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ΣΤΗΝ ΑΝΩΤΑΤΗ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗ

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

## ***EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT***

***The Department of Language, Literature and Culture of  
the Black Sea Countries***

***Democritus University of Thrace***

***Version 2.0***

***March 2010***



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## **External Evaluation Committee**

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of The Department of Language,  
Literature and Culture of the Black Sea Countries

Democritus University of Thrace

consisted of the following four (4) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by  
the HQAA in accordance with Law 3374/2005 :

1. Professor Moschos Morfakidis-Filactós (President)  
University of Granada
2. Professor Fatima Eloeva, St.Petersburg University, Russia
3. Professor Antoni Mironowicz, University of Bialystok, Poland
4. Professor Onur Yildirim, Middle East Technical University, Turkey

5. **N.B.** The structure of the “Template” proposed for the External Evaluation Report mirrors the requirements of Law 3374/2005 and corresponds overall to the structure of the Internal Evaluation Report submitted by the Department. The length of text in each box is free. Questions included in each box are not exclusive nor should they always be answered separately; they are meant to provide a general outline of matters that should be addressed by the Committee when formulating its comments.

## ***Introduction***

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

The members of the Evaluation Committee arrived in Athens on December 7<sup>th</sup> and met at the Central Office of the Agency the next day at 09:00 for a briefing. After the briefing concerning the general aspects of the evaluation process, the members left Athens for Komotini via Alexandropolis. The site visit took place between the 8<sup>th</sup> December (17.00) and 10<sup>th</sup> December(12:00) 2014.

In the afternoon of the 8<sup>th</sup> December the Commission had a meeting with the Vice- Rector for Student Affairs and International Relations and the Director of the Department of Languages, Philology and Culture of the Black Sea Countries.

At 18.00 the members of the Department analytically and thoroughly presented to the Committee the various aspects of the departmental activities. The information in these presentations included facts and figures about department’s history and organization which included issues such as quality assurance, undergraduate program, exchange programs and international relations, research activities, research projects, publications, conferences and other academic and research activities, students support services, infrastructure (classrooms, libraries, new technologies, etc.) administrative support. The Commission had an opportunity to ask a number of questions on all these issues and received valuable information on the structure and operation of the Department.

In the morning of December 9<sup>th</sup> the Commission interviewed the following groups:

- *Undergraduate Students*
- *Teaching Staff from Languages and culture sections*
- *Teaching Staff Philology and Theory and Methodology of Teaching section*
- *Teaching Staff in History*
- *Teaching Staff who deliver Russian, Turkish, Bulgarian, Romanian languages teaching*
- *Staff EEP, EDEP, Library Staff*
- *Administrative Staff*

During the Site Visit, the Committee members participated in several lessons (1<sup>st</sup> year Turkish Language, 4<sup>th</sup> year Turkish Language, 3<sup>rd</sup> year Romanian Language and 2<sup>nd</sup> year Bulgarian languages, International Law Class, 3<sup>rd</sup> year Russian History (one committee member gave a short lecture on the beginning of the Russian state-making process))

#### ***The Committee visited the following facilities:***

- *The main building of the Department*
- *The Department Secretary’s Office*

- *Department 's Library*
- *Teaching rooms*
- *Language Computer Lab,*
- *Seminar Rooms*

All meetings and interviews conducted during days 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> took place in the office of the Head of the Department.

***While preparing this External Evaluation Report, the Commission has consulted the following documents:***

- *The Department 's 2012-2013 Internal Evaluation Report*
- *The Study Guide*
- *Department 's Website*
- *The CVs of the Department Members and a list of publications*
- *Other documents (minutes of meetings of the Department, samples of written and oral tests, books, conference proceedings and journals published by the Department, regulations and legal documents etc.)*

## **II. The Internal Evaluation Procedure**

The *Internal Evaluation Report* gives detailed information about the current state of the Department and its academic activities. The documentation was mostly appropriate and complete and provided a good basis for the work of the External Evaluation Committee. The members of the Committee were presented with a description of the departmental Postgraduate and some other additional information was given verbally.

The Commission confirms that all department members participated in the meetings and were involved in the inspection process. At all times staff members - teachers, staff and other administrative personnel- had a very positive attitude towards the evaluation process and were willing to provide any additional information requested by the Commission. The members of the Committee were very pleased to have received a warm welcome by the students of the department, as well.

## ***A1. Curriculum (undergraduate programme of studies)***

### **APPROACH**

The curriculum aims at training its graduates in the languages, cultures and history of the Black Sea countries, more specifically, Russia, Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania. It should be stressed that the academic orientation of the Department (its interdisciplinary character) perfectly fits the geopolitical specifics of the area where it is located (Thrace), the feature that makes it especially important and unique. This is the only Department of this kind in Greece offering degree at undergraduate level and, apparently, one of the few Departments in Europe with interdisciplinary approach to this particular area of study. Hence the potential of the Department and its possibilities to play an extremely important role in educational, social, religious, geopolitical issues in the area of Black Sea can hardly be overestimated.

The programme aims to provide its students with qualifications for professional career in a number of fields :

#### ***a) Education***

- As teachers of Russian, Turkish, Romanian and Bulgarian languages and literatures in secondary and higher education.
- As teachers in private education sector (foreign languages teaching centres, technical and tourism schools)

#### ***b) Translation, interpretation and subtitling***

- In the public sector and official services of the European Union.
- In the private sector: translation agencies, private companies, publishing companies, editors, private tutors of small groups in special/general language.
- In the wider labour market (culture units: municipalities, museums, festivals, social workers etc)

As the Department was from the very start intended to reflect the multicultural character of the area (Thrace), the programme includes specific courses on Minority issues, International Law, Minority Education. The graduates of the Department can also take up related jobs both in the public and private sector. It is likely that the graduates of the Department could enjoy advantageous position while competing for positions in both governmental and non-governmental organisations (especially as consultants in matters of religion, minorities, cultural, economic and social contacts and relationships).

Overall, the undergraduate programme corresponds to the demands of the labour market as their present curriculum covers various fields of teaching (teaching of the main languages of the region, translation and interpretation both in public and private sectors).

The Department currently works on the revision of the curriculum. Its members have shown particular interest in the committee's recommendations. The two sides held a very constructive dialogue on the perspectives of improvement and the trends prevalent in the international, European and particularly Black Sea Region area. One of the issues that came up during the discussions was related with the job prospects of the students graduating from

the Department. The graduates of the Department who successfully complete the requirements can get jobs, using their language skills and their knowledge of different cultures in the Russian, Turkish, Romanian and Bulgarian speaking worlds (including the countries, formed on the territory of ex-USSR). The members of the Committee suggested that the Department takes into consideration the job prospects of its graduates in their revision of the curriculum. On this and other issues, the members of the Committee were very pleased to see the willingness of the Department's faculty to cooperate, to improve and to adjust the curriculum to the challenges of the constantly and rapidly changing globalized world.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

The curriculum is currently under revision. It seems that since the foundation of the Department (2001) the curriculum has been slightly revised but no substantial changes have been made. The interdisciplinary nature of the programme makes it difficult to consider major modifications. At the present, the structure of the undergraduate curriculum allows students to fulfil a total of 241 credits before graduation according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). This number of ECTS is divided into four (4) groups of courses in accordance with the language chosen by the student. Each term comprises 18 courses.

a) The first group of classes comprises general courses. These courses are divided into language courses, culture and history courses. There are also several courses, which students can choose from a pool of electives which are more specialized and relate to the study of the minorities of the region both in the past and the present, or to the international law.

b) Compulsory courses : On the whole the programme comprises 241 ECTS, the courses are subdivided into two cycles of studies

1<sup>st</sup> Cycle of Studies which lasts 4 semesters comprises

a) compulsory courses - 98 ECTS

\* 4 language levels I-IV (Turkish, Russian, Romanian and Bulgarian) 28 ECTS

\* The Introduction to Linguistics (General Linguistics, Terminology, Translation, Semantics, Didactics and Methodology of Teaching )- 25 ECTS

\* History) (Ethnography, Anthropology, Sociology, History, Introduction to Theology) 45 ECTS, elective 8 ECTS.

b) Elective Compulsory courses (0-2 lessons, up to 10 ECTS) 74 ECTS:

\* 2<sup>nd</sup> Language of the Black Sea area on two levels (Turkish, Russian, Romanian and Bulgarian ) 16 ECTS

\* Language, Translation (Terminology of Translation, Pedagogical Approaches ) 16 ECTS

\* Informatics I-IV, International Law, Greek Communities in the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey, Ethnography, Methodology of Teaching, International Law, Archeology, Introduction to Mythology ) 42 ECTS (elective up to 8 ECTS).

2<sup>nd</sup> Cycle of Studies in 4 semesters consists :

α) Compulsory lessons 118 ECTS:

\* 4 levels V-VIII specialization (Turkish, Russian, Romanian and Bulgarian) 28 ECTS

\* Comparative Literature 5 ECTS

\* 4 lessons of literature in the 4 languages I-IV (Turkish, Russian, Romanian and Bulgarian)



20 ECTS

- \* Didactic approaches to literature (Turkish, Russian, Romanian and Bulgarian) 10 ECTS
- \* The History of Literature (Turkish, Russian, Romanian and Bulgarian) 5 ECTS
- \* The History of Language (Turkish, Russian, Romanian and Bulgarian) 5 ECTS
- \* 2 courses of History (Turkish, Russian, Romanian and Bulgarian) 10 ECTS
- \* Introduction to Culture (Turkish, Russian, Romanian and Bulgarian) 5 ECTS
- \* The Human Rights and the Protection of Minorities: 10 ECTS

b) Compulsory Elective Courses (0-2 lessons, έως 10 ECTS) 74 ECTS:

- \* Introduction to Language (the Teaching of Language and Lexicology, Translation of the 4 Languages): 20 ECTS
- \* The History of Literature : 4 ECTS
- \* 3 courses of History: 12 ECTS
- \* Greek Politics: 4 ECTS
- \* Ethnography, Anthropology, Culture (3 lessons): 12 ECTS
- \* Intercultural Pedagogic : 4 ECTS
- \* International Law: 4 ECTS
- \* Classic archeology (2 courses): 8 ECTS

***The programme of studies comprises:***

8 compulsory language **courses** from the 4 languages offered (Turkish, Russian, Romanian and Bulgarian) with 56 ECTS and one compulsory lesson of history of language which comprises 5 ECTS. There are also 25 compulsory ECTS in introductory courses in the terminology, translation, semantics, language didactics.

The students can also have 16 ECTS **of the compulsory elective courses:** terminology of translation, language didactics), if they don't choose a second language from the proposed set of languages (Turkish, Russian, Romanian and Bulgarian) with 16 ECTS.

The courses on literature : 20 ECTS, didactics of literature 10 ECTS comparative literature 5 ECTS.

On the whole there are 138 ECTS concerning history of literature, culture and ethnography:

- \* History and culture of the peoples of 4 cultures (Turkey, Russia, Bulgaria, Rumania), classical archeology .
- \* Ethnography, anthropology, social issues , organization of Greeks in the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, confessions \* Politics, international law
- \* Pedagogic, methodology of research , informatics.

- language courses in Russian, Turkish, Romanian and Bulgarian that are designed to develop level C1 language proficiency, according to the European Council Scale ( ECTS)

It is of great importance that the Department actively participates in European ERASMUS programme, in collaboration with corresponding Departments of universities in Italy (University of Florence), Spain (University of Granada), Bulgaria (University of Sofia),

Turkey, Poland (Jagellonian University of Krakow) that enable students and professors to spend one or two semesters on exchange. A significant number of students have participated in the Erasmus programme in the last ten years, which is a testimony to the success of this project. We can say that the Department has greatly benefitted from the Erasmus program at both student and faculty levels.

According to the above information on the program, we can draw the following conclusions :

**a)** In general, the present curriculum is efficiently executed because the teaching time offered is sufficient for the material, which in turn is adequate for the study of the languages chosen. The courses on the history and culture of the geographical area of specialization complement the language courses; but, as it will be discussed below, it is important to integrate more course material in original language into the courses on the history and culture of Black Sea countries.

**b)** The curriculum meets the internationally accepted standards of this type of interdisciplinary programme because it is at least theoretically coherent and its structure is rational and clearly outlined. It should be underlined that this kind of multi-disciplinary approach has become extremely relevant over the past two decades. It is our recommendation that the Department brings its interdisciplinary orientation into the fore in its revised curriculum.

The Department employs quite competent and specialized staff to deliver its curriculum, but it lacks the resources required to employ more teaching staff. It is obvious that the demand for certain languages (especially in Russian and Turkish) has been growing rapidly in the last five years. However, the current number of staff fails to sufficiently accommodate this growing demand. For example, the situation with teaching Russian has become rather worse because the enrolment rate this year has jumped to almost 100. It appears that similar situation is true for teaching Turkish.

It should be stressed that the four languages are taught mostly by members of auxiliary staff ((ΕΔΙΠ/ ΕΕΠ).

The members of the Committee were informed that for the past 16 months one of the Turkish language teachers has taught her classes unpaid. Similarly, one of the staff teaching the Russian language has also been doing her job unpaid. We had a chance to speak with the Turkish teacher. While talking to her, not only had we have a chance to verify this situation but also to find out that she was highly qualified to do this particular job. The members of committee should also stress that the teacher mentioned above had no intention to complain, but regarded the opportunity to teach Turkish to highly motivated students as a privilege. We should also add here that teaching a language class to an audience of 100 students by one teacher, as it is the case with teaching Russian, does by no means comply with any international standards. The size of a regular language class should not exceed 20 or 25 students. In addition to hiring new language teaching staff, we would also like to suggest an exchange of foreign language teachers, and, as an option, attracting post-graduate students from relevant countries such as Romania, Bulgaria, Russia and Turkey. It should be mentioned that the Department has successfully negotiated with the relevant authorities for the appointment of a Bulgarian teacher whose salary to be paid by the Bulgarian government. In the same vein, the Department is conducting negotiations for the appointment of a Russian teacher to be financed by the Russian government. We still think that the Department should attract more post-graduate students from those countries; these students can be effectively integrated into language teaching. The students of the Department are being taught in large classrooms and do not have adequate opportunities to practice the language effectively. It should be stressed that the unique and mostly original

program of the Department corresponds perfectly to the multicultural character of the region and apparently presents the most unique and special part of all the disciplines taught at the Democritus University. It is obvious that both the Democritus University of Thrace and the Greek state should ensure that the Black Sea studies should be promoted, so that they could turn into one of the flagship disciplines, thus becoming a point of reference of the University activities.

Furthermore, the government should most certainly initiate a comprehensive project to repair, renovate, rebuild and generally modernize the teaching spaces that are used intensively. We had a chance to visit quite a few classrooms used by the faculty and all of them without any exception were far from being convenient and conducive to teaching.

As members of the Committee we see it as a matter of urgency to take certain steps to facilitate the teaching of languages more effectively. These steps should include a complete overhaul of the language lab and modernization of the technical facilities which would create more dynamic conditions for teaching of multiple languages. The same applies to the computer lab and the departmental library. The lab is still equipped with obsolete computers and CRT monitors and the library is waiting to be enriched with new titles and academic journals. Also the library should be fully incorporated into international library systems for archive borrowings and exchange.

## **RESULTS**

The Department is known for its almost 15-years experience in teaching and research of the Black Sea area with all its languages, history, literature and cultures. In this period competent and skilful teaching staff has turned the Department into an important centre of teaching and research, both on national and international levels. This situation could definitely be improved if the Department is provided with all the necessary material and technical infrastructure as well as additional teaching staff, especially in languages, where the lack of the teaching staff is dramatic. Specifically, the committee believes that the present state of learning and teaching in the department can be regarded as relatively satisfactory in terms of executing the present curriculum of the department, which fairly and rationally encompasses almost all areas required for the adequate training of the students in their areas of specialization.

## **IMPROVEMENT**

The committee believes that the Department meets the requirements for the training of students in the academic field of Black Sea Studies to a great extent. The department expressed its determination to do its utmost in order to fulfil the recommendations for its improvement. These focus mainly on the following issues:

- a) The curriculum is to be revised in accordance with the initial goals of the department. Accordingly, the Department will put more emphasis on teaching languages during the first two years of study to make the students more competent and confident in the chosen language before they undertake more advanced courses in their specific area of study.
- b) As part of the curriculum revision, the Committee drew attention to the fact that in

the modern world, languages are the main factor in the labor market and therefore should be given special emphasis in the departmental teaching.

- c)** With the same idea in mind the issue of introducing some additional courses on translation, synchronic translation and interpreting has been discussed.
- d)** Initially the Department aimed to encompass the entire Black Sea area. The competitiveness and prestige of the Department could be significantly enhanced by introducing into curriculum other languages of the Black Sea Region (Ukrainian, Georgian and Armenian). Thus the Committee believes that, as a long-term project, the Department should consider the introduction into the programme of additional languages, thus covering the whole area.
- e)** As an addition to the above recommendations, the committee believes that more general courses concerning the history, culture and literature of a particular Black Sea country should be conducted in the language of that country, if possible, from third year onwards. This will not only enhance the competence of the students in the general subject of the course but will also greatly improve their language skills. Our discussions with the members of the Department demonstrated that they too have the willingness, necessary qualifications and potential to deliver some courses in the language of the country studied.
- f)** The Committee noted that course descriptions presented in the departmental catalogue are too general and do not provide adequate information about the precise content of the courses. So, it is recommended that the Department takes these points into consideration while revising its curriculum and makes sure it reflects those changes in the course descriptions presented in the catalogue. The members of the committee are aware that any change in the structure of the program has to abide by the principles laid out by the official foundation document of the department.
- g)** Since the department offers a highly unique programme in terms of its area of study, it should keep closer track of its graduates and records in which sectors they usually get employed. This would enable the department to make certain career-oriented adjustments in the revised curriculum or the content of its courses, if not in the programme on the whole. The Committee was provided information that the Department keeps track of its graduates through the Alumni Association and even helps them with the teaching certification and other issues. We are of the view that this connection with the alumni is especially important given the unique and interdisciplinary nature of the Department.
- h)** The committee has observed that the student course choices are limited to the compulsory and elective courses offered by the department. In theory there seems to be no obstacle for students to register for elective courses in other departments. But our discussions with the students revealed that there are in fact certain other obstacles that prevent them from considering enrolment in the courses offered by other departments. Academic reasons top their concerns but there are also certain logistical obstacles as the departments are too scattered and moving between different faculties is not always practical.
- i)** The department should consider setting up optional courses in specific subject areas which could be useful for a much more effective specialization in the chosen study area. In the same vein, the contents of certain courses could be revised to give students a more in-depth coverage of recent political or economic developments in the region. It is important in this respect to encourage cooperation and collaboration between members of the department who specialise in specific country or region. On

this account, it is also recommendation of the Committee that the Department seeks ways to cooperate or advance co-operation with the other departments of the University such as the Department of Philology, the Department of Education, the Department of Public Administration and Political Science, and the Department of History and Ethnology.

## **A2. Curriculum (postgraduate programme of studies)**

### **APPROACH**

The Department provided us with a basic documentation of the new programme of the post-graduate Studies: Slavic Studies, Turkish Studies and the Cultural Education/Treatment of Minority Communities. The post-graduate programme that was described in the Self-Evaluation Report (which was made available to us) ceased to function at some point and the new programme (we were told) will be launched while the academic year of 2015-2016. We were also given some additional information—both written and verbally—about the contents of these three subfield programs but we were informed that they are currently non-functional and are to be launched in 2015-2016.

The material offered for the post-graduate programme covers a wide range of subject areas which enhance the students' knowledge and skills in the branches of Turkish Language and Culture, Slavic Languages and Intercultural Education and Treatment of Minorities. The members of the Committee have been verbally informed that the Department is currently in the process of launching a joint postgraduate program with a university in Italy, which offers initial language training of students in Italian (by lecturers from this Italian university), enabling students to get a double master-degree

- a) In the field of European Literature and Culture
- b) In the field of Interpreting and Translation

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

The great demand for the programme—demonstrated by the graduates of the Turkish Language and Culture, Slavic Languages and Cultural Education and Treatment of Minorities—can be viewed as the proof of the success of this project.

## **B. Teaching**

### **APPROACH**

Teaching methods are varied and suited to the accepted standards of Western universities: lectures, audiovisual laboratory classes, tutorials etc. In this regard, the Department has a small classroom equipped with computers for practical classes and work in laboratory.

The teaching program of the Department is rather broad, with a teaching staff of 15 lecturers & professors + 4 language teachers (1 russian, 1 turkish, 1 bulgarian, 1 romanian- the latter to be pensioned) + 2 language teachers (1 turkish, 1 russian, both working free of charge) This staff is offering a rich array of courses for the undergraduate degree (9 of which are optional courses). From the extended and rich postgraduate catalogue presented, only 2 courses and 20 ECTS are optional. It should be added that free textbooks – covering different fields – introduction to Russian phonetics, ethnography, Slavic mythology, Turkish etc - are offered to the students. There are no registration fees but postgraduate students pay a fee of 2000 € to the University.

The pedagogic policy is clearly defined, with introductory courses followed by more specialized ones during the eight semesters of the preparation for the undergraduate degree. One of the areas where subject coverage could be improved is the enhancement of the teaching of methodological approaches. This issue was partially discussed above in the section A.

As it has been already mentioned, some of the lecturers and professors, especially those teaching Russian and Turkish language and Literature face enormous problems, caused by the fact that the number of students in their classes is too high, sometimes exceeding 5n times the highest possible rate of student presence at a language lesson. Under these conditions some teachers have experimented with different methods of teaching, reaching quite good results.

The teachers' strive to offer students the best possible training is also evident in the use of a practicum (practical training) to supplement in-class teaching. This particular action is funded by the E. E. Operational Programme ΕΣΠΑ. During our visit, we had a chance to interview two students who have just come from the school where they conduct practical training. They shared their experience with us, showing a great enthusiasm and describing in convincing and quite a professional manner the details of the lesson in Greek, they had just delivered in a Muslim minority school.

**Teaching staff / student ratio:** 19 teachers in different fields of specialization teach different courses and seminars. During our conversations with the teaching staff we were informed that one of them is going to retire next year.

There is an apparent shortage of teachers in languages. The committee may characterize the situation as very dramatic, since the lack of faculty members forced the Department to appeal to the members EEDIP / EEP, who, with good will and enthusiasm, undertake the teaching of almost all the language courses, thus having excessive workload. In some language courses there is only one teacher who teaches all levels of this language.

Particularly serious is the situation in Russian and Turkish, where in the last five years the demand has been growing rapidly, and the current number of staff has failed to effectively accommodate the rising demand.

**Teacher / student collaboration:** In general the teaching staff displays obvious enthusiasm, sharing their knowledge and expertise with the student community. The statistics reveal a close and caring collaboration between teachers and students.

**Adequacy of means and resources:** There are several rare, valuable, and very useful resources in the Department, such as a Folklore Museum with an associated library. Similarly, the library staff is limited to 1 specialized librarian who has an enormous workload. This is discussed in more details in section D.

**Use of information technologies:** University system of student evaluation of teachers and a general statistical system QAU is quite well organized but is not used regularly. The members of the Committee regard the issue of student evaluation as a very important one and recommend its frequent use in the future.

In teaching process there seems to be a certain shortage of adequate technology to support lessons and lectures but the fundamental problem of teacher shortages remains. The Blackboard system is used successfully by students who regularly attend classes and those who do not attend them so regularly.

Currently there are 14 Assistant **professors** and lecturers (kathigités), 3 teachers (léktores), a member of EEP and 2 EDIP+ 2 (which are not elected but had been already appointed) working in the Department, to teach 2000 undergraduate and graduate students. In recent years there has been some decline in the number of teaching staff. This has resulted in the increase in teachers' workload. In our interviews, professors commented on the excessive teaching load and the students interviewed (especially of Russian specialisation) were consistently complaining about overcrowded classes and lack of professors.

Students are very satisfied with the care they receive from teachers and the quality of their teaching, but consider that smaller groups for certain subjects would be desirable.

More than 75% of the respondents valued positively teacher/student collaboration.

As for human resources, as noted above, in recent years there has been a substantial decrease due to 3 retirements. It should be noted that the Department has filed a request for 10 additional positions, all of which seemed to have been turned down. The situation will worsen next term due to the retirement of the professor of Romanian philology. Current lecturers will have to assume even greater teaching responsibilities, if the position is not filled by a new recruit.

As mentioned above, it is obvious that Democritus University of Thrace and the Greek State should make a special effort to promote the further development of the Department. It should be adequately staffed, particularly with professors responsible for language teaching. Such important changes will make the Department a reference point for the studies of the Black Sea area. The objective needs and shortcomings in this particular area call for making prompt decisions that will enhance the performance of the Department and will turn it into a magnet for young people not only from Greece but also from neighboring countries.

**Use of information technologies:**

All members of the Department (students, faculty members and administrative staff) have e-mail accounts and access to digital platforms of the University (e-class and blackboard) and

to the University library. In addition students have an update on-line information on their studies in the *e-odigos spoudon* and on the Department Website.

The examination system consists of written and oral exams, dissertations and portfolios. It perfectly corresponds to the procedures current in Greek universities.



### **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? Policy and Main Objectives.**

The Department's policy and main objective in research have been expressed in four points: a) promotion of basic research applied to the different levels and aspects promoted by the Department, b) link between theory and practice, c) link between research and teaching activities and needs of society, d) dissemination of the results obtained and sharing them with the international scientific community. In particular, the Department aims to train young scholars and encourage interdisciplinary studies and collaboration between local scholars and other universities, both Greek and foreign.

The research program of the Department seems to be organized in accordance with the Statutes of the Order, whose main mission is the "promotion, teaching and research of language, linguistics, literature and culture of the people of the Black Sea countries, especially those of Greek origin and training scientists equipped to study, investigate, understand and disseminate the languages, literature and culture of the people of the countries mentioned, as Greeks, Russians, Turks and others. Graduates may be employed as managers in Greek state institutions, consular offices or private companies the Black Sea countries (Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey) or as instructors in question as appropriate language or as freelancers or as experts or counselors in diplomatic missions in these countries or scientists in research institutions or as translators.

As far as we could see (internal evaluation report 2013) the department has an explicit research policy. The research programs, both the completed ones and those which are being developed follow the traditional lines of research practised in European universities; **each individual pursues his or her scientific interests with the consequence that research occurs on subject area topics as well as Social Science - including Education - topics.**

The research activities of the Department appear to be quite efficient and are characterized by high productivity. The number of books, papers, videos, and other public disseminations produced by the department are a testimony to this. These achievements are numerically significant.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION**

##### **• How does the Department promote and support research?**

A significant number of local, national, and international projects attests the Department's activities in promoting and supporting research.

Unfortunately, over the past five years, due to the severe economic crisis experienced by the country, the Department cannot offer any financial support to scholars; the consequence is that the faculty have to bear their own travel expenses for research trips as well as for participation in international conferences.

The Department supports and encourages research to the best of its abilities and in accordance with an aspiration to attain high standards comparable to expectations at peer international research universities. Members of the faculty are not only productive, but their

research produces results that are significant both at regional and national level. In many instances these achievements merit higher recognition from international audiences than they are currently receiving

### **Quality and adequacy of research infrastructure and support. Infrastructure and Support.**

The Department is located in one of the older buildings of the campus. Student access is provided only on the ground floor. The eight classrooms are insufficient, but the furnishings are adequate. The rooms are furnished with modern desks, marker boards, and projectors. In addition, one room has a TV, CD player, and satellite dish to assist with the learning of languages spoken around the Black Sea. There are two language laboratories with consoles and headphones. An auditorium for the use of the Graduate Studies Program is fully equipped and has an interactive whiteboard. The infrastructure also includes a computer room with twenty stations, with an interactive whiteboard and the electronic equipment for delivering long distance courses. Faculty members and a teaching assistant in the department have the necessary electronic equipment (stationary and portable H/PC, printer, portable projector, fax). The faculty members, departmental teaching assistant, and students have access to a xerox machine. The students' association has a computer in its office. The students also have access to two xerox machines where the handouts are copied free of charge for all the students.

The promotion of research, amongst the faculty and the students, is carried out in a number of ways: teaching research courses or the completion of assignments as part of course assessment; completion of dissertations where groups of students have the opportunity to explore, observe and study various issues related to primary education in the local context; Publication of articles through the establishment of a copy journal that enables both faculty and students to exchange findings related to educational research.

Overall the committee agrees to a great extent with what has been written in the internal evaluation document concerning the equipment and modernization of labs. The committee recognizes the need for the purchase of additional equipment and recruitment of research staff.

Expansion of facilities and steps toward unification of storage, both of paper records and artefacts, would also greatly enhance the positive impact of research on the teaching program of the Department at both the undergraduate and graduate level.

### **Scientific publications.**

The staff of this Department faces objective difficulties in carrying out research and publishing its results, (e.g. high numbers of students, lack of funds to participate in international conferences). The impact of these factors is difficult to assess: The internal evaluation report of the Department (2013) presents tables with the number of quotations as an indicator of impact. These tables, however, are based on the figures presented by the authors themselves. Standard procedure, such as using the SSCI or the SCI, are not employed for this reporting. In addition, the committee recognizes that many educational areas, have only recently been included in SSCI or SCI.

### **Research projects.**

In the two-year period covered by its internal review, the Department has been involved in a number of Competitively Funded Research Projects. Teaching and supervisory expectations of faculty members are substantial, especially for the researchers with expertise in the history, ethnography and culture of the people Black Sea. They are currently managing field

projects and are expected to publish the results of their research. In addition, Greek law requires that all faculty members spend at least 14 hours per week devoted to other academic or administrative activities which are spread over at least three days per week.

Finally the absence in Greece of any national funding body to which researchers may turn for the long- term and consistent support required to finance long-term research projects has to be mentioned. Private foundations in Greece often lack objective criteria for funding, and are currently operating with greatly reduced budgets.

#### **Research collaborations.**

The Department has enjoyed collaborative research projects with institutions in many countries in Europe, in particular in the Black Sea area. We can also mention dozens of other collaborations that it has initiated with both private and public institutions in Greece. Furthermore, as one might expect in a faculty so diverse in its interests as this one, topics of research show high variety both in chronological range and in their particular focus - ranging from culture, promotion and dissemination, teaching and research of language, linguistics, literature and culture of the people of the Black Sea countries, especially those of Greek origin.

### **RESULTS**

- **How successfully were the Department's research objectives implemented?**

The Department strongly encourages its members to organize research programs, and to take full advantage of opportunities to participate in collaborative research projects within frameworks established by the European Union and other international consortia. It recognizes that such projects not only contribute to the reputation of its members and more generally of the university, but also benefit students by allowing them, both as undergraduates and graduates, to participate in research projects. Thus, in many instances, they take first steps toward becoming researchers themselves. Anyhow the members of Committee would recommend to Department to intensify the activity in elaborating some general research projects unified by common goals.

#### **Scientific publications.**

Scientific Output. In addition to the above activities, 14 faculty members have contributed the following scholarly work: Books (monographs, edited/chapters): 8 --Publications in peer-reviewed journals; 12 -- Other international and Greek journals and Conference proceedings: 16. Most of this work appeared in 2013. (The internal evaluation document indicates that the numbers are similar for publications in 2012-2013).

#### **Research projects.**

Despite all the impediments to research that we have mentioned, the results of the research program of the Department seem to be quite satisfactory. The department has also developed labs for science education and a lab where students are practicing micro-teaching. There is also a lab that provides special education resources. These labs managed to develop a research and educational mindset, particularly amongst students and faculty. The aim of these labs will be the promotion of research procedures, innovative practices and the dissemination of research findings amongst the academic and student community.

#### **Research collaborations.**

In addition to these scientific scholarly publications and presentations, and given the specific circumstances the university is operating under, a number of faculty members (some of them completed the self-assessment report) is actively seeking funds and project collaborations with other International institutions (Bulgaria, Romania, Russia, Georgia, Armenia, Serbia, Israel, Poland, Italy, Cyprus, and Turkey). As a result, the faculty has managed to participate in a number of projects in the past few years. The department also has close links with other Greek universities through its implementation of common projects. It is important to note that in some cases the faculty is trying to carry out research projects with their own funding.

**Efficacy of research work. Applied results. Patents etc.**

The research programs of the department are of intrinsic value in the context of scientific research of Greece, but also have considerable relevance for modern Greece and modern European society. In short, this is a valuable research, the results of which deserve to be broadly disseminated. The Department realizes the need for its research to be of significance, not only for scholars, but for broader audience as well, hence it focuses on developing programs. Efforts such as these help to break down the walls of the academy and, ultimately, to demonstrate to taxpayers of the country the value of what is being accomplished in the University and its impact on their lives. In the light of this information, we can state that the Department has become a recognized international scientific centre.

**Is the Department's research acknowledged and visible outside the Department? Rewards and awards.**

Certainly within Greece the research of the Department is quite visible. Publications of the Department have a good circulation within this country, and also reach major research libraries outside Greece.

**IMPROVEMENT**

• **Improvements in research proposed by the Department, if necessary.**

After 13 years of operation, the Department has achieved much in teaching as well as in research and administrative work, as documented in this report. However, there are many additional opportunities for the Department. Its geographic location and international conditions are a challenge for co-operation and research. In conjunction with the PSP "Studies in Black Sea area" and the programs it has undertaken to develop, the Department created "tools" to deepen research and teaching; their **features** are significant. Therefore, despite the existing challenges, there is certainly ground for optimism: the Department is highly valued by the local community and every year the growing number of young people choose to be enrolled in the extremely interesting courses offered. The Department, established by Presidential Decree 90/2000, admitted its first students in September 2000 in Komotini with its main mission as "... The cultivation, promotion and dissemination, teaching and research of language, linguistics, literature and culture of the people of the Black Sea countries in particular of Greek origin and training of scientists able to study, investigate, understand and disseminate languages , literature and culture of the people of the countries mentioned, as Greeks, Russians, Ukrainians, Georgians, Armenians, Romanians, Bulgarians, Turks and others. "As seen above, the research emphasis and dominant teaching activity is deepening skills in the languages offered to support areas of specialization. Such deepening permits linguistic and communicative mastery in a chosen language and enables the study of history, society, and culture.

One obvious way to enhance the research profile of the Department is through digitization and dissemination of its publications to wider audience. However

understandable this may be, the fact is that publication only in Greek limits greatly the visibility of the important research published by members of the Department.

#### **Initiatives in this direction undertaken by the Department.**

The staff of the Department realizes that one solution to this problem may be to find ways to present the results of their research to multiple audiences in different languages. For example, shorter review articles in a western European peer- reviewed journal can be used as a “front end” to lead readers and researchers to more detailed reports published in Greek. Another way that may help to improve visibility of the research program of the Department involves the Departmental website. The site is now relatively easy to navigate and one can find there without much effort a list of faculty and a CV of each member. There is room for further development of the website, since the nature of the CV varies considerably from one member of the department to another, and it would be useful to include in all instances full lists of publications and (if not precluded by copyright issues) downloadable PDF files of published articles (since many are extremely hard to find outside of Greece).

The committee acknowledges the effort that has been undertaken by those who completed the Self-Assessment Report. We believe that the following recommendations should be taken into consideration as a way to expand and strengthen the scientific output of the department: We urge all faculty to publish in peer-reviewed journals and attend conferences whenever possible. We encourage the dissemination of their findings to the wider academic community (e.g., conference presentations within and outside the university, publication in international journals). It would be useful if the department could turn the hardcopy journals into e-journals to facilitate wider access and dissemination. We recommend organization of joint seminars with other university departments in order to promote dissertations and share faculty research output. In that way the department will become a source of knowledge not only for the University of Thrace but also for the local and the international community. We recommend the development of a Research office in collaboration with the other academic departments, one that would provide support to faculty (e.g., help with writing a proposal, statistical analysis, etc.) and disseminate information about available grants and funding. The department could involve its Master students and graduate students who may want to work on voluntary basis. In addition, European funds could be used to employ graduates in order to conduct research projects. We are convinced that research work could be strengthened in various areas (e.g., venues of publication; equipment of labs; use of modern technology; and strengthening the link between research and teaching). Overall, however, the committee estimates the research activity of faculty members who continue their research under very difficult conditions.

***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)?**

The administrative infrastructure provides adequate services to students and faculty. Communication between the Departmental secretary, staff and students appears excellent. Still the support offered to the Department by the University administrative units could be improved.

The Department of Language, Literature and Culture of the Black Sea Countries has two highly skilled and educated secretaries who seem to be meeting the unit’s needs to a great extent. They seem very friendly and approachable for students and they show empathy to students’ difficulties.

The committee felt that despite their limited resources and financial restraints, the administrative personnel have been very efficient at managing an enormous workload. We were informed that one of the secretaries has already applied for another position in the public sector. So it is of paramount importance that additional staff is recruited to perform secretarial services.

**Does the Department have a policy to simplify administrative procedures? Are most procedures processed electronically?**

The Department has taken significant and pioneering initiatives to maintain and improve its online infrastructure in support of administrative services. From a position of having almost no online records five years ago, it was able to generate an impressive range of reports and statistics from the fundamental student and staff data to support the evaluation. This indicates fast progress. The Department and its leadership are striving to simplify and optimize administrative procedures in order to facilitate and promote student and faculty/staff participation in the Department and in general Campus academic and cultural activities. There is adequate provision for internet access, Library databases, and other electronic resources, student counselling to undergraduates, and other cultural activities: technical support is, however inadequate. As indicated at several other points in this report, the Departmental website contains much practical information for students. The individual commitment of academic and administrative staff to supporting students is remarkable.

**Does the Department have a policy to increase student presence on Campus?**

Attendance of classes is formally not obligatory. However, the shortage of teaching rooms of adequate size means that it is impossible for all the registered students to participate in classes at the same time. If the University could allocate more classrooms on campus, that would remove an important obstacle to attendance and draw more students onto campus. In the meantime, the Department is making constructive use of Blackboard to ensure that students keep up with their courses and remain in contact with professors. The Department issues a Diploma Supplement to acknowledge skills acquired by students beyond examination grades: this too may be an incentive for students to participate. The detailed analysis of data from the recently implemented online student survey provided us with evidence that the Department is concerned about the attitudes of the students. The Department strives to increase student presence on campus through a series of academic and cultural activities. It also promotes and encourages cordial and collegial relationships between student groups and between students and faculty members.

The committee observed the lack of attractive environment that might have encouraged a student presence on campus. We understand that this is due in part to the limited resources for students (e.g., computer labs, reading rooms, student societies etc.). Moreover, it appears that many of the classrooms do not allow interactive communication that would bring students to campus for a variety of purposes (e.g., lectures, clubs). The lack of heating may be another reason for the absence of students from the campus.

It seems to the members of the Committee that the situation could be improved with the assistance of the Greek State and the Demokritus University of Thrace.

**IMPLEMENTATION**

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

The department's current administrative staff members seem to support the daily activities of the academic unit very well. In particular, the Department staff members appear to play a crucial role in the organization of labs, the contacting and sometimes even tutoring of students and the development of outreach activities at a local community level. The administrative infrastructure provides adequate services to students and faculty. Communication between the Departmental

secretary, staff and students appears excellent.

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

**Infrastructure for Students.** Library facilities seem to be adequate but there is ample room for improvement, both in terms of material acquisition and expanded space. The person in charge of the library has done a superb job of sorting and filing books, journals, and student theses. The planned production of digital versions of the theses - doctoral, master, and bachelor - is an important development and should be emphatically promoted.

In addition, the committee also feels it necessary to implement unlimited Wi-Fi access across the entire campus community. In particular, students complained about the lack of internet throughout the campus and also expressed the need for new computers. Despite the lack of studying rooms for students, there was an office with a small library and a printer for postgraduate students.

We observed that every member of the faculty has his or her own office space and they are all well furnished. This creates a positive academic environment that promotes research and academic work and encourages students to consult with the faculty in private.

## RESULTS

- **Are administrative and other services adequate and functional?**

Department members showed strong support for their colleagues in administration, and the extent of their reliance upon them was plain to the evaluators. With a staff of two, the Department functions satisfactorily, thanks to the experience, good organisation, division of labor and regular overtime work. Additional staff would strengthen the Department and allow for a more efficient operation. The committee commends the administrative staff of the department (and secretaries) for their diligent and good-willed efforts to face the challenges of serving students with limited resources. We believe that some of the suggestions we have made are the result of circumstances that cannot be resolved only at the departmental or school level. They are, in fact, the result of a highly centralized educational system, both at the university and ministerial level.

- **How does the Department view the particular results?**

The Office performs the following services: undertaking legal responsibility for administrative transactions according to Greek law; communication with other Schools, university administrative services, state and other public bodies; management of the Department budget; processing of incoming correspondence and documents, and assigning Protocol numbers; enrolment of incoming and transfer students at all levels (including Erasmus students); tracking of student enrolment, progress, and completion of requirements for graduation; recording of class enrolments and examination grades; coordination of the issuing of student IDs; providing certification of completion of studies (with ECTS credits) and Supplementary Diplomas; issue of Student Transcripts; oversight of textbook ordering through the EVDOS system; assistance to the central administration in recognition of foreign degrees; production of the Departmental Study Guide; scheduling of courses and examinations; management of scholarship awards and student housing subsidies; provision of data to the Statistical Service of the State. Despite this heavy workload, the academic staff and students praised the quality of service provided by the Secretariat to the evaluators. At our meeting with the Chief Secretary, we were impressed by the quality of personal service she was committed to deliver. Scheduled office hours for the public (between 10:00-12:30 daily) are very limited, but the Office makes an effort to serve those who come at other times and responds throughout the day to telephone calls and emails.

There is currently only a single employee (TE Librarian) who seems to make most of the administrative decisions regarding the functioning of the library. Additional library staff would definitely allow for better service, such as efficient organization of the collection, effective use of the library conditions, and

extended opening hours. The latter issue is especially important. The library is open from Monday to Friday between 08:00 and 15:00. It remains closed during official and academic holidays. The Departmental library has been operating since 2001. It is housed on the first floor of the building, where the Department operates. The library covers approximately 161 sq.m. and holds a collection that is constantly enriched through purchases and donations. The collection has now reached 12,000 titles and includes books, reprints, CDs, DVDs, videotapes, audio tapes, microfilms, and microfiches. It is worth noting that the last two categories refer to the archival copies of the official publications (national yearbooks, newspapers, government documents) as well as those of the Ottoman Turkish state (19th & 20th century), partially financed by the Department. The library holdings also include 186 journals and newspapers (in Greek as well as in foreign languages but with several gaps, due to inadequate funding). For timely information on current developments, on-line journals are available through the University and the college HEAL Link. The library's collection covers almost all subject areas, with particular emphasis on fields taught in the Department. The library material is organized according to international literature standards (Library of Congress Classification System, Library of Congress Subject Headings, AACR2). The computerization of the material is in accordance with the program ADVANCE.

The library has modern network infrastructure and electronic equipment. The library is within the control of the Department and, as mentioned above, is staffed by one trained librarian. The Library has access to interlibrary loans within and outside Greece. The library serves the intermittent needs of students in regular semester courses as well as meeting the intensive resource demands of seniors required to prepare larger seminar papers. A reduction in electronic resources from 2010 onwards has deprived these research libraries of assets of incalculable value (which both add to the body of accessible material and enable the limited number of reader spaces in the library to be used effectively for those who need to conduct intensive research in situ). Similarly, the great reduction in funds allocated for the purchase of books undermines the long-term prospects for the library facilities of the Department. Form and function of academic services and infrastructure for students (e.g. library, PCs and free internet access, student counselling, athletic and cultural activity, etc.): The operation of the Departmental services and the working hours of the Library are satisfactory.

### **IMPROVEMENTS**

- **Has the Department identified ways and methods to improve the services provided?**

While services in general do appear adequate, we suggest a few areas where the department could enhance its delivery of services. The committee acknowledges, however, that these suggestions can only be implemented with additional funds, either from the university or external sponsors. In order to improve and enhance administrative services the Department must be supported by the University's Administration. Administrative staff development, appraisals, and feedback mechanisms could be considered for the improvement of staff morale and productivity. Creating a central university registry may help ease some of the workload, especially in matters such as enrolment, graduation requirements, and the issuing of degrees and student transcripts. Digitization of the recording of grades is absolutely necessary and will help ease some of the Departmental office workload. There is a pressing need for a larger and stable administrative staff and, ideally, increased e-governing. We draw attention to the risk of loss of specialist knowledge with the departure of staff, and the expenditure of time needed for training when staff are moved around the university.

#### **Initiatives undertaken in this direction:**

Some steps that have been taken include the exploration for acquiring new funds, the implementation of the unit for quality assurance, and the establishment of e-protocols. The Department seems very interested in assessing and expanding these services. However, it is faced with a serious shortage of resources. Collaboration with social, cultural, and production organizations: The Department collaborates extensively with both private and public sector organizations in the community, and with



government agencies. A significant number of students are engaged in such activities, and the facility for recording their work on the Supplementary Diploma is important. Overall, the Department seems to have very good relations with local organizations, cultural institutions, etc., and is actively involved in the cultural life of the city of Komitini and its vicinity.

During our meeting with the staff and students, it was our understanding that the department did not have a very strong alumni network. We This would help the department know the employability of its graduates and identify possible areas where skills (academic or practice) may be lacking. We recommend the department consider developing an official organization of alumni who can become “ambassadors” for the program. Currently, the library appears well-equipped with Greek language texts and has expanded its electronic range, but we recommend increasing access to English language texts and journals. The library also needs a data engine that records and catalogues dissertations. We recommend that the library expand its journal collection through the acquisition of e-journals and e-books. Electronic journals and e- books would be easily accessible to both students and faculty and provide them with instant access to the best research available. In addition, purchase of these materials would be cost-effective.

It should be mentioned that it would be appropriate for the Department to get included into the international intercollegial book lending system.

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

##### **Originality and significance of the Department’s initiatives:**

The Department participates in, or organizes, cultural events for the general public in collaboration with cultural institutions of the city. As indicated above, there is considerable and sizeable effort by the Department to be involved, and to collaborate, with social, cultural, and productive organizations in the community, the country as a whole, and internationally. The Department might be still more proactive in promoting and advertising its activities.

#### ***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.*

- **Potential inhibiting factors at State, Institutional and Departmental level, and proposals on ways to overcome them.**

The committee believes that the Department has taken very seriously the process of strategic planning and the setting of short-, medium-, and long-term goals. Preparing their internal evaluation had already confirmed the importance of self-reflection and planning for the future. The recent financial crisis, however, which has resulted in the collapse of funding in all aspects of the academic operation, seriously endangers the Department at all levels. We listed only a few examples of the long list of inhibiting factors they are facing. The number of the teaching staff has gone down and no replacement is expected in the near future. In 2013 the Department did not receive any funding for their post-graduate program. The Libraries’ budget has been reduced to the point that they can no longer afford electronic journal subscriptions beyond a minimal

level, not to mention their inability to buy new books. Their buildings and facilities are not well maintained. Financial support for research and travel for faculty or students is non-existent.

- **Short-, medium- and long-term goals.**

While the State as a source of financial support to the University is a great resource, it also plays an inhibiting role. For example, the serious restrictions on hiring do not allow the Department to serve the large number of students, plan strategically to hire staff, and deploy reduced staff numbers effectively, while the many changes in the legal framework present additional challenges to the administrative staff, who needs to navigate through and adapt to rapid changes in legislation in order to serve students and teaching staff.

The Department has shown great self-reflection in setting objectives. They recognize that strategic planning is a new process for them, and they have already done some thinking about short-term matters, such as the nature of their curriculum and the needs of their students in terms of the job market. Additionally, they have long-term plans regarding their role in the national and international academic community. In terms of their curriculum, they recognize that they could do more to serve their students' needs and modernize some aspects of their curriculum. For example, they would like to offer more courses on specialized topics or courses on topics with a less rigid chronological organization. They would also like to offer courses that promote more interdisciplinary contact between the various existing specialties within their Department. Deeply concerned about the fact that their graduates cannot all be absorbed by the public sector, they are seeking to implement courses that will equip them with skills that they can use in jobs in the private sector, such as management and development of cultural heritage.

- **Plan and actions for improvement by the Department/Academic Unit**

The Department is very much interested in enhancing its current areas of research language, linguistics, literature and culture of the people of the Black Sea Countries.

In light of the above, the Department also wishes to promote more collaboration between the Divisions in undertaking research projects for themselves and providing research opportunities for their students. They also would like to encourage more of their faculty members to apply for international research programs, although the lack of a national funding agency for such projects is a great impediment in achieving that goal. In the long term, the Department would like to launch a post- graduate program in English so that they can attract students from neighbouring countries. The Committee encourages them in this and believes that the rich range of courses offered by their Department would attract students from other European countries as well. It is important to note that the current structure of student governance should be taken into account while considering the Departments' efforts in achieving curricular innovations.

The broader academic community encompassing the Department of Language, Literature and Culture of the Black Sea Countries includes the School of Classics and Humanities. The School community is interested in the implementation and dissemination of the results of the Department's development strategies, particularly when they relate to the disciplines of language, literature, and culture. The Department of Languages, Literature and Culture of the Black Sea Countries very early undertook to promote academic development and therefore studied relevant departments with similar domestic and foreign profiles. Unfortunately, the lack of funding due to the economic crisis, and the Department's limited years of operation do not allow for the full use of indicators and data, at least not directly or to the desired degree.

### **Long-term actions proposed by the Department.**

The need for additional financial resources, additional staff, and larger premises is based on the following priority developments: 1. Accomplishment of the program of practical training for students. 2. collaboration with other educational levels and institutions, such as the Regional Education Directorate of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, where co-operation has begun in the "Programme for Local History", in that context, offering free of charge Greek language courses to the non-Greek speakers of the region and, as of next year, it will be co-responsible, as stipulated by a recently issued decree,\* for the education of the minority teachers that will lead to their attaining a degree equivalent to that of the teachers of Greek schools, allowing them to teach 3. Organization of international scholarly conferences and workshops that attract foreign professors and graduate students, strengthening the Department's international linkages. 4. Continuation of collaboration between the Department and universities from the Black Sea countries in order to raise the profile of the region and establish the Department as the natural home for knowledge and research on the region; in this context, the department's journal *Mare Ponticum* provides a good outlet for scholarly exchange. 5. Participation of faculty members in implementing new programs in the Black Sea area in order to enhance the Department's openness will focus on research and the improvement of Undergraduate and Graduate Studies. 6. Within the same context, priorities are the following: a) development and rational management of infrastructure (facilities and equipment); b) the development and improvement of human resources management; c) strengthening research activity; and d) a closer link to the communities and d) continued participation in quality assurance procedures.

\*Στο άρθρο 8 του ν. 2327/1995 (Α' 156) προστίθεται παράγραφος 4 ως εξής:

«4. Από το ακαδημαϊκό έτος 2015–2016 ιδρύεται Διδασκαλείο Εκπαιδευτικών Μειονοτικού Προγράμματος (Δ.Ε.Μ.Π.) της Μειονοτικής Εκπαίδευσης στην Αλεξανδρούπολη, που εντάσσεται στο Παιδαγωγικό Τμήμα Δημοτικής Εκπαίδευσης του Δημοκριτείου Πανεπιστημίου Θράκης (Δ.Π.Θ.). Δικαίωμα φοίτησης σε αυτό έχουν αποκλειστικά μέλη της μουσουλμανικής μειονότητας της Θράκης που είναι απόφοιτοι Παιδαγωγικών Τμημάτων Δημοτικής Εκπαίδευσης της ημεδαπής. Το Διδασκαλείο Εκπαιδευτικών Μειονοτικού Προγράμματος (Δ.Ε.Μ.Π.) απονέμει Δίπλωμα Μετεκπαίδευσης και έχει την ευθύνη για τη διαρκή επιμόρφωση των εκπαιδευτικών του μειονοτικού προγράμματος των μειονοτικών σχολείων πρωτοβάθμιας εκπαίδευσης της Θράκης. Με προεδρικό διάταγμα, που εκδίδεται μετά από πρόταση των Υπουργών Παιδείας και Θρησκευμάτων και Οικονομικών κατόπιν σχετικής εισήγησης της Συγκλήτου του Δημοκριτείου Πανεπιστημίου Θράκης, ρυθμίζονται όλες οι αναγκαίες λεπτομέρειες για τη λειτουργία του Διδασκαλείου Εκπαιδευτικών Μειονοτικού Προγράμματος και ιδίως η στελέχωση, το εκπαιδευτικό προσωπικό, η διάρκεια και το πρόγραμμα σπουδών το οποίο πρέπει να δίνει ιδιαίτερη έμφαση στη γλώσσα διδασκαλίας των μαθημάτων του μειονοτικού προγράμματος των μειονοτικών σχολείων και τη μουσουλμανική θρησκεία, η δυνατότητα συνεργασίας με άλλα Διδασκαλεία και Τμήματα του ίδιου ή άλλων Πανεπιστημίων της ημεδαπής ή της αλλοδαπής και ιδίως με το Τμήμα Γλώσσας, Φιλολογίας και Πολιτισμού των Παρευξείνιων Χωρών του Δ.Π.Θ., ώστε να εξυπηρετηθούν με το βέλτιστο τρόπο οι προαναφερόμενες ανάγκες για τη γλώσσα διδασκαλίας των μαθημάτων του μειονοτικού προγράμματος και τη μουσουλμανική θρησκεία αλλά και της διαρκούς επιμόρφωσης των εκπαιδευτικών του μειονοτικού προγράμματος, η οργάνωση και η διοίκησή του.»

### ***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 up 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.**

It is clear that the number of newly registered students is in constant rise. The committee acknowledges that the large number of students in the department creates some evident problems and hinders the teaching process. Obviously a reduction in the number of students in the near future would make the workload of academics more manageable; but if this does not happen, the number of serving academic and administrative staff should be increased.

- Review of the curriculum:

To emphasize the teaching of languages and integrate some other languages of the Black Sea area into the program of the Department.

Some courses may need to have a better sequence. In addition, we recommend adding courses such as pupils' assessment, teaching in multicultural environments, educational leadership and management.

- Increase the length of practicum: To deepen their understanding of the link between theory and practice. Furthermore, those experiences need to begin much earlier in the curriculum. Throughout this report, we have made suggestions about potential ways to extend the practicum experience of students in diverse settings.

- The committee recommends that all faculty members become involved in research projects. In addition, we urge all faculty members to improve their publication records mainly in international journals. In that respect one of the specific target journals should be "Southeast Europe and Black Sea Studies" published by Taylor and Francis. They are also encouraged to develop strong links with European universities through Erasmus and other European funded projects. Dissertation research results should also be published in either local or international journal.

- The Committee urges the teaching staff to draw strategic lines of research for the further intensification of the collaboration and productivity.

- The committee believes that the development of Master's degree addressing contemporary educational needs can be supported electronically with the use of modern digital technology.

Postgraduate studies should comprise themes that will enhance competence in specialized languages.

Purchase of books, journals and modern equipment (e.g. labs, Wi-Fi): In order to support master's and PhD candidates the department should enrich its library with English textbooks (preferably e-books and e-journals) and equip the buildings with wireless access so as to facilitate students' access to electronic resources.

- Facilitation of Teaching and Learning: Teaching, learning, grading and other everyday activities and procedures should be enhanced by basing them on an electronic program. This enables, free-of-charge, enormous enrichment in the preparation and conduction of everyday

learning for all courses on campus and reduces the workload for the staff members considerably. Overall the committee believes that not all improvements can be achieved at personal and departmental levels since many of the challenges identified are related to the central governance of the University and the Ministry of Education.

### **Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC on:**

In this climate of economic contraction the members of the Department have been doing their best to cope with the arising challenges and continue their research and teaching activities.

The Department has already considered the issue of restructuring its programs in a period of diminishing economic support from the State, and has substantial plans for development in the short, middle, and long term. One should point that the weaknesses in the program emanate primarily from the decisions that are taken almost entirely outside its control. Those decisions concern mostly legal rules and regulations that are externally imposed and often with financial strings attached to them.

### **Strengths**

1. The Department enjoys a good reputation and a successful record that has earned it prestige and respect in the community. 2. The staff of the Department includes talented and creative researchers and teachers, who seem to be respected and valued for their professional accomplishments nationally and internationally. 3. The Department is well-networked within the international scholarly community, and maintains many bilateral and multilateral agreements that facilitate collaborations and exchanges of students and faculty. 4. It should be stressed that the Department has great potential for graduate study.

### **Weaknesses**

1. Adapting the curriculum to labor market needs: languages, translation and interpretation.
2. Lack of didactic personnel in the field of languages.
3. The number of students enrolled in the Department is enormous.
4. There is a lack of adequate infrastructure at all levels.
5. There have been no new recruitments in the faculty for more than four years. This lack of renewal in the faculty will inevitably have a negative impact on the Department's activities.
6. The general lack of funding in Greece, a result of the current financial crisis, endangers the Department seriously in all of its operations.

### **Opportunities**

1. The strategic geopolitical position in the region makes it possible to develop the Department as a hub of research and education in the whole Black Sea area. The Committee considers this issue as one of the main advantages to be appreciated by the Greek state and the Democritus University of Thrace in order to give the necessary financial and strategic support to one of the most interesting and original programs of the Greek academia. Electronic media provide an opportunity for more effective promotion of the Department's accomplishments and achievements.
2. The large numbers of talented and successful graduates of the Department can be a resource of support for it, especially in establishing even further research collaborations.

3. The Department plans to seek additional resources from the program “Horizon 2020” of the European Union.

**The Department’s readiness and capability to change/improve**

The faculty of the Department are ready for change, in the sense that they are clearly prepared to adapt to the ongoing changes in Greek society and economy. Even within a plethora of negative constraints they have continued to improve their teaching and research programs. At this point, it is highly important that the Department is protected from further losses, particularly as many significant senior members will have to retire as they arrive at the mandatory retirement age over the next years.

**The Department’s quality assurance.** The Department, through its Quality Assurance Committee, has done an excellent job of collecting statistics relevant both to assessment of teaching and research. Clearly, the faculty and staff are all committed to this enterprise, and it has been a pleasure for us to collaborate with them in the course of our external evaluation.