



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
HELLENIC REPUBLIC



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Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of:

Economics

Institution: Democritus University of Thrace

Date: 7 November 2020



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



Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the Undergraduate Study Programme of **Economics** of the **Democritus University of Thrace** for the purposes of granting accreditation

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part A: Background and Context of the Review	4
I. The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel.....	4
II. Review Procedure and Documentation	5
III. Study Programme Profile	6
Part B: Compliance with the Principles	7
Principle 1: Academic Unit Policy for Quality Assurance.....	7
Principle 2: Design and Approval of Programmes	9
Principle 3: Student- centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment.....	12
Principle 4: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification	15
Principle 5: Teaching Staff	18
Principle 6: Learning Resources and Student Support	20
Principle 7: Information Management	22
Principle 8: Public Information	24
Principle 9: On-going Monitoring and Periodic Internal Review of Programmes	26
Principle 9: On-going Monitoring and Periodic Internal Review of Programmes	27
Principle 10: Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programmes.....	28
Principle 10: Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programmes.....	28
Part C: Conclusions	29
I. Features of Good Practice	29
II. Areas of Weakness	29
III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions	29
IV. Summary & Overall Assessment	30

PART A: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE REVIEW

I. The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

The Panel responsible for the Accreditation Review of the Undergraduate Study Programme of **Economics** of the **Democritus University of Thrace** comprised the following five (5) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

- 1. Professor Michail Dimou (Chair)**
University of Toulon, France
- 2. Professor Nicholas Vonortas**
The George Washington University, United States
- 3. Professor Fragkiskos Filippaios**
University of East Anglia, United Kingdom
- 4. Professor Emeritus, Emmanuel Thanassoulis**
University of Aston, United Kingdom
- 5. Mr Ioannis Michiotis**
Economic Chamber of Greece

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

Because of the Covid-19 crisis and the different national lockdown procedures, all the meetings took place by teleconference using Zoom. From a technical point of view, everything worked well, and all the attendees were able to participate in the discussions without interruption. All the meetings took place between 3h00 PM (Athens time) and 9h00 PM (Athens time) in order to manage the time differences between participants and the EEAP (Greece, France, United Kingdom, United States). The panel received excellent technical support.

On Monday November 2nd, afternoon, the panel met with the HAHE office for an official briefing on the procedures and requirements.

On Tuesday, November 3rd, afternoon, the panel had its first meeting with the Vice-Rector and President of MODIP, Professor Zoi Gavriilidou, Head of Department, Professor Konstantinos Hazakis as well as members of the Department of Economics (DoE) Quality Assurance Unit (QAU). The Panel was briefed on the Department's structure, organization and goals. During the meeting several documents were presented and delivered to the Panel members providing information on the curriculum, students, teaching methods, and research activities. Further, the meeting with the Department academic members covered various teaching and research issues related to the programme as well as other issues and on-goings of the Department. In late afternoon, the Panel met with students, without the presence of Departmental academic members. Students revealed their experiences and the discussion with the panel members was very informative. The students were open and frank about their experiences and views, and overall, very positive.

The next day started with a University tour in which the Panel also met the administrative and technical staff. The University provided a video allowing a virtual visit to the Department's infrastructure such as classrooms, lecture halls, the computer labs, staff offices, the library and meeting rooms. Overall, the Panel's view of the resources available to the DoE students was positive. Afterwards, the panel also met with former students as representatives of the alumni of the DoE. Most of the attendees follow an academic career. The panel felt that it would have been useful to meet some more former students working now in private firms. Next, the panel met with stakeholders and social partners. They similarly provided useful insights. The common view for the DoE and of their studies there was very favourable.

Later in the same day, the Panel members met again with the DoE staff, MODIP and QAU members, to address some additional clarifications and discuss any remaining issues.

All meetings with teaching, technical and administrative staff, undergraduate, postgraduate students and alumni, were very useful and informative. They were conducted in a very sincere and constructive manner, and all Panel questions were answered sincerely and without avoiding any issue. The staff of the DoE have provided the Panel with detailed and comprehensive documentation that was required for the accreditation process. All attendees were very helpful and have understood and accepted the requirements, the principles and objectives of the external accreditation process.

III. Study Programme Profile

The DoE offers undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral programmes. The Department of Economics was created in 1999 in the city of Komotini. In 2013, it merged with the Department of Business Administration. The Undergraduate programme leads to a Bachelor's Degree either in Economic Science or in Business Administration. There is one postgraduate (Master's Degree) programme in Business Administration (MBA). However, most of the academic members of the Department are specialized in Economic Analysis.

Currently the DoE has approximately 1800 undergraduate students, 56 graduate students in the MBA and 52 Ph.D. candidates. There are 21 academic members with teaching and research activity.

The scope of the undergraduate programme is to provide a general economics and business administration curriculum, taking into account the standards of similar good programmes in Greece and Europe. The DoE provides a four-year degree programme, which includes economic theory (micro and macro), strong quantitative methods (mathematics, statistics and econometrics) and applied field economic and business administration subjects. The curriculum has not been revised since the new format of the Department. A major revision is planned for 2021, since the members of the Department decided to wait for the accreditation procedure in order to take into account the proposals of the external panel. During this time there have been some minor revisions and improvements, mainly concerning the increase of elective courses. The panel feels that, in the future, continuous and sustainable monitoring for changes and improvements of the curriculum should be followed.

To be awarded a Bachelor's Degree in Economic Analysis or in Business Administration, a student must enroll in 40 courses and obtain 240 ECTS units. The curriculum is organized in 8 semesters. Each semester has 13 teaching weeks. During the first two years (4 semesters), the students enroll in 20 courses as a cohort. They are then divided into the two fields of Economic Analysis and Business Administration at the beginning of the 5th semester. During these last two years (4 semesters) the students must choose 20 courses (from a total of 30 courses delivered by the Department). In each semester during the 3rd and the 4th year, there is at least one different compulsory course for students in Economic Analysis and in Business Administration.

The DoE academic members deliver 50 courses in total among which 38 are compulsory and 12 are electives. Students cannot attend elective courses from other Departments of the University and cannot substitute elective courses with an undergraduate thesis. However, the Department and the academic members have considered the option of substituting elective courses with a thesis.

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 a clearly articulated Quality Assurance (QA) process that is in line with the QA process of the Institution. From the submitted accreditation documentation as well as the meetings with the Institution's and the Department's representatives it was evident that the

two units work closely and the Institutional Unit (ΜΟΔΙΠ) offers continuous and substantial support to the Department.

There is a transparent annual review process for the evaluation of both the courses and the programme as a whole that starts with the students' evaluation of the individual courses. The results of this evaluation are discussed, together with the students' performance in the course's assessment, in the general assembly (Γενική Συνέλευση) of the Department and recommendations are being made for adjustments to specific courses. Academic members also review the content of their courses annually integrating new research findings and management practices.

The quality assurance process is communicated to all relevant stakeholders, i.e. academic members, students and external stakeholders.

Administration services, the Library and all other support services operate at a high professional level and support students excellently.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

While the QA process and the engagement with stakeholders are high, it appears that the DoE is approaching the changes to the programme from the perspective of a course level and not strategically from the perspective of the programme. The last substantial change to the programme was implemented over ten years ago. Despite the incremental changes to individual courses there could be a more systematic review process at the programme level that integrates programme learning outcomes, courses, teaching methods and assessment instruments.

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

The programme has a substantial economics foundation that leads to two specializations one in Economic Analysis and one in Business Administration. It consists of a number of core courses covering adequately key areas of the economics and business administration disciplines and then offers a number of electives (in years 3 and 4) that lead to the two specializations mentioned above. More specifically, the programme includes 40 modules in total. The first two years cover 20 compulsory courses providing economics foundations. Years three and four offer specializations through 8 specialisation courses and 12 electives. The programme has a strong quantitative element which has been commended by students, graduates and external stakeholders (businesses, local authorities, public organizations) as it prepares students for positions that require strong analytical skills.

There is a significant number of inactive students (28% of total enrolled undergraduate students) that has been accumulated over a number of years. The Department is arguably making every effort to reduce this number by offering personal tuition support and an enhanced distance learning element to those students.

The programme has an established mentoring scheme. Academic members act as mentors to undergraduate students offering academic and pastoral support. This system has reportedly clear benefits to students' engagement, retention and attainment.

The programme has an element of funded internships. Students can work for regional and national organizations over the summer months and gain significant work experience. There is a transparent selection process taking into consideration the academic progress of applicants. The programme also offers opportunities for studying abroad through the Erasmus+ scheme. Several established collaborations provide opportunities for both students and faculty to gain international experience.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

While every effort has been made to comply with this principle fully, the panel feels that the programme would benefit from some additional actions. More specifically:

The programme would benefit from a more frequent systematic review. This systematic review would allow the Department to introduce new courses capturing recent developments in economics and business administration. This would need to be complemented by academic members continuous professional development (discussed further in Principle 5)

We would recommend introducing a more structured path of student progression throughout the programme. Currently, the programme does not have any prerequisites. Therefore, students can progress to higher-level courses without having achieved a pass mark at a lower level or introductory modules. We feel that this is a contributing factor to the significant number of inactive students. We would recommend the introduction of prerequisites to ensure that courses, when this is appropriate, build on each other and the students cannot proceed to a more advanced stage on a course before successfully completing a preceding stage. The creation of the structured path of student progression can also influence the development of a programme level assessment strategy.

The programme does not have an undergraduate thesis element. The lack of a thesis does not allow students that wish to undertake a substantial research project and develop research methods skills to do so. We would recommend to the Department to consider introducing a thesis in the final year of the programme as an elective.

The programme has a significant degree of engagement with external stakeholders. However, this engagement is not formalized in any institutional structure. We recommend working with external stakeholders to establish an Advisory Board. This Board could consist of representatives

of local companies, representatives of chambers of commerce and economics, representatives of local authorities and academic members from other national and international Departments of Economics and Business Administration. The Advisory Board could meet annually and provide feedback on the programme's strategic direction.

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 Department benefits from a regular number of freshmen. The Department considers that its staff and facilities are adequate for recruiting annually about 180 students. However, this is usually greatly exceeded each year. For example, the latest intake (2020-21) was 329 students. This makes it very difficult to subdivide students to smaller class sizes (e.g. for tutorials) to ensure interaction between student and teacher to help the less able students. Further, the very large student to staff ratio makes it difficult to give students individual projects to carry out as part of the curriculum. Yet these would help develop their skills in independent learning and problem solving. The number of students recruited each year is imposed centrally by the State

and so the Department has no control over it. To alleviate the situation the Department can perhaps have group projects so that at least students learn to work in teams and develop their skills in conducting analyses in real life contexts. This picture was confirmed by the panel's interviews with students' representatives.

The Department uses different modes of delivering knowledge when appropriate. Specifically, it offers homework, projects, midterm and final exams and oral presentations. Students in the third and fourth year of study can also attend research seminars that are regularly organized and are evaluated through personal and field work. The students benefit from a certain diversity in learning environment with course offerings varying from traditional lectures, labs, practice sessions, to on-line access to course material and (few) opportunities to practice internship. The syllabus of each course states clearly what the assessment criteria for the course are. However, an overall assessment strategy could be useful. There is currently no provision for academic thesis (Διπλωματική) at the undergraduate level. Consequently, no Thesis Handbook is available.

Student progress is monitored in each course through written exams, including mid-term progress tests and the final exam at the end of the semester, as well as written project reports/papers. We were impressed by this apparently very close relationship. One direct benefit is the monitoring of student progress. Faculty seemed genuinely concerned with the progress of their active students as well as less active students in the n+1, n+2, ... categories. The percentage of >n+2 was reported to have decreased from 29.16% to 28% (still not negligible). The annual share of students graduating on time increased slightly from 25.82% to 26% (not very high with foreign standards, competitive with Greek standards). The grade point average (GPA) at graduation averages to 6.32 (out of 10).

In the panel's meetings with students it was evident that there is a good rapport between academic members and students. Academic members make themselves available during timetabled office hours where students can see the teacher to gain a better understanding of courses where they need to. This is a substitute for the smaller tutorial classes found elsewhere, where student to staff ratios are low. Formal surveys of student feedback on courses are carried out at course level. Where more than one person teaches on a course the survey should be at teacher level, if this is not yet the case. The survey results are reviewed by appropriate academic members and recommendations made for improvements where these are needed. From the material submitted for the accreditation it was impossible to know what percentage of students typically responded to the student surveys at individual course or teacher level. We could decipher from the aggregated data that some 7%-8% responded in 2018-19 and 15%-16% in 2019-2020. It is encouraging that the response rate has doubled in one academic year but clearly there is still room for improvement. Academic members need to encourage students to engage more in the 'conversation' about the quality of teaching and course content from the student perspective.

Turning to student satisfaction at aggregate level of results for 2018-19 some 70% of responses state the student is satisfied or very satisfied with the course content, the teaching etc. This is good at the aggregate level. However, on some aspects where the mean score is below 4, sometimes with a large standard deviation, action is needed to make changes to improve student satisfaction. The Department does have in place a process of 'completing the circle', by

reviewing student survey findings and discussing with academic members concerned any remedial actions needed. It is not clear, however, whether this reporting back also involves students. This could engage the students better in the process of surveys when they can see the role they play in improving student experience with the courses.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The Panel has two recommendations for consideration for further improving the student learning conditions.

First, there are a number of courses, with a variety of assessment methods. At the moment, the academic members decide individually, at the course level, on the most appropriate assessment method. We would encourage the Department to engage in a mapping exercise of all assessment instruments and identify areas of significant over assessment or under assessment of skills and attributes. This mapping exercise could be done at the programme level and enhance the collaboration of academic members in thinking strategically at the programme level.

Second, academic members should strongly encourage students to engage with teaching surveys. Surveys should be analyzed and acted upon especially where remedial action may be needed.

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

All indications from the various focused groups carried out by the panel – professors, graduates, students, stakeholders – indicated strong dedication of the faculty to the students and a very congenial environment bringing students and professors very close.

Incoming students are supported in a couple of ways formally regarding their smooth transmission from high school to the higher education:

1. Εβδομάδα Προσαρμογής. Annual informational event organized by Department faculty members and secretariat.
2. Economics Student Association is assisting new members from the day of arrival on campus and throughout their stay in the program.

Student mobility is encouraged in general, but still the number of students entering a European exchange programme is small. However, this does not depend exclusively on the Department's efforts as the available positions are externally determined.

The ECTS is applied across the curriculum. The Diploma Supplement is issued without request for all graduates.

Practical training is in place. The DoE has developed an impressive network including social, cultural, productive bodies in the region and beyond to support this component. The picture that panel members got in this respect during the stakeholder meeting was quite positive. There is apparent genuine interest in the community about the welfare of graduates and high satisfaction of employers with interns from this Department. Very positive comments were offered by all stakeholders – such as the National Bank of Greece that takes 8-9 such interns annually. The panel was told about a wide network of very well-placed graduates in the region

and the rest of the country. This is impressive for a relatively young Department located in a peripheral region of the country.

Practical training is currently optional. Academic members insisted that practical training is a valuable part of the programme. However, practical training is not institutionalized. It is not referred to explicitly in the study programme. This item received significant attention by the panel members. Due to difficult legal procedures in the country and the concentration of the decision making at the university level, very few positions “Πρακτικής” are available – 20 in 2019 compared to 329 incoming students.

Academic members repeatedly expressed their strong wish to raise the number of such placements. They also stressed that in individual courses – specifically “Επιχειρηματικότητα I&II” and “Επιχειρησιακή Έρευνα” – students engage in hands-on projects involving business firms and other organizations producing graded term papers.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

Academic Thesis: As noted earlier, there is no institutionalized thesis in the degree at this time. Academic members correctly expressed their concern about the large numbers of incoming students – 329 on last count compared to about 180 that they consider optimal – and their ability to supervise these theses. However, one could think possible solutions such as optional academic thesis substituting coursework (1 or more courses) for students that are more academically inclined.

Practical Training: While taking into consideration the constraints mentioned above, we think that there is room for improvement on that front. There seems to be less than optimal explicit integration of practical training in the program of studies that will incentivize students to pursue other more flexible ways of practical training for grades. Perhaps the Department needs to think a bit out of the “box” on this matter. For instance, flexible forms of practical training may be considered in conjunction to the currently missing academic thesis – one may think of these as complements or substitutes as well as replacing established coursework. Such practical training could be optional, suggested primarily to students preparing for the job market after graduation. The establishment of an Advisory Board was suggested earlier (Principle 2). In addition to advice on the structure and the content of the curriculum, such a Board could facilitate the efforts to raise the Department to the next level in terms of both market placement and academic performance of graduates.

Department Graduates' Network: The panel stresses the importance of redoubling the already extensive efforts of academic members to approach and “utilize” (take advantage of) the networks of stakeholders and graduates.

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 academic members of the Department on continuing posts currently number 19, all holding PhD as their highest academic qualification. The Department does follow the formalities of the recruitment process of academic members as laid out by law. By discipline and research interests academic members cover the broad fields of Economics, Econometrics and Operational Research consistent with the content of the modules that comprise the degree programmes of the Department. In addition, up to 3 teachers are in post each academic year on temporary contracts. There has been limited recruitment of academic members on continuing contracts in recent years. However, the Department is expecting to have in post 2 new such academic members joining by the Spring of 2021. The research profiles of the tenured faculty members are good. They have a satisfactory level of publications, both in quantity and quality, testifying to a healthy level of research activity. During the presentation several examples were given of courses where research has fed into teaching. An indirect benefit of student surveys is that where staff are given feedback to improve their teaching skills, it helps them to develop their own career, thus having a win-win situation for staff and students.

The Department runs a Working Papers series (<https://econpapers.repec.org/paper/risduthrp/>) for the early dissemination of research findings from its academic members. The Department also has a Research Centre (Laboratory) (**Decision Making and Economic Analysis** - <https://sites.google.com/view/dmea/home>) which acts as an umbrella for the encouragement and support of the research activities of its academic members and student population. Research active academic members benefit students not only through feeding directly from their research to teaching but also in creating and maintaining a lively atmosphere for learning. It may be suitable, however, as academic member numbers increase and given the existing

diversity of research interests in the Department, to consider whether some additional research Centre may be created to enhance research and outreach activities to the academic and non-academic communities. The research profile of a Department is a key consideration for attracting well qualified new academic staff, and indeed for retaining existing academic members.

The submission by the Department, and our meetings with faculty, suggest that there is an informal framework at Department level of support for academic members to develop their research interests, teaching and more generally their career. A more formal process of annual review of each academic member, perhaps on a one to one basis, covering research, teaching, outreach etc. would be beneficial. This should not be in a judgmental framework, or in the context of promotions, but rather in a supporting, mentoring capacity. Such a process would enable all academic members, especially those at earlier stages in their academic career, to develop their research, teaching and outreach to their full potential. As new academic members are to be recruited going forward the Department should consider more closely the issue of informal but planned academic member mentoring.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The Department should set up a process for periodic review – mentoring of academic members to enable them to maintain and improve their teaching, research and outreach activities. The Department should also assess whether the single existing Research Centre is a suitable home for all research interests in the Department and, if need be, to enable one or more other such Centers to be set up. Finally, the Department should encourage academic members to consider setting up group projects to enable students to develop independent problem solving and report writing. An indirect benefit of this would be the enhancement of research opportunities where such group projects are based on real issues in collaborating organisations.

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 learning resources and support services available to the students are provided either directly from the Department or indirectly by the university. They basically consist of three categories: Physical infrastructure facilities, academic and administrative services and social and other advisory services.

Physical Facilities

Most of the student related activity is concentrated in the main university campus building the construction of which was completed at in the early 1990s. The panel's virtual tour of the Department's physical facilities was limited to the main building. The Department's facility arrangements are controlled by the central administration. One of the two computer laboratories used by the Department is for the exclusive use of the School of Economics, Business and International Studies. It was visited virtually by the panel and it was observed that there are available stations were equipped with up to date computers with wired and wireless access to the internet. The students working there at the time seemed comfortable. The Department runs its research laboratory activities related to the specialized courses.

There was not an opportunity to visit the library facility as it was inaccessible due to on-going remodeling and renovation work. The student dining facility was not visited either. In the meeting with the undergraduate students there were no concerns about the quality of the food.

Academic and Administrative Services

The e-Class computer module serves the needs of communication and electronic interaction of faculty and students as it serves most instructional related activities and exchange of information.

The panel visited virtually the departmental administration office of three staff members and talked with them. They are managing all services associated with student and faculty support, aided by appropriate computer platforms such as e-class for efficient and timely delivery. The departmental computer information system also provides valuable support for the gathering and processing data needed to support the OMEA activities relative to the Quality Assurance.

The Department has a Student Advisor Support service for the students to seek advice on their study program as well for the resolution of possible personal problems. In general, all students indicated that the relationship with and accessibility to their professors is very good and friendly.

Social and Other Advisory Services

Most of these services are run and managed by the university. The students of the Department indicated that they are pleased with the support and accessibility they enjoy. These support services include (Dining facilities, allowance for housing or possibility for student residence placement at the facility, office of Advisory and psychological Support for personal problems, Student Complaint Submittal, Management and Appeals Process, Council of Student Affairs, Health Insurance, Local Medical Facility and Care, Practical Training / Internship Office, Career Office providing a variety of services for the placement of graduates, ERASMUS+ Office).

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The panel draws attention to the fact that both the Department activity and student population have increased significantly but the facilities have remained more or less the same. The possibility of utilizing additional space in the peripheral buildings should be explored.

The panel also recommends that the Department encourages the active engagement of the Economics Student Association. This group could support departmental functions such as local conferences, provide some community service, help AMEA students or conduct public relations or focused campaigns of interest to the student community such as encouragement for involvement in Quality Assurance related issues.

The panel recommends the setting up of common meetings between local stakeholders and graduates, e.g. virtual career weeks, helping with the outreach of the department.

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 panel ascertained the establishment of a comprehensive system for the collection of a large set of data from sources like questionnaires, mainly concerning the student body, the completion of studies, students' employability, etc. The procedure for the collection and processing of such information combines data from the information system (Cardisoft, the Student Career Office, SAP). Student evaluation of individual courses is conducted at the end of every semester. The evaluation includes information related to the Programme of Studies, in terms of various factors and indicators, learning outcomes, workload and Faculty member performance. The evaluation includes a quality assessment of the available teaching material and resources, its adequacy to the stated academic goals and its accessibility (IT equipment, library, academic support). The evaluation and eventual remarks are examined by the OMEA with executive staff and MODIP and submitted to the Department chair who may raise individual issues with academic members concerned and the corrective measures taken.

The data collection, processing, analysis, and the derivation of information is well established and functioning. However, it is not evident that the QA improvement cycle is completed with the development of an implementation action plan (Key Performance Indicators monitored through a dashboard) that would enable a closer monitoring of the effectiveness of continuous improvement actions. This is perhaps due to the early stages of the Internal QA system and

processes now under implementation by the Greek universities. The EEAP noted the considerable efforts deployed by academic members to provide counseling and support to students. These efforts are not measured nor assessed, although they constitute one of the core strengths of the Department.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

While there is a strong engagement with graduates of the Department, data presented to the panel on graduate destinations (employability of graduates) were rather dated (focusing on data from 2012-2013). We would recommend a more comprehensive data collection process for the career of graduates. This will give the Department a better understanding of its alumni basis but the data can also be used for advertisement and promotion of the Department in the wider region of Northern Greece.

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 panel ascertained the availability of extensive, complete and up to date information on the Department's website, relating to the mission, study program, the teaching staff and Quality Assurance policy. The Department has deployed considerable efforts in upgrading its website and the OMEA in cooperation with the QAU/MODIP control the available information on academic programme, activities and services to students which are made public, to ensure compliance and Quality Assurance. The OMEA and the Secretariat of the Department are tasked with controlling the content of the website three times a year, ahead of each semester and the examination periods. The Department provides clear criteria for the evaluation of the website referring to its reliability, completeness, user friendliness, accessibility and uniformity, amongst others.

The website is also available in English in all subject-fields. The Department's website (e-class) has the dual role of an information tool, available to students, and of an access portal to applications such as e-Secretariat and e-Class. The web application of the electronic-secretariat allows students to search for information about courses which are offered in the curriculum, instructors, suggested reading and other course related issues, register for courses for each semester, access grades for courses in which they have been enrolled, receive a confirmation of studies instantly in electronic format, and obtain a variety of other documents related to their academic endeavors. The access to this application is simple and available, using the student username and password, ensuring its confidentiality. A major upgrade of the website is scheduled that will permit easier access and content update.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

No specific panel recommendation.

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 has in place a system for annual review of the undergraduate degree programme. The system operates at two levels: the Programme of studies and the individual course level. The quality assurance system is overseen by the Departmental Committee (OMEA).

At the Programme level there is a committee (Επιτροπή Προγράμματος Σπουδών) which in consultation with OMEA reviews the curriculum annually and recommends revisions as appropriate to better reflect developments in the economics and business administration disciplines. Every 4 years the Department can, if it deems it appropriate, opt for a major revision of the undergraduate programme. Such a major revision has not taken place in recent years, but it is expected to follow this accreditation visit.

At the individual course level the teacher responsible reviews and maintains both the content and the format of delivery of the course, including in some instances the integration of external speakers. In addition, student feedback is sought on each course based on a questionnaire students are invited to complete grading various aspects of course content and delivery by the teacher on a scale 1 (worse) to 5(best). Students can also enter free text comments. The survey's findings are assessed by (OMEA) and the results communicated to the teacher including recommendations for remedial action, if necessary.

The system for internal review outlined is adequate and in line with norms in other universities. However, there is room for improvement. At course level the response rate to surveys by students is below 16% and care is needed to raise it. Further, it would be appropriate to also have mid-semester informal reviews, perhaps in the form of a student-staff committees, to capture any urgent issues that may need attention in the delivery of course content. At

programme level it is welcome that a major review is due to take place in 2021 as the Programme has not had a major review for several years. In the meantime, many developments have taken place. For example, the advent in recent years of a banking crisis followed by a pandemic crisis bring to the fore potential courses on crisis management.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The panel recommends that a full review (in line with the Department's intentions as discussed in the relevant sessions) of the undergraduate degree programme be undertaken as soon as possible. [As the Department faculty members already plan to do at the end of this academic year]. This could involve students, stakeholders and an Advisory Board as recommended earlier (Principle 2) in this report. The aim would be to update the Programme curriculum to include the latest theoretical and application developments in the broad fields of economics and business administration.

Principle 10: Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programmes

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

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

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

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

Study Programme Compliance

This is the first external evaluation of the study programme. Under these circumstances, this principle cannot be examined.

Panel Judgement

Principle 10: Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programmes	
Fully compliant	N/A
Substantially compliant	N/A
Partially compliant	N/A
Non-compliant	N/A

Panel Recommendations

None.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

The Panel found evidence of good practice in quite a few areas of the study program of the DoE of the Democritus University of Thrace.

- The DoE features a very good student/teaching staff relation and an adequate student mentoring scheme.
- There is a high engagement of the stakeholders and of the regional economic and social partners.
- The Department features very good infrastructure for teaching.
- There is very good student information on courses, teaching materials and a well-functioning website.

II. Areas of Weakness

The Panel notes a few areas of weakness that should be given attention:

- The programme does not have any prerequisites for courses.
- An undergraduate thesis currently does not formally exist within the curriculum.
- The curriculum has not been substantially reviewed since the merger of the Departments of Economics and Business Administration.
- Professional training and internships remain low in numbers and are not fully integrated with the programme of studies.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

The Panel recommends that the Department should consider:

- Immediate (short-term) actions:
 - The Department should set up an Advisory Board (mainly external academics, stakeholders and partners from the private and public sector) to offer advice on the structure and the content of the curriculum and facilitate the Department's efforts to place students in internships during their studies and in jobs after graduation.
 - Introduce prerequisites for courses.
 - Introduce a thesis as an optional course.
 - Increase the differentiation between the two specialisations and provide better guidance in the selection of electives.

➤ Medium to long-term actions:

- Set up an internal academic member mentoring and development system.
- Increase the opportunities for professional training and internships and further integrate them with the programme of studies.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8.

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: 2, 4, 9.

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are:

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are:

Please note that Principle 10 is not applicable.

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

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname

Signature

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- 2. Professor Nicholas Vonortas**
The George Washington University, United States

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- 5. Mr Ioannis Michiotis**
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