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HELLENIC REPUBLIC  
**H.Q.A.**  
 HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE AND  
 ACCREDITATION AGENCY

## EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

SCHOOL OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS SCIENCE

ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY OF THESSALONIKI

November 2013



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### **External Evaluation Committee**

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the School of Physical Education and Sports Science, Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Science of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki consisted of the following five (5) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by the HQAA in accordance with Law 3374/2005:

1. Prof. Vasilios Baltzopoulos (Coordinator)

Brunel University, London, UK

2. Prof. Theodore Angelopoulos

University of Central Florida, Orlando, USA

3. Prof. Kyros Karamanidis

German Sports University, Cologne, Germany

4. Prof. George Karlis

University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada

5. Prof. Panagiota Klentrou

Brock University, Ontario, Canada

## ***Introduction***

### I. The External Evaluation Procedure

- Dates and brief account of the site visit.
- Whom did the Committee meet ?
- List of Reports, documents, other data examined by the Committee.
- Groups of teaching and administrative staff and students interviewed
- Facilities visited by the External Evaluation Committee.

### II. The Internal Evaluation Procedure

Please comment on:

- Appropriateness of sources and documentation used
- Quality and completeness of evidence reviewed and provided
- To what extent have the objectives of the internal evaluation process been met by the Department?

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) received the relevant electronic documentation from HQAA in advance of the visit. The EEC met on Sunday 3 November in Thessaloniki and was briefed by a member of the HQAA on the purpose of the External Evaluation process and the function of HQAA. There was also an opportunity to discuss any questions and issues raised by the EEC members. On Monday 4 November the EEC went to the Rector's Office in the main campus of Aristotle University in Thessaloniki and met with the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs and Personnel and Chair of the Quality Assurance Unit of the University, the Dean of the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Science and the Chairs of the two (Thessaloniki and Serres) Schools of Physical Education and Sports Science.

The EEC then visited the School of Physical Education and Sports Science between 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> November 2013. Comprehensive presentations on the history, structure and development of the School, its undergraduate and postgraduate curricula and research funding were followed by discussions with the EEC in an open forum with the Head of the School, the Quality Assurance team, as well as faculty members representing various academic disciplines and academic ranks. The EEC also met and discussed with the committee for the review of the undergraduate program of studies and a group of external stakeholders and employers of School graduates from both the public and private sectors. There were also meetings with representative groups of undergraduate and postgraduate (Master and Doctoral level) students, as well as administrative and technical support staff. The Committee also visited the laboratories, computer teaching rooms, library and some of the sports facilities in the Themi campus as well as the University Sports Centre in the central University campus.

The visit was very well organised and the School provided additional material and information during the visit, including electronic copies of the presentations. The EE Committee's view was that we had access to any material and additional information that was required for the external evaluation process and we would like to thank all the members of staff, students and external stakeholders for their hospitality, contributions and cooperation.



## **A. Curriculum**

*To be filled separately for each undergraduate, graduate and doctoral program.*

### APPROACH

- What are the goals and objectives of the Curriculum? What is the plan for achieving them?
- How were the objectives decided? Which factors were taken into account? Were they set against appropriate standards? Did the unit consult other stakeholders?
- Is the curriculum consistent with the objectives of the Curriculum and the requirements of the society?
- How was the curriculum decided? Were all constituents of the Department, including students and other stakeholders, consulted ?
- Has the unit set a procedure for the revision of the curriculum?

### Undergraduate Program

The mission of the School of Physical Education and Sports Science in Thessaloniki is the optimal physical development and functional capacity as well as the promotion of physiological, mental and psychological health of humans of all ages. The School offers the means for a contemporary education in a variety of sub-disciplines of physical education including human performance, sport psychology, and therapeutic recreation. In accordance with the other sister Schools in Greece, the objectives of TEFAA in Thessaloniki include: the promotion and advancement of physical education and sport science through basic research, applied science, and high quality teaching, the professional preparation of students as future physical education teachers, the advancement of sports in Greece, and the promotion of the Olympic values Worldwide, as well as the promotion of physical activity in improving health and quality of life in the society. To achieve these goals, the curriculum of the School is meant to attune to the needs of society, the present and the future, and to have a direct connection with the labour market and the related problems and prospects.

The objectives of the School are decided collectively by faculty members who take into consideration the needs and aspirations of the students, the policies and regulations of the State, the research strengths of faculty members, and the international standards of research and higher education. The School has an Internal Review Committee with the mandate to evaluate the undergraduate program and make suggestions for improvement. Most importantly, with the current committee there is a clear attempt to highlight all the strengths and weaknesses of the operation of the School and the curriculum. It is not clear if the students are part of this internal review process.

Our impression from the visit is that the curriculum is consistent with some of the the set objectives. In its current structure, however, the curriculum does not seem to respond fully to the modern professional needs of students neither as future teachers of Physical Education nor sports coaches. Although there is plethora of activity (sports) courses focused on teaching, the curriculum as a whole seems disconnected from both the elementary and high school curriculum and is more focused on high performance coaching. As an example, there is more than one course in sports like artistic gymnastics and swimming with minimal applicability to the school system due to the lack of appropriate infrastructure. A second example is courses in highly specialized, individual sports such as tennis, sailing, fencing etc. that are not part of the school curriculum. In terms of coaching education the opposite seems to be the case; the curriculum is not at high enough technical standards to develop the core competences of a professional coach because most of the students lack the required motor

skills and experience. In other words, for highly technical sports such as artistic gymnastics, rhythmic gymnastics, swimming, sailing, skiing, etc. the technical curriculum is somewhere in the middle, excessive for physical education teachers and limited for coach education. Given the increased workload of students with the existing plethora of courses, specializations and electives an appropriate suggestion could be to develop separate curriculum pathways (or even separate degrees altogether) for physical education or coaching, for example. This will allow students that have the necessary expertise to become coaches in their speciality sports by concentrating in detail on technical and theoretical aspects and students that want to concentrate on physical education to study in depth only activities and sports that are relevant to the elementary and secondary schools' curriculum.

The current curriculum is still not entirely consistent with the needs of the society in terms of exercise therapy and fitness. However, there is evidence for a positive curricular turn towards "clinical" applications and exercise prescription, which we appreciate and encourage. This repositioning of the field towards exercise as medicine has been successfully implemented in many institutions in Europe and North America, where professional accreditation was also made possible. We propose that the School keeps an open line of communication with its stakeholders including: a) the Ministry of Education in regards to the nature and direction of the school curriculum, and b) the local and national health and fitness organizations, of both the public and private sector, regarding the new professional trends. This will guide a targeted revision of the applied and practical course offerings.

#### Graduate Program

The School offers a trans-institutional graduate program in "Human Performance and Health" both at Masters and doctoral level, and a departmental graduate program in "Physical Activity and Quality of Life" also at the Masters and doctoral levels. In our view, this is an overkill that creates duplications and unnecessary overlaps in provision (as in the case of research methods courses). In the end, resources are spread thinly. The two programs cover the same disciplinary space, and should be amalgamated. Otherwise, the aim and structure of the programs are in line with current policies adopted by modern Western Universities.

The trans-institutional program was first introduced in 1998 by four TEFAA departments across the country. In 2006, two of these departments pulled out and the program was discontinued. The program was revitalized in 2012 only by the Schools of Thessaloniki and Serres, in which case the program is no longer trans-institutional. This graduate program is self-funded and students pay fees. The aim of the Masters Program is to develop and promote evidence-based practices in physical education and exercise science and offers 4 fields of study: Exercise and Health, Training Theory of Team Sports, Physical Education for Schools and Physical Education for Special Populations. The Masters program's length is 4 semesters and includes 11 courses and the completion of a thesis. The doctoral program's length is 8 semesters including the 4 terms of the Masters degree. It is unclear what is the length of the program for students who did not complete their Masters degree in the Aristotle University. The program requirements include 1 required statistics course, 2 elective courses, 2 independent studies, a collective learning module, and the thesis. The requirements do not include a comprehensive examination but there seems to be a thesis proposal according to international standards. Students are also expected to publish two peer-reviewed papers, one in an International Journal and one in a Greek Journal. The program has many students that have not completed their studies (102 Masters and 12 doctoral) from the period of 2001-2006. This is something that is common amongst Greek

Universities and must be dealt with immediately. A clearly communicated deadline and process of withdrawal must be established and implemented. There should be no reason to expect that these “stagnated students” will complete the degree in the future.

The length of the inter-departmental graduate program is 3 semesters for Masters and 4 additional semesters for the completion of the doctoral program. Although of a slightly shorter duration, the program has similar structure with the other graduate program. The focus of this program is the prevention and management of chronic conditions. However, it is still possible to integrate the two graduate programs within the fields of study instead of having separate but similar graduate programs.

#### IMPLEMENTATION

- How effectively is the Department’s goal implemented by the curriculum?
- How does the curriculum compare with appropriate, universally accepted standards for the specific area of study?
- Is the structure of the curriculum rational and clearly articulated?
- Is the curriculum coherent and functional?
- Is the material for each course appropriate and the time offered sufficient?
- Does the Department have the necessary resources and appropriately qualified and trained staff to implement the curriculum?

#### Undergraduate Program

Overall, the structure of the program is well defined and relatively flexible. The number of required theory courses increases progressively from 4 in the first two semesters to two in the 6<sup>th</sup> semester, whereas there are no required theory courses in the last two semesters. Such progression is actually a good program design. The number of core practical and applied courses is 3 for the first two semesters, 4 for 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> semesters and only 2 in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> semesters. This amounts to a very large total number of required core courses (43 across 6 semesters). In addition, the students must also take a total of 14 elective courses from a wide variety of elective and optional courses. The choice is dependent on the theoretical field of study chosen (either Competitive Sports or Physical Activity and Health). In other words, to graduate with a degree in Physical Education and Sports Science the students must complete in 4 years an average of 58 (57 and 59 for male and female students, respectively). This means that students must take an average of 14 courses per year. They must also choose one of 26 available practical specializations. This results in a heavy student workload since some courses are focused on direct instruction that does not encourage self-directed learning, creativity and critical thinking. It is also surprising that within 43 required courses there is no course introducing students to the basic principles of Research. A combined Research Methods and Statistics course is in the bank of the 15 advanced elective courses, of which students must take 4. This means that students may complete a University degree without a basic understanding and appreciation of the academic enquiry process and scientific research. This program structure is similar to that of the sister programs within Greece but does not comply with international higher education standards and philosophy.

In terms of appropriateness and functionality, faculty members and students expressed concern about the heavy student workload induced by the large curriculum and the required weekly hours. Students must take many courses that are spread throughout the city without an easy transit system. They all recognize that the School’s move to Thermi was positive and necessary but due to the lack of a systematic plan in the initial design stage there are no

adequate large lecture halls or classrooms in the new location. Only the first year students can be accommodated in Thermi. The students of the upper 3 years must take the theory classes in the old location, which is far from where they take the practical courses. The timetable adds to the problem by having all theory courses scheduled in the afternoon and in another location. This is one of the reasons for students not attending theory classes.

A weakness of the program is that there is a large number of activity courses and areas of specialization that are taught by non-permanent instructors posted to the University from the primary and secondary schools. Although financially this is an effective way to resource the program it is an unstable and unpredictable situation that has become more and more unsustainable in recent years. Therefore, it is unreasonable to design courses and areas of specialization without appropriate expertise within the regular faculty compliment of expertise.

### Graduate Program

Given the establishment of the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport Science, the trans-institutional program is by default a program within the same Faculty so can no longer exist in isolation. Thus, the graduate programs need to be discussed in combination under a new Faculty administrative structure.

Based on the data in the self-study and our meeting with approximately 10 graduate students (mostly PhD students), students appear to be satisfied with their program, and the quality of supervision. There is considerable evidence that the graduate degree outcomes are being achieved. Some tensions were detected, however, especially in relation to funding. There is lack of financial support for equipment maintenance, and students must pay from own funds to attend scientific conferences or in some cases conduct research for their dissertations.

We think that the 8 semesters of the doctoral program should not include 4 semesters of the masters but should be rather independent. Consistent with this extension in the duration of studies, the requirements should also include a comprehensive examination and should allow a multi publication thesis format (sandwich type), which will require 4 published or submitted papers (including the 2 already required independently of the thesis). This will raise the quality of the doctoral candidates and the reputation of the program.

Teaching assistantships are not available to graduate students, which is inconsistent with international standards. Teaching assistantships are a useful way to provide financial support to graduate students and effectively cover laboratory and marking hours. It is also a very valuable and useful learning experience for the students and their future careers. It is a common practice with multiple advantages and should be considered. Furthermore, no office space is provided to graduate students. Students working in labs have an advantage but students working in non-lab based areas of study do not have study space. Concerns about access to electronic and paper sources of literature were also raised.

### RESULTS

- How well is the implementation achieving the Department's predefined goals and objectives?
- If not, why is it so? How is this problem dealt with?
- Does the Department understand why and how it achieved or failed to achieve these

results?

There is evidence that the School has already achieved a number of goals and objectives and has the willingness and energy for curricular review and improvement. The undergraduate program is strengthened by the implementation of the fields of study in the upper years, and the teaching skills of the majority faculty members. The graduate programs are of good quality and have adequate numbers of core faculty to support them. Overall, the availability of research space and equipment is the strength of the graduate program. The overall weakness of the curriculum is the heavy student workload, the societal and professional relevance of the program, the non-standardized course outline and student evaluation practices, and the absence of a professional orientation program that will enable students to gain valuable working experience in the community in the form of internship or work placement opportunities.

#### IMPROVEMENT

- Does the Department know how the Curriculum should be improved?
- Which improvements does the Department plan to introduce?

The School's strategy for the future involves the revision of the undergraduate curriculum and their differentiation from the other School within the Faculty with the same title. We strongly support this initiative as one that will strengthen the position and reputation of the program as a distinct entity. The emphasis on sport sciences or physical activity and health is in line with contemporary developments in the curricula of leading North American and European institutions and can attract students with diverse professional aspirations.

#### Recommendations (Undergraduate Program):

1. Consider reducing the number of sport specific required courses. The basic principles of sports education can be developed in the context of 4 or 5 basic, thematic courses (eg. outdoor activities, fitness activities, swimming/aquatic activities, games, fundamental movement activities).
2. Consider replacing the required language courses (both English and Greek) with a basic research methodology course that will introduce students to basic concepts of the scientific approach.
3. Practical courses should include the completion of individual or group projects that will encourage active learning. In this case, the ECTS of these courses should increase to accurately reflect the effort required from the students.
4. If the number of core course would be decreased then the number of elective courses required for degree completion will also be decreased so that there is no content overlap and students have time to spend on self-directed learning. This type of learning encourages critical thinking and other academic skills and is what makes University education different from that of high school.
5. The idea of pre-requisites should be used to better control a logical flow through in course selection. The core theory courses required in the first two semesters should be prerequisites for some of the elective courses.
6. To be more effective, all theory courses should include 2-3 hours of common lecture followed by 1-2 hours of tutorial or lab, where the total student cohort will be split into a number of small tutorial or lab groups. This small group learning format will allow for critical discussion of current literature, in class quizzes, and

completion/presentation of individual and/or team assignments in separate small group or larger class seminars.

7. Some of these tutorials and seminars, especially in courses with cultural and social content, should take place in the library. This will encourage the critical use of the literature and will allow for the completion of literature reviews, essays, projects and critiques.
8. Hands on type of course content delivery is an effective and popular way to engage students. An increase in the number of laboratories and clinical workshops will be welcomed by students.
9. The current scheduling does not take into account the location of the facilities and the transfer time required by students. Consider a different timetable that will optimize the utilization of available teaching space. Courses should be grouped by location so that students' daily schedule is preferably in one location and daily travel time is minimized. Having the practical courses occupy every morning of the week is a very ineffective timetable. It is also the reason for students not attending the lectures. It is more efficient to schedule courses to run in the same location during the same days of the week. For example: Monday/Wednesday could be the "practical days" in Thermi for all activity courses (from 8am to 5pm so that all classes fit); Tuesday/Thursday could be the days that students go to central campus for their theory courses (from 8am to 5pm); Friday could be the "tutorial/laboratory days" in Thermi (from 8am to 5pm) or an "off-campus day" for swimming and other courses in various other locations. The timetable of the academic and teaching staff should fit with the needs of students.
10. Consider developing a Sports and Professional Ethics course as a common, culminating experience of the final year so that students are introduced to the basic Ethical principles that apply to their professional area. This could also be accompanied by a professional development/internship course as part of the students' specialization experience in the last 2 semesters of the program.
11. Consider restricting the number of available elective courses and specializations to what can be covered by regular, permanent teaching staff only.
12. Student examination should use different types of assessments and evaluation of knowledge and the criteria should be clearly defined and presented in a standardized course outline format. This diversified student evaluation format should progressively move from the simpler, traditional types of examinations, tests and lab reports used in the first 2 years to more complex, critical, reflective types of examinations, essays, assignments, and literature reviews that can be employed in the upper two years.

#### Recommendations (Graduate Program):

1. Given the establishment of the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Science, we propose that this program either: a) replaces the inter-departmental graduate programs and is administered by the Faculty, or b) is discontinued.
2. We think that the 8 semesters of the doctoral program should not include 4 semesters of the masters but should be rather independent.
3. Consistent with this extension in the duration of studies, the requirements should also include a comprehensive examination and should allow an alternative thesis format with publications (sandwich type). This type of thesis will require 4 published or submitted papers (including the 2 already required by the program independently

of the thesis). This will raise the quality of the doctoral theses and the reputation of the program.

4. Consider the amalgamation of all Research Methods and Statistics courses across programs and fields.
5. A Qualitative Research Methods should also be considered.
6. A seminar series course could focus on the development of academic and research communication skills and could involve a series of research presentations and workshops on various topics including manuscript writing, Ethics applications and implications, community involvement etc. As part of this course, students could also accumulate credits for teaching undergraduate lectures, attending conferences, and reaching out activities such as public lectures.
7. Develop, post and communicate a Student Handbook for both the Masters and Doctoral levels. These Handbooks will describe the process and timelines of the program with clear deliverables, roles and outcomes.

## **B. Teaching**

### **APPROACH:**

Does the Department have a defined pedagogic policy with regard to teaching approach and methodology?

Please comment on :

- Teaching methods used
- Teaching staff/ student ratio
- Teacher/student collaboration
- Adequacy of means and resources
- Use of information technologies
- Examination system

The teaching methods used in the School vary depending on the type of course (practical or theory-based). The lecturers and instructors use a variety of delivery techniques that are in general appropriate for both, the practical and theory-based courses. In 2012 approximately 1400 undergraduate students (~350 in each Year) participated actively in the university courses. In the same year, the School had 77 academic staff members including 65 permanent academic members and 12 non-permanent instructors posted from the primary and secondary schools. Thus, in 2012 the overall undergraduate teaching staff/student ratio was approximately 18. This number is within the range of international standards and can be viewed as an adequate ratio to provide a good educational quality in teaching and learning. Regarding this issue, it has to be mentioned that 15 students are required to deliver a course (i.e. at least 15 students must have selected a specific course). However, the number of courses offered by the School including practical and theory-based courses is excessively high. For example, the School offers more than 50 different practical courses for the students. It is our impression that this partly overloads both the School resources (staff and facilities) and the students and thereby, leading to an ineffective and deficient teaching and learning. Moreover, due to the high number of offered courses, an overlap of classes is inevitable and difficult to avoid. Course overlap has been identified as a major issue by a number of students and several academic staff members. This is an unacceptable situation and needs to be corrected by the School.

Based on the fact that the academic activities are organized at different areas of the city with

long distances between each other and due to a relatively high number of staff members having only a short term teaching contract (approximately 16% of the academic staff members are non-permanent instructors posted from the primary and secondary schools), it is apparent that the collaboration between teachers and students is not always appropriate or efficient. This is supported by our discussions with the students stating that the quality of instructor (posted from schools)/student collaboration is quite variable ranging from excellent to inappropriate or insufficient.

Most of the teaching resources and facilities are adequate and generally of a good standard. In particular, most of the sports facilities and the various scientific laboratories are excellent and well equipped. However, the computing facilities for the students require upgrading. The students' computer room is often closed due to staff shortages and the library has no computers at all. Due to the tremendous reduction of the library budget (from 12.000 EUR in 2010 to 2.500 EUR in 2013), the faculty has no access to scientific journals at the moment. This is in particular problematic for the scientific research work of the faculty and graduate students. Furthermore, the students are officially allowed to borrow books only for a very small period of time (officially only one week). All the above limitations make an appropriate preparation for the classes, projects and thesis (BA, MSc or PhD) very difficult for the students.

Concerning the resources and facilities, one of the biggest limitations is that the classrooms and the different sport facilities are spread throughout the entire city with no appropriate public transport infrastructure or, alternative, with no efficient transport arrangements organized by the University. This inhibits the students to arrive at the classes on time. Due to the geographical constraints of the facilities, it is essential that the travel time for the students is reduced to a minimum and the destinations between the different classrooms or sport facilities are taken into account when organizing the schedule and timetable of the students. We have the impression that this is currently not the case and, thereby, leading to an overlap of classes and travel problems for students, especially for attending lectures and laboratory practicals in the afternoon or later in the day.

Undergraduate students do not have opportunities for work placements or industry employment or training for a longer period of time within their studies. Based on the discussions of the EEC with members of the industry and potential employers, the quality of the education would benefit considerably from such practical activities and, thereby, better prepare the students for their future work and careers.

In the main building of the faculty there is Wi-Fi access for all academic staff members and students. Furthermore, the E-learning software is appropriate and of a good standard. However, the E-learning platform is not used by all staff or practical instructors and only a small number of staff regularly upload and upgrade the required documents for their students, including lecture presentations. There are currently only 14 courses uploaded in the Blackboard system by a few members of staff and only a few of those have full information and lecture and laboratory materials. This is a significant weakness and a lost opportunity (given the availability of such an excellent electronic system) to improve the quality of teaching and student learning experience.

In general, the examination system is well organised and supported administratively. The course outlines are normally available electronically in the E-study guide so all students have access to assessment details. However, there are a number of courses where there is no specific information of the different examination methods. Furthermore, examination

criteria for practical and sport skill courses need to be specified more clearly with generic assessment criteria for the different grades. It is essential that all courses and examinations - including those within the sport skills areas – are defined clearly with objective criteria for each grade. This is particularly important due to the high number of non-permanent instructors posted from the primary and secondary schools that need to apply similar assessment standards. Furthermore, it would be beneficial if the E-learning software would also allow the staff to provide all the different marks for the various elements of the assessment in each course (e.g. reports, presentations, lab or class tests, essays etc) instead of only providing a single field for final mark entry. In addition, the programme committee needs also to check and consider the overall examination and assessment matrix across semesters and consider issues of progression and examination workload of students. Despite the fact that there is currently no provision in the university system for a formal or structured system for the internal moderation of the examination and assessment material or external examination, such an approach could be suggested for the new organisational structure document of the University (Οργανισμός). This is an essential element of quality assurance in student assessment.

#### IMPLEMENTATION

Please comment on:

- Quality of teaching procedures
- Quality and adequacy of teaching materials and resources.
- Quality of course material. Is it brought up to date?
- Linking of research with teaching
- Mobility of academic staff and students
- Evaluation by the students of (a) the teaching and (b) the course content and study material/resources

The majority of teaching methods and techniques implemented are sport, practical and face-to-face lectures. In particular, the undergraduate students have a significant amount of sport practical courses predominantly in the morning. This has a clear negative impact on the effectiveness of the theoretical teaching and learning which usually takes place in the afternoon right after the practical sport courses. It is recommended to reduce the number of sports practical courses to 4-5 key sports and activities and to switch the order of teaching (e.g. main theoretical courses in the morning) or to dedicate specific days to the theoretical lectures and laboratory classes in the Themi campus.

We noticed that there are only a few examples of practical courses and scientific projects in the laboratories, and almost no tutorials or seminars. Including such teaching methods the staff could engage the students to use the library regularly in small groups or individually, to work more with scientific papers and to handle different measurement techniques and methods. This may also help to improve the student's ability for independent learning and to better prepare the students for finalizing their written bachelor or master thesis. The requirements of attending seminars or tutorials where students will be required to participate actively with individual or group presentations can also facilitate studying and engaging with different individual or group learning activities outside the main lecture contact hours. Formal and structured interaction with students during lectures (e.g. class quizzes, question-answer sessions, discussion points) would also facilitate participation and engagement of students during lectures, especially in theoretical topics.

The School but also the Faculty and the University must provide training courses and

workshops for academic staff on how to improve their teaching techniques using modern methods of student engagement and independent learning. Furthermore, this guidance and training (by the School or University services) for enhancing teaching methods should be compulsory and available for all academic staff members. This is in particular important for junior or newly elected lecturers and for the non-permanent instructors posted from the primary and secondary schools.

The undergraduate dissertation is optional for the students in the current curriculum. The School should reconsider this and perhaps change it to a compulsory course for all students. In most national and international departments this is a standard requirement for an undergraduate degree. However, based on the high number of students it is also clear that such changes will need a reorganisation and a more effective management by the leading academic staff members and the heads of the different scientific groups and laboratories. Such changes may help to improve the quality of teacher/student collaboration and interaction, and may also offer the opportunity to better link research with teaching. A regular meeting and collaboration between the research and teaching staff members is needed and can improve the linkage between research and teaching.

Course and teaching materials are not provided by all staff in the E-learning (e-TEFAA) platform. Currently, only a limited number of staff members regularly use the electronic learning platform and update all needed documents and lecture materials for their students. This needs to be improved in the near future. Organizing regular software training exercises for all academic staff members and providing more appropriate E-learning guidelines may help to increase the usage of the E-learning platform within the faculty.

In general, there is some mobility of staff and students through the Erasmus program and by having several international contacts and/or collaborations with some academic staff members. However, the student's mobility could be improved by applying more regularly for EU travel grants and by increasing specific international contacts by additional members of the faculty. In particular, graduate students would benefit from such additional activities enhancing the academic career of the students.

Student participation in the course evaluation process must be improved as only a small number of evaluations were performed (in 2012 approximately only 10% of the students evaluated their courses). One of the obvious problems and main reasons for the low participation is the high number of classes that the students have to attend and, thereby, increasing the number of evaluations that have to be performed by the students at similar times of the year (end of semester). In addition, the questionnaire design and content and the process of the evaluation must be improved and needs perhaps to be adjusted for the different disciplines, i.e. seminars, lectures, tutorials, sport practical courses. To our knowledge, there is no process through which the academic staff considers the results of the student evaluation aimed at improving the course content, teaching methods or any other element of course delivery. In international faculties this is usually done through an annual course review by each member of staff based on the results of student evaluation analysis. Furthermore, a permanent discussion of the procedure and the content of the evaluation processes with academic staff and students are essential. In other words, the staff must consider the opinion and the feedback of the students in order to significantly improve the quality and the effectiveness of the evaluation and their teaching. A more effective evaluation of the classes by the students is an essential element of teaching quality assurance and will help the academic staff to better reflect their teaching success.

## RESULTS

Please comment on:

- Efficacy of teaching.
- Discrepancies in the success/failure percentage between courses and how they are justified.
- Differences between students in (a) the time to graduation, and (b) final degree grades.
- Whether the Department understands the reasons of such positive or negative results?

The efforts made by staff within the last few years to implement essential elements for the quality assurance of teaching and the effectiveness of their teaching are notable and there is evidence that the staff have already achieved a number of their goals and objectives. However, as it has been noted above, there is still opportunity for improvement concerning teaching efficiency. Furthermore, the discussions of the EEC with the students indicated that, in general, the students are satisfied with the quality of their studies and educational experience. However, the academic interaction and collaboration between staff and students needs to be strengthened. Time to graduation compares favourably with some other similar Schools in Greece and final degree grades are perhaps somewhat lower compared to similar departments and other University School averages. Based on the different meetings and discussions, the EEC has clear evidence to suggest that the vast majority of academic staff members appreciate the need and have the willingness to undertake the necessary changes for improving further the teaching quality.

## IMPROVEMENT

- Does the Department propose methods and ways for improvement?
- What initiatives does it take in this direction?

The staff members have undertaken notable activities for teaching quality improvements, although some variability in teaching outcomes among members of School staff is evident. Those staff members who have contributed to these improvements efforts need to be commended for their efforts and dedication. The recommendations proposed below by the EEC, may be viewed as some additional guidance and suggestions aimed at helping the School staff to better support teaching and to improve the quality of teaching in the near future. The following recommendations are proposed by the External Evaluation Committee:

1. Consider reducing the number of offered and required courses including practical and theory-based courses. For instance, the School offers more than 50 different practical sports courses.
2. An undergraduate student needs to complete approximately 58 courses with about 7-8 courses per semester. That is far too much and does not give much time for the students to improve their ability for independent learning including library work and working with other sources on the subject such as books and scientific papers.
3. A specific topic could be organized by using different teaching techniques or methods, e.g. one lecture, one seminar and one tutorial or, alternatively, one practical laboratory class. This would potentially unload the faculty resources (staff and teaching facilities) and thereby, lead to a more efficient teaching and learning. Moreover, it may reduce the possibility of overlap between different classes.
4. An overlap of classes and courses is an unacceptable situation and needs to be avoided. This may be achieved by more precisely pre-planning the time schedule of the students

and by reducing the number of classes.

5. Due to the geographical spread of the facilities, it is essential that the travel time of the students is reduced to a minimum. The distances between the different class rooms or sport facilities have to be considered when organizing the schedule or timetable of the students. This would also mean that the instructors may not be able to choose their teaching times without communication with the timetable planning committee. Rather, they can make suggestions during the pre-planning phase of the program about their preferred time slots to allow flexibility in the timetabling of the different classes.
6. The undergraduate students have a large amount of sport practical courses predominantly scheduled in the morning. This has a clear negative impact on the effectiveness of the theoretical teaching and learning which usually takes place in the afternoon right after the practical sport courses. It is recommended to reduce the number of practical courses (see curriculum section) and to switch the order of teaching or to mix sport practical and theoretical courses.
7. The evaluation process of the students for teaching quality and course content and delivery needs to be improved. One of the obvious problems is the high number of classes increasing the number of evaluations that have to be performed by the students at the end of each semester. Further, the content of the evaluation may need to be adjusted depending of the disciplines and types of courses.
8. There seems to be no effective process through which the academic staff consider the results of the student evaluation aimed at improving the course outline, teaching methods or any other element of course delivery. This could be accomplished by an annual review by each member of staff based on the results of student evaluation analysis and may help the academic staff to better reflect their teaching success and procedures.
9. Teaching materials are not appropriately provided by all staff in the E-learning platform. Only a limited number of staff members regularly use the electronic learning platform and update all the required documents for their students. Organizing regular E-learning software training exercises for the academic staff may help to increase the usage of the E-learning platform within the faculty.
10. Currently, the undergraduate dissertation is optional. The School should consider changing this to a compulsory element according to international education standards.
11. Consider specifying examination criteria for all courses more clearly with generic assessment criteria for the different grades.
12. Consider establishing teaching assistantships for graduate students that will help with the increase in the marking load associated with a potential expansion of student evaluation beyond a single final examination.

## **C. Research**

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

### **APPROACH**

- What is the Department's policy and main objective in research?
- Has the Department set internal standards for assessing research?

The School's commitment to research is very obvious and the research profile is improving compared to similar-size departments elsewhere. The School has made significant efforts in recent times to hire younger, research-active staff and allocate resources, thus promoting its research program. Although initially the research objectives were based mainly on aspects of sports performance, research gradually branched in the areas of sports medicine, health promotion and disease management and prevention. It is very clear that the School recognizes the importance of the role of physical activity on health and disease prevention and continues to support such research efforts and initiatives (for example collaborations) in this domain. Despite diversity in research areas there is no evidence that one area of research is promoted and internally supported at the expense of others.

Research is solely driven by the training and interests of specific staff and/or research groups without central vision and research strategy by the School or Faculty. The School and the faculty encourage and support the participation of graduate students in research projects. It should be noted, however, that in addition to the lack of overall School strategic direction for research there is also no well-defined process for assessing research quality and productivity of different members of staff. Although this may be due to the fact that the School is very diverse, such a process will allow the evaluation/ achievement of research objectives and will enhance the research visibility of the School. We believe that the School as part of its strategic vision should develop a process for assessing research quality internally. This is a very important step in promoting academic staff research and the quality of education delivered to graduate and doctoral students.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

- How does the Department promote and support research?
- Quality and adequacy of research infrastructure and support.
- Scientific publications.
- Research projects.
- Research collaborations.

The School has been quite productive with some notable contributions in the scientific literature. As mentioned above, research is solely driven by the training and interests of faculty and is promoted and supported by the School perhaps in a manner that is not integrative with little planning for future growth and development.

Of particular importance, the quality of publications has increased overall in recent years. Some of the School's publications and scientific contributions appear in peer reviewed journals with high impact factors. Therefore, it should be inferred that there is commitment for high quality research by some of the faculty and such faculty deserve to be commended for their efforts, dedication and accomplishments. However, we also noted that some faculty members have made minimum contributions to the School's research efforts. This discrepancy in research efforts and productivity among faculty deserves attention as part of

an overall strategy to improve research quality and productivity. The development and implementation of a robust process for assessing research in our opinion is pivotal in addressing this issue.

The School has a total of eleven laboratories (9 currently active, 2 in phase-out state) in basic, applied, and behavioural sciences. The research infrastructure is very impressive which underscores the School's research potential and the commitment made by the academic unit and the Institution to support research. It also highlights a certain level of expectations and productivity. Research efforts and productivity over time must match institutional commitment. Faculty members and research staff are encouraged to continue and increase their research efforts in order to justify and sustain such a research environment over time.

As noted already, we were pleasantly impressed by the space availability, the technology and equipment available to support all research domains. Of particular importance, we also observed duplication of expensive research instrumentation that probably cannot be justified on past or current needs (2007- present). We feel that the School has a unique opportunity to re-organize the existing laboratory space and laboratories in an effort to better coordinate research efforts and operate in a more fiscally responsible manner in research.

Research efforts are supported by funding received from competitive and non-competitive research programs. We commend the faculty for these efforts while recognizing the challenges associated with competitive funding mechanisms. It is anticipated that these trends and efforts, will continue, using similar and innovative approaches. Of particular importance, some faculty in the School have established strong research collaborations. Faculty in various areas should seek additional domestic and international partners. Such collaborations greatly enhance funding opportunities and may help the School in recruiting faculty and graduate students.

## RESULTS

- How successfully were the Department's research objectives implemented?
- Scientific publications.
- Research projects.
- Research collaborations.
- Efficacy of research work. Applied results. Patents etc.
- Is the Department's research acknowledged and visible outside the Department? Rewards and awards.

The School has articulated its research objectives. Further, there is an impressive research environment in most areas supporting current research endeavours. As it has been previously mentioned, the research productivity of the School in terms of published research articles and research presentations is notable. Of particular importance, the School has produced several quality publications that appear in journals with high impact factors, thus enhancing the visibility of the school. Further, certain faculty are members of editorial boards of international journals, elected members of committees of international organisations, have organised major international conferences, and have well-cited research portfolio. These trends are very encouraging because they underscore the School's potential. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the School has reached some of its research objectives. The existing collaborations have brought success and visibility in some areas, but further interdisciplinary collaborative efforts may be key to high impact research and funding. It is important that the Dean of the Faculty, School Head and senior faculty should

engage in a dialogue in order to provide the school's research strategy and platform. Further they should continue to emphasise the importance of impact publications to junior faculty and doctoral students. We feel that the School has the capacity to launch more focused interdisciplinary research efforts on specific thematic areas of significant impact for today's societal problems reflecting collective faculty expertise. Finally senior school faculty should mentor junior faculty towards the establishment of a well-defined research agenda. This has the potential to drive the research efforts towards projects of higher quality, secure collaborations, enhance the visibility of the School and attain research prominence if such efforts are sustained over time.

#### IMPROVEMENT

- Improvements in research proposed by the Department, if necessary.
- Initiatives in this direction undertaken by the Department .

The School has made notable accomplishments in research, although the variability in research productivity among faculty members is evident. The recommendations noted below are important, at least in our opinion, for enhancing the School's current research efforts.

1. Reorganization of Research Laboratories. The existing laboratories need to be reorganized/realigned in a cost and space effective manner. Duplication of equipment must be avoided when possible. Scientific overlapping in basic and applied sciences allows sharing of equipment without preventing equipment availability when research activities are well coordinated.
2. Develop research foci and promote interdisciplinary research. The School should explore and discuss the development of research foci as part of a clear research strategy. This process must be concurrent with # 1 above. This will allow: 1) a more effective allocation of resources, 2) the development of a small number of distinct research groups with adequate critical mass of researchers, 3) the promotion of interdisciplinary culture, and 4) the facilitation of hiring of junior faculty consistent with the School's research agenda (foci).
3. Implement a faculty mentorship program. There is no evidence that such a formal program for junior staff exists at the present time. Senior research staff in the Faculty and University should lead this effort.
4. Establishment of a Research Committee. This committee will provide strategic vision and guidance for the development the School's research environment and agenda (#1 and # 2 above). This committee should also establish standards in terms of publication outputs, promote and coordinate external grant efforts and ensure progression to higher levels of achievement. We would encourage faculty from both Schools (Thessaloniki and Serres) to be included in the membership in this committee that needs to operate at the Faculty level.
5. Promote the development a research culture among students. Organize journal clubs and engage student in the organization of local conferences or research exchanges.

## **D. All Other Services**

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

### **APPROACH**

- How does the Department view the various services provided to the members of the academic community (teaching staff, students).
- Does the Department have a policy to simplify administrative procedures? Are most procedures processed electronically?
- Does the Department have a policy to increase student presence on Campus?

The central administration unit of the School, including the undergraduate and graduate directors maintain a positive and optimistic viewpoint of the various services provided to the academic community which includes teaching, staff, and students. All members of the central administration ascertain the importance of the various services provided by the School while emphasizing the relevant importance in building a stronger academic, theoretical foundation and framework. A number of "open-communication" channels evidently exist between all parties, including a good working relationship with administrators and members of the central administration. Administrators recognize the relevant place and importance of all services, technical as well as physical to services offered by the School and in particular to fulfilling the objectives of the School. The 11 labs are also perceived as being relevant to research needs of academic members while also providing a needed service to graduate students as well. The administration heads are cognizant of the merits of the labs yet also recognize that changes for improvement can take place in the way lab services are delivered. The administrative heads of the School also conceptualize the importance of service delivery in teaching and appear to be open to change for improvement.

The undergraduate, graduate as well as central administration all abide by collective policies that have become the norm through time for service delivery. The use of electronic communication exists between and amongst staff members for the implementation of policies. Administrative meetings as well as general assemblies are held regularly, thus providing an avenue for review and examination of School Policies.

The fact that the School is located in a suburban building (its own) far from the main campus aids in both enhancing the presence of students on campus, but can also deter this presence. Limited hours of operation of the computer room and library may also limit the presence of students on campus. The approach to increase student presence on campus extends beyond the auspices of the School to include the physical structure of the campus as well as the means used to deliver teaching and its related services. The omission of a distinct "student centre" - either in the form of a separate building or lounge - is also vital in diminishing the lack of student presence on campus. The main gathering place for students is the dining area. Students need a distinct area - other than a dining area - to meet, socialize, discuss and relax. Mandatory attendance in courses would also increase student presence on campus. All of the aforementioned appear necessary to enhance student presence on campus yet were not evidently revealed in any policy.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

- Organization and infrastructure of the Department's administration (e.g. secretariat of the Department).

- Form and function of academic services and infrastructure for students (e.g. library, PCs and free internet access, student counseling, athletic- cultural activity etc.).

The organization and infrastructure of the School's support staff (7 members) is relevant to the day-to-day delivery of existing services yet changes are needed to improve the quality of delivery of these services. This School is geographically distant from the main campus and physically resembles a campus in itself. Thus, the reliance of administrative support assistance from the main campus is difficult. In addition, the large number of teaching staff, graduate and undergraduate students are left with little administrative assistance to address their needs. The organization and infrastructure of this School is in need of more full-time support staff help. Areas that can be improved include student support (in the form of undergraduate and graduate student advisors), and additional technical support personnel to cater to the needs of the labs. The implementation of day-to-day services needs to be improved both from a human as well as physical resource dimension.

The form and function of academic services and infrastructures for students is lacking, and in some cases, even missing. The School's library is housed in an isolated basement area. Library collections, resources and space is limited and not conducive to a School of this magnitude that operates a large undergraduate and graduate program. A full-time librarian operates the library with the assistance of student volunteers. Library hours of operation are limited from Monday's to Friday's from 9-5, and its limited collection of periodicals and outdated resources make it difficult for graduate students to access needed resources. A limited number of older PC's exist, with minimal hours of operation for the computer room (the same hours of operation with the library). Accessibility to modern computers, an essential resource in this age of contemporary education can be enhanced through the addition of more computers and increased hours of operation of the computer room. In addition, the large number of undergraduate and graduate students merits the creation of two additional positions directed to student counselling and advising. The function of the 11 labs appears to be conducive to the needs of the School, yet greater collaboration can take place to enhance resource use and productivity. Distance between labs is a problem - some are located in main building, and some in a building that is a fair walking distance away. The presence of medical staff on campus doing lab research truly enhances the implementation of services and research. Finally, the lab equipment and material at hand is very good thus providing a quality environment for the implementation of services to graduate students. The addition of a lab support position would be an asset to help better serve all labs as well as enhance the implementation of services. The central University resources offered for sports and cultural activities and skill development linked to future careers are very good, yet the distance between the main campus and access to other student services in the main campus is a problem.

## RESULTS

- Are administrative and other services adequate and functional?
- How does the Department view the particular results.

The administration services of the School are good, yet the implementation of these services requires change to better serve the needs of students. Change needs to take place in the form of: (1) increased secretarial help, (2) the addition of distinct student counselling/advising positions at the undergraduate and graduate levels, (3) the creation of a lab coordinator position to cater to the operation as well as administration needs of the labs, (4) an enhanced

collection of library resources, including hours of operation, to address the needs of undergraduate and graduate students, (5) the addition of more/upgrade of older PC's in the computer room with enhanced hours of operation, and (6) adding a Multimedia support position to serve as technical support for professors, undergraduate and graduate students.

#### IMPROVEMENTS

- Has the Department identified ways and methods to improve the services provided?
- Initiatives undertaken in this direction.

The Administrative heads of the School have identified the above as ways to improve service delivery. They are conducive to the fact at hand - the economic crisis - and have managed to function adequately with what they have. However, to address certain standards necessary for service delivery in institutions of higher education learning, the aforementioned results are deemed as necessary actions. Furthermore, feedback provided by students is limited to individual course quality and there is no official process for student to comment on central University and School support services and campus related issues and needs.

Initiatives to improve service delivery seem to be carried out by all staff members doing "more with less". The reality of operating an undergraduate and graduate program of this size and magnitude requires resources to enhance service delivery. The delivery of services is essential for providing a quality undergraduate and graduate service. The aforementioned suggestions would aid in ascertaining an enhanced service delivery by this School.

#### **Collaboration with social, cultural and production organizations**

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

The quality, originality and significance of the School's initiatives are in general improving but more emphasis must be placed on the establishment of external collaborations in particular that are currently quite limited. The School has taken action on improving this mainly through the hosting of conferences. The active involvement of many of its staff members in delivering papers at various internal scientific conferences, and the collaborative relationships that have been established with other European universities have also aided in building collaborative social, cultural and academic relations. More is needed however. More academic collaborations are needed - particularly beyond Europe - to not only enhance exposure and recognition of the School, but also for professional development. Staff and students alike would benefit from international collaborations that extend beyond Europe. Efforts should be placed on establishing working agreements with international universities for student exchanges and academic staff exchanges. Greater efforts need to also be placed on hosting more scientific conferences and workshops in order to enhance exposure of the School.

Outreach to the academic community is not the only aspect of collaboration for this School. The large number of alumni of this School can also aid in help build collaborative relationship between this School and society. Alumni in prominent social, cultural, as well as sport, public authority and political positions can help this School in building collaborative

relationships. Dialogue between and amongst the School and key community stakeholders and future employers is evident and a strength of the School, but can be strengthened, formalized (as part of curriculum revision processes and committees for example) and should take place more regularly with the objective of enhancing collaborative relationships domestically and internationally.

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

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

Please, comment on the Department's:

- Potential inhibiting factors at State, Institutional and Departmental level, and proposals on ways to overcome them.
- Short-, medium- and long-term goals.
- Plan and actions for improvement by the Department/Academic Unit
- Long-term actions proposed by the Department.

The current economic condition poses a number of significant problems and challenges for strategic planning - particularly when it comes to long term planning. Public institutions such as this Department are currently subject to economic cutbacks, restraints, and downsizing. This is an inhibiting factor for short-term strategic planning. Indeed, any planning and decisions need to be carefully considered and evaluated in the context of the changing landscape in Higher Education in the country, the economic conditions and developments in other departments in the same or similar areas and fields of study.

The School has identified the main areas requiring improvement and has outlined some limited proposals for improvement in the internal evaluation report. These are mainly based on requesting more financial support from the University to complete the sports facilities at its Thermi campus and more financial support from the University Research Committee to support the School research work. However, in the current financial situation it is difficult to see how such requests can be afforded by the University and the School needs to have alternative plans and strategies to ensure that the funding is increased in the future not only through the University but from external sources as well. Other actions proposed by the School include a more coordinated central effort to improve collaborations with relevant organisations and stakeholders and encouragement of students to participate actively and in the course evaluation process for the improvement of teaching and learning quality.

In general, the School did not have a clear strategic plan in the past for achieving its main objectives in infrastructure, teaching and research. However, this need is clearly recognized by the current management and plan to discuss and implement appropriate long term actions to ensure the improvement of the quality in all aspects of the School's work and provision.

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

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

Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC on:

- the development of the Department to this date and its present situation, including explicit comments on good practices and weaknesses identified through the External Evaluation process and recommendations for improvement
- the Department's readiness and capability to change/improve
- the Department's quality assurance.

The School has many strengths that include its long history and tradition that are also linked to the development of the profession and the area in higher education and the experienced staff that are educating large number of students in undergraduate and postgraduate programs. The School has extensive experience of conference, seminar, scientific meeting and workshop organisation and service provision in sports science and medicine, and has made significant progress in attracting research grants from both competitive and non-competitive sources. There are some good examples of links with external private and public organisations, employers and other stakeholders and provision of service through outreach programs and university schemes to support vulnerable groups. There were also significant improvement of infrastructure, sports facilities and IT provision and e-learning facilities and some important flagship achievements linked to participation in a University scheme to improve energy efficiency and environmental friendliness of School buildings. Finally, the introduction of the student mentoring scheme is an important step in student support and quality of educational provision.

The establishment of a Faculty in this area in one of the largest and more influential Universities in the country is a very important development in the current context that can be exploited for the advancement of the Schools and the field in general. The managerial groups of the School and the Faculty are ambitious and forward looking and appreciate the urgency for building on the strengths but also consider radical changes to adapt to the changing external conditions, including the financial uncertainties. They are also prepared to consider the various opportunities for the development of the School. These include links with external stakeholders (e.g. sports federations and associations) and potential external income streams and re-orientation of the School focus in important areas of the modern marketplace that are distinct from the directions in the other School in the Faculty in Serres. These changes have the potential to attract high quality students motivated by the quality of the educational experience and the potential career opportunities after graduation.

The main weaknesses according to the School relate to the quality of the sports facilities and available infrastructure although in the opinion of the EEC the sports facilities in the Thermi campus are impressive. The main problem is the maintenance of the existing facilities and perhaps the perception and false expectation that the curriculum must cover most Olympic sports and, therefore, the unrealistic expectation that even more sports facilities are required all the time as the School keeps adding more sports courses in its curriculum. The School should reconsider how to deliver the basic motor abilities that are common to all Olympic sports through a limited number of combined practical courses that are based on the strengths and experience of the existing staff, the available facilities and the needs of the graduates in the marketplace and their future careers. Although coaching qualifications are

important for some career paths, the School as an academic unit of a University should provide the basic knowledge and academic skills and qualities that are necessary for any University graduate in addition to specific subject knowledge and qualifications. For example, official and recognised (by the State or official authorities) coaching qualifications in specific sports or modern activities can be offered through short-term intensive courses in association and collaboration with external partners such sports federations and experienced coaches. This will avoid the need to offer a normal one semester course on that sport as part of the curriculum, requiring new facilities on campus or continuous travel to the sports facilities away from campus and dedicated permanent staff to teach so many sports courses as part of the curriculum.

The number of academic staff is also considered a weakness but this pressure is somewhat self-imposed due to the size of the curriculum and the resistance to consider further reduction in the provision of peripheral subjects and minority sports. Furthermore, the staff to student ratio with the 'active' number of students is acceptable ( $1400/77=18$  students per staff) and compares favourably with international standards. The main issues with staffing relate to the lack of any succession and forward planning for replacement of retired staff in areas of need and future growth and academic staff normally working in isolation and separated in a large number of sections and laboratories without many opportunities for collaboration. This leads to differing opinions and interests expressed and prevents the formation of a clear strategic vision for the future of the School.

The main weaknesses identified by the EEC as requiring improvement (see improvement sections in parts A-D above) relate mainly to the University entrance system and the expectations of the incoming students, the curriculum structure and organisation as well as the teaching, assessment and feedback and evaluation methods. The fragmentation of the research and teaching activities because of the current structure of the School is also a main weakness. The large number of sections and laboratories, usually developed around the interests of a single or just few members of staff, means that there is a low critical mass of people in each area or laboratory and this fragmentation prevents the smooth and coordinated function of the School. A new organisational structure is required with fewer sections and laboratories to enhance collaboration and cross-disciplinary work opportunities for both research and teaching. This will allow the School to build on its significant achievements, exploit its existing strengths and achieve even more success in the future.

Based on the external evaluation process, the main recommendations of the EEC for improvements are the following:

1. Complete differentiation of the School from the same School in the Faculty based in Serres and distinct mission, direction, focus and curriculum. The Faculty could also be enhanced with the addition of the University Sports centre as a separate unit to coordinate the provision of sports and physical activity opportunities to the whole of the University community but offer training and practice opportunities for the School students as well.
2. Drastic reduction in the number of courses in the curriculum and the amount of passive lecture and practical instruction contact time.
3. Increased active participation opportunities for students in courses with laboratory practicals, seminars, tutorials, group work and work placements/internships to enhance the quality of contact time and active learning.
4. Establish a more student friendly timetable that will facilitate lecture attendance and will optimize the use of available resources.
5. Improve student evaluation and feedback process with appropriately designed electronic

questionnaires, promotion of student feedback importance and facilitation of student course evaluation opportunities.

6. Establish frequent (annual or biennial) process of course quality evaluation and improvement through effective use of student evaluation scores and feedback and course performance statistics.
7. Establish a Research Committee to include School head, laboratory directors and senior academic staff to coordinate research activity in the School based on well defined strategic directions and a focused research plan.
8. Improve the research environment for young researchers through an active program of interaction, participation, support and mentoring events.
9. Establish a monitoring and evaluation process for all faculty members that includes an annual activity report summarizing their teaching, research and service outcomes. These reports can be collected by the quality assurance team or a special internal committee responsible for the data analysis and the production of the Departmental statistics to be posted on the website. Such a process will increase self-motivation, accountability and transparency and could also be linked to the quinquennial process of evaluation of professors and associate professors according to Article 21 of Law 4009/2011.

## The Members of the Committee

Name and Surname

Signature

1. Vasilios Baltzopoulos \_\_\_\_\_
2. Theodore Angelopoulos \_\_\_\_\_
3. Kyros Karamanidis \_\_\_\_\_
4. George Karlis \_\_\_\_\_
5. Panagiota Klentrou \_\_\_\_\_