and research targets are set for the forthcoming year. Where this process identifies individuals who need support to conduct research of good quality that plans are put in place to offer such support. This could include a mentoring process;
- make clearer its expectations of staff on quantity and quality of research, including expectations on research for promotion, conference attendance and sabbatical leave;
- Where there may be occasions where staff is unable to develop a research agenda that they compensate through carrying a higher teaching load. However, the view of the Committee would be the Department remain overwhelmingly research active and only exceptionally are staff permitted to compensate in this way for lack of research.
- Support research through sabbatical leave to the extent that available funds permit.
- Maintain and enhance the culture of participation of staff in the international research arena through such activities as Journal Editing and Conference organising;
- Identify niche research areas where the Department can make a name for itself at international level. This may involve setting up research collaboration within the newly created School to which the Department belongs and potentially reaching out to other researchers within and without Greece.
- Secure financial resources through applications for research funding, consultancy and fee charging postgraduate degrees to support the research of academic staff, improve research infrastructure and offer PhD scholarships.

The Committee is aware that the Department's efforts to recruit top quality research staff are frustrated by the twin problems of lack of state funding for new appointments and the bureaucracy that can see years between a selection of a candidate being made and the funding actually being released for the appointment. The Committee would recommend that the Department lobby the authorities concerned to mitigate these problems.

**D. All Other Services-** *Foreachparticularmatter, pleasedistinguishbetweenunder- andpost-graduate levels, if necessary.*

**APPROACH**

Our general impression of the premises and the infrastructure is that they are in very poor condition and hardly maintained. The Pcs in the computer labs are too few compared to the number of undergraduate and postgraduate students. The library is poorly subscribed to databases and journals and perceived to be heading for the worst. Although this is clearly a budget issue it may be an idea that the Department specific library merges with the main university library, following the trend of most universities abroad. This would of course entail the creation of a budget sharing algorithm at University level for library resources but to the extent that many journals may be used by more than one Department it could offer the opportunity for a wider list of journals to be subscribed on a joint basis. Almost all classrooms appear run down and they lack basic equipment (PCs, projectors, sound systems etc.), partly due to inability to secure from thieves such equipment. Further, teaching rooms the Committee understands are not always properly heated. The workplace has poor basic hygienic conditions and sanitary standards. As a result students and faculty are discouraged from using the premises. The lack of personal safety is compounding this effect, as faculty and students are not feeling safe to stay, work and study on campus, especially in the hours of darkness.

**IMPLEMENTATION**

The Department is self-contained in terms of administrative and technical staff. The Committee met all the administrative staff of the Department. They conveyed the impression of a good working relationship both among themselves and with the academic staff. They each have their allocated tasks but at the same time have sufficient experience to be able to cover for one another when one is on leave or absent for any reason. Their key concerns were two. One related to the uncertainty regarding the imminent layoffs of colleagues due of the government cutbacks in the context of the current economic crisis in Greece. The second was a concern that in the library and in the administrative office colleagues carrying out the same tasks were on different contracts. Some were contracted to the University directly and others were subcontracted to the Department by an external contractor to the University. This created unequal terms and conditions across staff carrying out the same task. We return to this point in our recommendations.

**RESULTS**

The support services (administration, library, computer labs) are functioning satisfactorily at the human interaction level. There is an overhanging air of anxiety primarily among administrative but also among academic staff due to the potential redundancies in progress at the time of this evaluation. This air is likely to clear once the so-called mobility phase plays out. However, it is likely there will be a further air of uncertainty consequent on the setting up of the School of Economic and Political Sciences of which the Economics Department is a constituent part. At present support services largely function as they have always done at a

Departmental level. It is likely that now that the overarching School structure has been set up many of the support services will be reorganized to exploit economies of scale. This can create tension among administrative and potentially academic staff of different Departments in terms of domain preservation and workload redistribution.

#### **IMPROVEMENTS**

The Committee believe there is room for improvement in the management and the allocation of work tasks for the support staff. As noted above supportstaff that performs the same duties, some are on continuing contracts public sector employees and others are subcontracted private sector employees. This creates an obvious discrepancy in salaries and benefits which results in lower standards of performance, tension in the workplace and low morale. Moreover, it appeared that the subcontracted staff were on paper employed for a completely different task (security) while then finding themselves carrying out administrative tasks. This is clearly a highly anomalous situation which needs to be put right for the benefit both of the Department and the employees concerned. The Committee appreciates budgeting issues may have brought this about but the solution adopted is unsatisfactory.

Maintenance of the building and computing infrastructure is another area which needs improvement. Security of such facilities needs to be put in place and this may be by a combination of deployed security personnel and perhaps creating some secure areas where for example corridors would require a swipe card for access. The Committee appreciates these issues may go beyond the Department and may require action at University level. However, the Department needs to lobby for infrastructure and security to be upgraded significantly and as a priority to make the Department a pleasant place to work.

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

The EEC applauds the efforts and contributions of the Department of Economics at the AUTH with respect to its academic and public outreach program. These contributions are an essential part of the academic mission of a well-functioning academic unit within a modern university. It is a form of enhancing public awareness, contributing to public education, underlining the importance of lifelong learning and advancing the frontiers of knowledge. It has the collateral benefit of

raising the profile of the academic unit within the university and the greater public community that it serves. All of those roles and contributions are an important and essential role for a modern academy of higher learning.

The EEC has noted the multi-dimensional and diverse contributions of the Department. They include the awarding of academic honours and awards; the awarding of honorary doctorates; organizing conferences and seminars; the signing of bilateral agreements with foreign universities; participating on scientific organizations; forming a unit of Innovation & Entrepreneurship at the AUTH; the contributions of Departmental faculty members to local and national initiatives in Greece; establishing links with industry and research institutes; an active engagement with the ERASMUS program and a student internship program. The EEC was also made aware of several student directed initiatives such as AISEC and ASECU YOUTH.

The EEC has taken special note of the following initiatives spearheaded by the Department: a collaborative academic initiative with the International Society of Marketing & Development in the organization of the 9th International Conference of Marketing and Development; co-organizers with the International Hellenic University of an international conference on Designing Creative Synergies and a collaborative initiative with the Society of Economists of Thessaloniki and the T.E.I. Serres in organizing the 12th International Conference on Regional Economic Development.

Taking all of the above into account, the EEC commends and applauds the contributions of the Department of Economics with respect to academic and public outreach that have taken place in the recent past.

The EEC recommends that the Department of Economics at the AUTH continue with its active and engaged agenda. The EEC also recommends that the Department expand its outreach program by forming new academic links and establishing new public outreach initiatives.

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

The Department of Economics of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki has twenty seven (27) full-time faculty members at different ranks, divided into three academic Divisions. Six faculty members (or 22.22%) belong in the Division of Economics (**Τομέας Γενικής Οικονομικής Θεωρίας και Πολιτικής**), eleven faculty members (40.74%) in the Division of Growth and Development Economics (**Τομέας Ανάπτυξης και Προγραμματισμού**) and ten faculty members (37.04%) in the Division of Business Administration (Management) (**Τομέας Οικονομικών Επιχειρήσεων**) ignoring 2 Ε.Ε.ΔΙ.Π. ΙΙ and 1 επιστημονικός συνεργάτης.

The classification of faculty members into the three Divisions does not necessarily comply with their area of expertise and/or teaching responsibilities. There are cases where two faculty members from different Divisions teach the same course to the

same or different student groups. On some occasions, qualified faculty, are unable to teach courses that belong to other Divisions. Moreover, there are too many similarities and overlapping of materials in the courses offered by the Divisions of Economics and Growth and Development Economics.

Over the past five years, the average annual enrollment in the Department of Economics has been 462 students. Currently, the Department of Economics services about 4,300 active students. The above number yields a regular student to (full-time) faculty ratio of 159. This number is far beyond those of international standards that range between 18 and 50 students per faculty member.

During the first two years of studies, all students follow a common program consisting of twenty-two (22) required courses. At the beginning of the third year, students are free to choose one of the three programs of studies, each one offered by each Division. These programs of study are 1) Economics, 2) Rural and Development Economics and 3) Management. Each of the three programs requires students to select at least twenty-four (24) courses.

In terms of student preferences, roughly six percent (6%) of the students select to specialize in the area of Economics, offered by the Division of Economics, twelve percent (12%) in the area of Rural and Development Economics, offered by the Division of Growth and Development and 82% in the areas of accounting, finance, marketing and management, offered by the Division of Business Administration. These numbers are typical in Departments or Schools of economics and management throughout Europe, Canada and the USA. It is clear, that students prefer subjects that enhance their employment chances.

Considering that during the first two years of study, the compulsory courses are offered by the three Divisions (τομείς), more or less equally, the student / faculty ratios for first and second year students corresponding to the three Divisions are 119 students per faculty ( $33.3\% \times 2,150 / 6$ ) for the Division of Economics, 65 students per faculty ( $33.3\% \times 2,150 / 11$ ) for the Division of Growth and Development Economics and 72 students per faculty ( $33.3\% \times 2,150 / 10$ ) for the Division of Management.

Nevertheless, the respective ratios for third and fourth year students are 21.5 students per faculty ( $6\% \times 2,150 / 6$ ) for the Division of Economics, 23.5 students per faculty ( $12\% \times 2,150 / 11$ ) for the Division of Growth and Development Economics and 176 students per faculty ( $82\% \times 2,150 / 10$ ) for the Division of Business Administration.

Therefore, the combined student / faculty ratios for the four years are roughly 140.5 students per faculty for the Division of Economics, 88.5 students per faculty for the Division of Growth and Development Economics and 248 students per faculty for the Division of Business Administration. Overall, these numbers are both quite high when compared to international standards, and very uneven across Divisions to the detriment of the Division of Business Administration.

It is clear from the above statistics that the sizes of the Divisions, in terms of faculty numbers, are out of line with student preferences regarding their course of study. It appears that the Divisions operate as “equal partners” when it comes to the allocation of resources, including faculty lines, regardless of their teaching needs.

Moreover, it appears that the distortions and imbalances in the type and number of required courses, especially during the first two years of study, are likely to be the result of the equal partnership perception.

This Committee feels that the University should undertake corrective measures to increase the quality of instruction and strengthen the research and teaching collaboration among faculty in the Department of Economics. These measures may include a combination of: 1) cutting down on the number of students entering the Department, 2) hiring more faculty in the areas where the student / faculty ratios are the highest or transferring existing staff across Divisions, 3) restructuring the curricula by decreasing the number of compulsory courses, 4) combining the two Divisions in economics into one and 5) streamlining the curricula, by merging similar courses and eliminating courses of limited value.

In light of the above findings and the discussions with the faculty, this Committee believes that the divisions (TOMEIS) as currently constructed and operating are dysfunctional and should be abolished. Moreover, given that the majority of students specialise in the area of Management including, accounting, finance, and marketing, the Department should be renamed "Department of Economics and Management". This name change will better reflect the faculty disciplines in place at this time, it will allow for additional managerial disciplines to emerge and is likely to increase the interest and quality of high-school students entering the Department. It would be ideal if the Divisions replacing the current ones better match the faculty disciplines in place. At this time 3 Divisions in 1) Economics, 2) Finance and Accounting and 3) Marketing and Management, respectively, appear possible. However, going forward the Divisions should be seen as loose dynamic groupings of academics by discipline, changing over time as staff composition and student preferences change. Planning of curricula, degree programmes to offer and teaching allocations should always be at Department rather than Division level. Elaborate management structures at Division level should be abolished retaining only perhaps a Head of Division as a channel between Department and Division.

***F. Final Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC***

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

The Department is functioning well within its current set up and objectives. It has three UG Programmes which attract some of the best qualified university entrants in Greece. It has a small but selective PG programme whose graduates complete successfully and have good career destinations despite the adverse employment conditions current in Greece. Student staff communication is good as are working relationships between academics and administrative staff. The academic staff in the majority are research active and a significant number of their publications have appeared in well-respected academic journals. A number of academic staff engage well with the academic community in their field in such tasks as journal editing and seminar organising. The Department has well motivated PhD students and its requirement that they publish at least one paper to have their degree conferred, though too stringent by international standards, does convey the right message both to current and aspiring academics within the Department that quality in research matters.

The Committee considers that providing the Department of Economics with adequate financial and human resources in order to accomplish its academic mission should be considered an essential investment in building a stronger Greek economy and a more prosperous Greek society.

The Committee finds the Department to have a good academic standing, comparable to that of international academic Departments they are familiar with. At the same time the Committee believes that there is room for improvement in a number of areas, though in some cases the improvements are not in the gift of the Department and it will need University support and changes in regulatory framework to be able to deliver. These improvements have been signalled in the text of the Report above but the main ones are summarised below, by section.

#### **A. CURRICULUM**

##### **Recommendation A1.**

The Department should consider decoupling programmes of study from Divisions (τομεις). It could merge Development and Planning with the Economic Theory and Policy Programme to reduce teaching load on students and staff. This would allow more time for students to explore learning on their own. This will help them develop independent thinking and critical judgment.

##### **Recommendation A2.**

The Department could merge certain similar courses across the three Programmes to further reduce teaching loads while at the same time splitting students on large courses to offer better student experience in smaller classes than is currently the case for such courses.

##### **Recommendation A3.**

The Department should update its curriculum, discontinuing certain courses while bringing in new ones as the discipline evolves.

##### **Recommendation A4.**

The Department should set itself a much higher vision in postgraduate programme provision. It should develop curricular that reflect the clear skills of its academic staff

and that would be in demand of graduates in the Greek and international market. This will not be possible without charging fees for at least some of the Programmes in order to make the exercise viable. For example it can create a flagship programme such as an MBA, possibly in English, to attract a large number of students from Greece and abroad. Such a programme can be provided by charging tuition fees, a point picked up below under Strategic vision.

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## **B. TEACHING**

### **Recommendation B1.**

The Department should seek to have some component of continuous assessment where it is missing from courses. Further it should maintain and improve participation in mid-term assessments so that a multi-assessment culture develops and reliance on final examination is reduced and a sense of on-going engagement over time with students develops.

### **Recommendation B2.**

The Department should streamline its curriculum development and maintenance processes so that they are consistent across all its courses and they are comprehensive, including the Learning Outcomes and linking them with the syllabi.

### **Recommendation B3.**

The Department should enhance the international orientation both of its undergraduate and especially its postgraduate Programme. At the Undergraduate level this can be achieved by a higher involvement with the Erasmus programme both for outgoing and incoming students and staff. At postgraduate level one or more programmes in English might be essential in order to generate fee income both from Greek and foreign students. The use of visiting academic staff can help both with the international orientation of the Department and with alleviating teaching loads for the permanent staff.

### **Recommendation B4.**

The Department must strive to keep teaching loads at levels comparable to research active universities. This is primarily a budget issue beyond the gift of the Department. However, the Department may be able to reduce teaching loads by rationalising its curriculum as noted above and reducing the number of courses taken by students at Undergraduate level. Students must be given scope to learn under guidance from staff rather than be required to attend enormous numbers of lectures, which many then choose not to attend anyway. A closer engagement with students on fewer courses which however require them to take continuous multiple types of assessments, including group work may serve better both learning academic content and developing skills to work in a team.

### **Recommendation B5.**

The Department should at UG level encourage more student feedback, including by timing appropriately feedback sessions. Further the student body of each course should be given the feedback on that course from previous years and the action taken in

response. This would engage better students with the feedback process and further encourage participation.

**Recommendation B6.**

The Department should set up a formal systematic process of internal vetting of exam questions and of assessed assignments to ensure they are fit for purpose. Further, the Department could set up a system of sample second marking to ensure the marks are appropriate for the standard of the work submitted by students.

**Recommendation B7.**

The Department should enforce strict guidelines on adherence by students to deadlines for handing in assessments but it should also set up formal procedures for appeals by students who fail to meet the deadline for good reasons. It is more practical to operate such a system through the administration rather than faculty.

**Recommendation B8.**

The Department should set up a system to give initial advice to those new to teaching on how to be effective in teaching. Further, it should have a peer review system in place so that colleagues can sit in on each other's sessions to then offer advice on improving teaching technique.

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**C. RESEARCH**

**Recommendation C1**

The Department should set up a performance and development review process for staff on an annual basis. The Dean or other delegated senior colleague could review a number of staff to discuss their contributions in research, teaching and other activities. This could be a supportive process, not directly linked to the promotions process. It can reassure and acknowledge those delivering well and help others to overcome any difficulties they may have in attaining their teaching or research targets.

**Recommendation C2**

The Department should promote a culture of international engagement in research though not only publishing in respected international Journals but also through conference attendance and organizing and Journal editing. The Committee appreciates conference attendance has budget implications but this can be supported through developing a more vigorous fee charging PG Programme as recommended elsewhere in this Report.

**Recommendation C3**

The Committee recommends that research fund generation be given more prominence within the Department as a means of supporting research output including funding PhD students and conference attendance by staff.

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**Recommendation C4.**

The Department should seek to support research active staff through sabbatical leave. This again hinges on research income generation and fund generation through postgraduate degree provision. Within existing funds also some relief for sabbatical may be possible through higher teaching load for research inactive staff for the benefit of research active staff.

#### **D. ALL OTHER SERVICES**

##### **Recommendation D1.**

The Department should improve the physical infrastructure as far as possible. In the short term this may require lobbying at School or even University level. In the medium term if the Department generates research or teaching funds through PG provision it can use part for infrastructure upgrades. This relates both to offices, teaching rooms, software and computer labs.

##### **Recommendation D2.**

The Department should get to grips with security issues. It is unacceptable that staff and students should feel intimidated in their place of work even in the hours of darkness. At present nominal 'security staff' exist who are deployed in administrative and other duties. This damages morale in the places where these staff are because of their differing terms and conditions of employment while at the same time security is clearly not at the level where staff and students feel re-assured. This may be a University issue but nevertheless the Committee believes the Department should press for the resolution of this twin issue of security and staff on the same tasks having different terms and conditions.

#### **E. STRATEGIC PLANNING, PERSPECTIVES FOR IMPROVEMENT AND DEALING WITH POTENTIAL INHIBITING FACTORS**

##### **Recommendation E1.**

The Department should have a formal planning committee to propose plans for the Department on its vision regarding degree programme provision, research and outreach compatible with the School and University overarching strategy. The Recommendations on Curriculum, Teaching and Research could form the first agenda of this committee which nevertheless should be a permanent body to steer over time the Department.

##### **Recommendation E2.**

The Committee notes a potential dysfunctionality in the way appointments to Divisions (τομείς) have been made on the one hand and student course preferences on the other. Thus on a rough calculation the student to staff ratio ranges from about 90 in the Division of Economics to 240 in the Division of Business Administration. In the short term the Committee strongly recommends that these imbalances be addressed. This can be done by a combination of measures as detailed in section E.

**Recommendation E3.**

Given its staff and student composition by academic discipline the Department should be renamed "Department of Economics and Management". The current Divisions should be restructured to better match the faculty disciplines in place. At this time Divisions in 1) Economics, 2) Finance and Accounting and 3) Marketing and Management appear possible.

**Recommendation E4.**

The Department should raise its ambition where Postgraduate Education is concerned. It should launch fee paying degrees both in Greek and English. It could charge different fees between Greek and foreign students where the law permits. The generated revenues can serve multiple purposes to offer scholarships to poorer students to attend, fund PhD students, and invest in infrastructure. In short the Post Graduate Programme can offer the Department a degree of financial autonomy to carry out its educational function as it sees fit. It may even help it to reach a larger number of deserving students than now by offering fee discounts or waivers according to financial need while also generating a surplus for its own needs.

## The Members of the Committee

Name and Surname	Signature
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