



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ

HELLENIC REPUBLIC

**Α.ΔΙ.Π.**

**Η.Ο.Α.**

ΑΡΧΗ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ & ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ  
ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΑΝΩΤΑΤΗ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗ

HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE  
AND ACCREDITATION AGENCY

## **EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT**

Department of Economics (TOE)

University of Patras



**European Union**  
European Social Fund



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION & RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS, CULTURE & SPORTS  
MANAGING AUTHORITY



**Co-financed by Greece and the European Union**

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### External Evaluation Committee

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

1. Pr. Michel DIMOU (Coordinator)  
University of Toulon (France)
  
2. Pr. Sofronis CLERIDES  
University of Cyprus (Cyprus)
  
3. Pr. Manthos DELIS  
Surrey Business School (Great Britain)
  
4. Pr. Nikolaos GEORGANTZIS  
University of Reading (Great Britain)
  
5. Pr. Basil JANAVARAS  
Minnesota State University (USA)

***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 EEC members arrived in Athens on Monday the 6<sup>th</sup> of January. On Tuesday morning they met at the HQAA office with Prof. Soldatos, who has coordinated the evaluation process. After an official briefing from Prof. Soldatos, the EEC members departed for the University of Patras.

On the afternoon of Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> the EEC had its first meeting with the Rector of the University of Patras Mr Panagiotakis, the Vice-Rectors in Economic Affairs Mrs Daouli and in Academic Affairs Mr Kyprianos, the Head of the Department of Economics Mrs Zervoyianni as well as the Head and members of the University of Patras Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP). Following this meeting, the EEC members met with all faculty members of the Department of Economics. The EEC was briefed on the Department's structure and organization and a synopsis of the Internal Evaluation Report (IER) was presented. During these two first meetings, an important number of documents were delivered to the members of the EEC concerning the curriculum, teaching methods, and research activities.

The next day, the EEC members had a meeting with the Department's staff. Faculty members delivered presentations of the undergraduate program, the postgraduate program, and the student placement program. Following this, the EEC entered a classroom (comprised mostly of 4<sup>th</sup> year students) and had a very interesting debate with 50-60 students, without the presence of Departmental staff. Following this, the EEC met the administrative and technical staff and visited the Department's buildings and installations such as classrooms, lecture halls, computer labs and the Department's study room.

In the afternoon, the EEC members met again with the Department's staff. The various research groups gave very informative presentations of their work. Following this, the EEC members met with a group of 1<sup>st</sup>-grade students, and then with the Ph.D. students. In the late afternoon, the EEC met individually each member of the Department' staff in order to discuss career issues.

The morning of Day 3 was dedicated to the Campus visit and a long and interesting discussion with the Rector, the Vice-Rector in Economic Affairs, the Head of MODIP, and the members of the Department's Internal Evaluation Unit.

All meetings with academic, technical and administrative staff, undergraduate and postgraduate students, were very useful and fruitful. All meetings took place in a very respectful and constructive manner. The Rector, the Vice-Rectors, the Head of the Department and all the members of the Department were extremely helpful and all seem to understand and accept the principles, objectives and demands of an external evaluation.

### II. The Internal Evaluation Procedure

The EEC members received the IER more than two weeks before their visit to the Department of Economics of the University of Patras. This period was sufficient for the members to read the document and prepare for the on-site visit. The document is very comprehensive (193 pages); it is well documented and gives detailed analyses of the curriculum, teaching methods and research issues. It has been very helpful for the members

of the EEC in order to inform discussions of several strategic issues with the Department's staff.

The IER was complemented with presentations from the Department's staff. The EEC members received hard copies and electronic versions of all the presentations, as well as a CD concerning a wealth of information about the Department.

One should note the disruption of the University's academic life due to strike action lasting four months (September-December 2013). The Department's staff managed to prepare for the evaluation as well as deliver courses during this very long strike period in order to avoid the loss of a whole semester for students.

### III. General Presentation

Before entering the presentation and discussion on different issues such as the curriculum, teaching, research, it is important to note two important elements concerning the Department of Economics: (i) its extremely high student/teaching staff ratio and (ii) the institutional changes with the creation of a Faculty of Business Organization and Administration. Some aspects of these issues are highlighted here and a further discussion is provided in the Strategic Planning section.

#### *The Department's students/teaching staff ratio*

- Firstly, the Department's staff counts 14 members: 6 full Professors, 3 associate Professors, 4 Senior Lecturers, 1 Junior Lecturer. Full Professor Mrs Daouli has been the Vice-Rector in Economic Affairs since 2012. During the last years, some Department's members were granted one-year sabbatical leaves for research purposes (one member per year). A new Lecturer arrived on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January. The provision at Department's creation was for 25 full-time members (PD 325/23-5685).
- Secondly, due to the economic crisis, the number of short-term teaching staff (teaching contracts 407/80) has dramatically decreased, from 26 during the 2010-2011 period to 1 in 2013-2014. This means that the Department's total teaching staff saw a decrease of 62% in the space of two years.
- Thirdly, there were 1320 undergraduate students in the 2012-2013 period, plus 370 students that have overpassed 6 years of studies and still need to pass their exams in some courses. There has been a steady increase in the number of undergraduate students over the last years: between 2009 and 2013, there was a total increase of 19% in the number of students.
- Fourthly, each year the Department takes in more than 250 first-grade students (289 in 2012-2013), even though it typically requests fewer than 100 (77 in 2012-2013).

This has resulted in a students/teaching staff ratio of 66:1 in the 2012-2013 period and even higher (88:1) in the 2013-2014 period.

This should be compared with:

- ✓ The University of Patras average (29:1),
- ✓ the National average (26:1),
- ✓ the EU-27 average (16:1).

This ratio has dramatically increased over the last three years:

- ✓ 66:1 in 2012-2013
- ✓ 53: 1 in 2011-2012
- ✓ 29:1 in 2010-2011

#### *Institutional changes*

The *ATHENA* plan that was recently approved by the Greek Parliament calls for the organization of University Departments into Faculties. This procedure was implemented in a top-down approach from the Ministry of Education. The Department was not involved in this decision.

The Department of Economics of the University of Patras entered the Faculty of Business Organization and Administration, along with the Department of Business Administration, the Department of Agricultural and Farming Products Business Administration and the Department of New Technologies and Environment Administration.

One should take into account the following figures, as provided by the University:

Department	Full-time members	Students
Economics	14 (26.5%)	1320 (41.5%)
Business Administration	16 (30.0%)	850 (27.0%)
Agricultural & farming	12 (20.0%)	600 (19.0%)
New technologies	11 (23.5%)	400 (12.5%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>54 (100%)</b>	<b>3170 (100%)</b>

The name of the new Faculty does not seem to take into account the size of the Department of Economics in terms of number of students or the significance of Economics as a scientific field. It is an unfortunate name that downgrades the field of Economics and is misleading to prospective students.

These two issues will be discussed further in the section E on strategic planning and perspectives for future improvement.

## **A. Curriculum**

The Department of Economics offers an undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral program. The Undergraduate program leads to a Bachelor Degree in Economics. The postgraduate (Master Degree) program delivers an MSc in Applied Economics & Data Analysis, although the program has been suspended since 2012. Finally, there is a Doctoral program in Economics leading to a PhD degree.

The Department made major revisions on the undergraduate and postgraduate program in 2004 and it is currently working on another revision of its postgraduate program.

### **I. The Undergraduate Program**

#### *Approach*

The scope of the program is to provide a general economics curriculum, taking into account the standards of similar programs in Europe and North America. The Department provides a four-year single subject degree program, grounded in economic theory (micro and macro), quantitative methods (mathematics, statistics and econometrics) and applied economic subjects.

The curriculum was significantly revised in 2004. It is under continuous monitoring from a five-member Committee, including one student. Proposals for changes and adaptations are discussed yearly during formal staff meetings.

There are 40 required courses for a Bachelor's Degree. Among these courses, 20 are compulsory and 20 are elective. Students must choose the latter from a pool of 26 courses. All courses carry the same load, corresponding to 6 ECTS units. In order to get a Bachelor Degree, a student must obtain 240 ECTS units (40 courses of 6 units each).

The curriculum is organized in 8 semesters. Each semester lasts 12-13 weeks. Most courses have three teaching hours per week while some courses have four hours.

#### *Implementation*

The main purpose of the curriculum is to provide a modern economic studies program with a substantial number of core economic courses and some non-economic courses.

All compulsory courses are delivered by the Department staff. 23 out of 26 elective courses are delivered by the Department; the other 3 courses are delivered by members of the Faculty of Human and social sciences.

Concerning the program, some field courses such as Economic Growth and International Finance could be added. The students expressed an interest in more elective courses to choose from, but it seems almost impossible to add new courses delivered by Department members with existing resources. However, new electives taught from faculty in other Departments could be added.

### *Results*

Three main results concerning the curriculum come out of the discussion with the Department's staff and students:

- ✓ There is a very large number of undergraduate students in the Department. The entry rate is quite higher than the exit rate: in 2012-2013, 289 students arrived but only 155 graduated. Many students seem to exceed the legal maximum period for attaining the Bachelor Degree, which is 6 years.
- ✓ The main objectives of the curriculum are achieved and the students have a solid and well-rounded understanding of economics. Although there is no official statistical data, students with a Bachelor Degree from the Department of Economics of the University of Patras seem to do well in postgraduate studies in European or North American Universities.
- ✓ The total number of required courses for students of the undergraduate program is rather high. All these courses are taught with the same number of hours per week and carry the same number of ECTS units (6). This leads to students not differentiating the amount of work between core courses that are fundamental when teaching economics and other courses – mainly electives that may be less important.

### *Improvements*

Improvements in the undergraduate program seem difficult with available resources. However, there are three issues that must be discussed:

- ✓ The most important issue seems to be the one concerning prerequisites. As the Department itself notes in the IER, there are no prerequisite courses in the undergraduate program. This goes against the usual practice in most programs worldwide. As a matter of principle, the EEC strongly agrees with the idea that students should be required to demonstrate mastery of a basic set of skills before they can continue on to higher level courses. However, the EEC also feels that instituting prerequisites may only be practical if the 6-year maximum limit for obtaining the Bachelor degree is applied in a strict manner. If this is not the case, then prerequisites may lead to congestion in some courses. The students themselves do not seem to have strong objections against prerequisites.
- ✓ The second issue concerns the organization of elective courses in thematic groups of courses (concentrations) that help the student select a more specific profile than a general economic profile. For example, some students may prefer to focus on regional and environmental economics. In this case, the Department could group elective courses that are relevant to this concentration as a guide to students. In the long-term, this could lead to merging some courses.
- ✓ The third issue is to follow the performance of the students in the job market in a more systematic way, in order to better orient the curriculum towards the Greek and European labour market. A statistical survey, perhaps with the help of alumni groups, would be extremely helpful.



## II. The Postgraduate Program

### *Approach*

The scope of the program is to provide a high level of expertise in economics and the methodology of applied research in Economics. One of the main goals of the postgraduate program is to prepare students for the PhD. Until 2008-2009 the postgraduate program was organized towards three directions:

- i. Applied Economics
- ii. Applied Microeconomics and Marketing
- iii. Financial Analysis and Management

After 2009-2010, a single direction was offered:

In 2009-2010 : Applied Microeconomics and Marketing

In 2010-2011: Financial Analysis and Management

Until 2010, the postgraduate program was organized in 4 semesters, with 120 ECTS. During 2010-2011, the program was organized in only two semesters.

The postgraduate program offered up to 30 places every year. Prerequisite for admission is the certified knowledge of English, two letters of recommendation and selection is operated on the basis of performance in a multiple choice test that covers microeconomics, macroeconomics and Statistics/Econometrics. The EEC members feel that selection on the basis of individual CVs could be sufficiently efficient and the test may discourage quality candidates from disciplines other than economics. ~~mislead in the candidates' selection.~~

### *Implementation and results*

Until 2008-2009, there were 50 applications yearly for 22-23 students enlisted and 18 graduated. The fact that the Master degree was limited in a one-year period led to a much higher application rate (close to 100 for 23 enlisted students). During the last five years, 42% of students admitted to the postgraduate program were graduates of the Department of Economics of Patras.

The Department of Economics decided to suspend the postgraduate program in 2011 and 2012 due to the dramatic decline in resources – particularly short-term teaching contracts – and the lack of incentives. For the EEC this is one of the major issues that must be revisited: the Department must offer a postgraduate program.

### *Improvements*

The creation of a new postgraduate program should take into account the following issues:

- ✓ The proximity with the Business Administration Department within a single Faculty.
- ✓ The possibility of introducing tuition fees for students. The EEC members strongly advise introducing fees, since this is the case in most European Universities today. Interestingly, students expressed their willingness to pay tuition for a quality program.
- ✓ The need to have a close link between the postgraduate program and the research profile of the Department.

In line with the above, a new postgraduate program should be created, probably with a double orientation:

- A research orientation, with emphasis on core and applied economics, leading to Ph.D. studies;
- A professional orientation, with emphasis on more applied business and regional issues, preparing students for the job market. This orientation could attract students from diverse backgrounds.

### III. The PhD. Program

The department puts a lot of emphasis on the supervision of PhD theses. Studies have a minimum duration of 3 years and a Master's degree is required for admission. Positions are advertised at least once per year or depending on the research needs of faculty members. A seminar is organized with frequent presentations of ongoing PhD work. This is a very efficient way of collective mentoring and dissemination of information on the research results and progress by the PhD students. Doctoral students assist in the invigilation of the Department's exams and participate in the educational process through tutoring. While an excessive load should always be avoided for PhD students (so that they can progress with their research), it seems that the students appreciate the positive effects of their teaching on their future academic careers. There is a small but satisfactory for the size of the department intake of students who also exhibit very satisfactory graduation rates.

A very large number of publications have been produced as a result of PhD research. This seems to be a natural consequence of the requirement that a necessary condition for awarding a PhD is that the student has at least one publication (or acceptance letter from the Editor) in international scientific journals with a referee process. However, we think that this rule may be setting an unnecessary burden for students, binding them to the minimum standard as a misconceived aspiration. Given the satisfactory level of publications by the faculty members, it does not seem necessary to have such a strict external reference point, as excellent research may take many years to publish. Thus, the rule might be biasing the target journals downwards, away from the levels usually required for placement in good universities abroad. (In fact, a negative impression is created by the fact that the PhD students themselves seem to have low expectations or even not know with certainty the target journals for their PhD papers.) In fact, the EEC is concerned that the students were not sufficiently aware of the different journals and their quality levels, or of the significance of high quality publications in the international job market.

The topics of the PhD theses seem to be well defined within the overall research profile of the department with students distributed rather evenly across the research units with some higher but reasonable concentration with respect to specific faculty members. It is especially positive, although not common in other countries, that relatively junior faculty members are intensively involved in the supervision of PhD students.

A problematic aspect not related with the department's efforts and planning is that some PhD students have no grant, and are thus forced to work outside the University for their living. Despite that, all students seem happy and confident regarding their choice of subject, supervisor and program, with a timid enthusiasm to go on the international job market, being reluctant in some cases to leave Greece at all. Interestingly, some of them would be willing to look for a job in the non-academic market.

Although the law has been modified to allow PhD theses written in English, it seems that most theses so far have been written in Greek (with an abstract in English). Given that the

bulk of PhD research is published in English-speaking outlets, the Department should encourage students and supervisors to avoid this unnecessary transition from one language to the other and have theses written directly in English (with a Greek summary).

Overall, we consider the PhD program as a strong point in the Department's activities and strongly encourage maintaining and strengthening the program as a way of enhancing the Department's international recognition as a research center. One thing that we found missing is information on the placements of past PhD students. We think that an effort should be made to keep a record of placement data.

## ***B. Teaching***

### APPROACH AND IMPLEMENTATION:

#### *Teaching content and delivery*

Lecturing is the main mode of teaching delivery. Both traditional methods (chalk and blackboard) and modern techniques (power point presentations) are used. Lab sessions are also used for econometrics courses. In some courses there are additional tutorials for helping students solve exercises. Overall, teaching delivery is similar to what is practiced in most economics departments around the world. Admittedly, this can sometimes be dry and leaves students with the mistaken impression that economics is detached from reality. The classroom experience could be enriched by applying the theory to real life situations, analyzing case studies, and using real data in statistical and econometric analysis. We understand that this is done to some degree but we believe there is scope for more extended use of this practice. We would also recommend bringing outside speakers – instructors from other universities, people from the business community, policy makers – to help bridge the gap between the university and the real world.

The Department makes an effort to involve undergraduate students in research by presenting their own research in courses, by assigning projects and by using students in their research projects. We believe this an important activity that should be strongly encouraged and expanded, both in terms of the numbers of students involved and in terms of the depth of the involvement. Students can get gain valuable experience and a better appreciation of the purpose and value of economic research. Faculty members can benefit from the research assistance and – perhaps more importantly – they can also reap long term benefits such as increased interest for PhD studies from students.

All instructors recommend two textbooks for their courses, as stipulated by law. Textbooks are distributed to students using the Evdoxos system. The recommended textbooks are often translations of well-known international texts. We believe this is a very good practice that ensures that students keep abreast with the most recent developments at the international level. This could be further enhanced by assigning readings from international publications (such as the Economist or the Financial Times). This has the additional benefit of helping students' understanding of the English language, which is today the world's lingua franca, especially in economics and business.

#### *Teaching evaluation*

The University of Patras has been implementing a comprehensive student evaluation system for several years. This is highly commendable. Student evaluations of Economics Department faculty as presented in the internal evaluation report present a good overall picture of teaching quality. Since there is always room for improvement, we recommend to the Department to strive for continuous improvement of teaching quality. This could be a dimension in which the Department can differentiate itself from other Economics programs. It should set specific, quantifiable targets and implement mechanisms to identify weaknesses and improve teaching quality when it falls short.

A possible way to promote good teaching practices is to introduce an annual award for the best-teacher of the undergraduate program and for the best-teacher of the postgraduate program, voted by students.

#### *Students and resources*

The Department's IER reports a student to teacher ratio of 66:1 for 2012-2013. It has increased dramatically over the last 2-3 years as a result of cuts in teaching staff. This ratio is extremely high by any standard. As mentioned in the introduction, the University of Patras ratio is 29:1, the national average is 26:1 and the EU-27 average is 16:1. Student ratios of these levels severely inhibit the learning process and put a heavy drain on teachers. It is not practical to assign projects in classes of 200+ students. We strongly urge the State and the University to remedy the situation by providing resources and reducing student intake.

Relations between faculty and the student body appear to be good. Faculty members are approachable and the department is open to suggestions from and discussion with the students. Students participate in the committee for the undergraduate curriculum and they appear to be satisfied with the department's response to their needs.

Teaching resources can be described as satisfactory, although there is room for improvement. Classroom availability is a bit tight and makes course scheduling a difficult exercise. An additional classroom would ease things significantly. The department has a computer laboratory that is used for teaching econometrics courses. When not in use for teaching, the lab is available for student use. The laboratory is equipped with statistical software (Stata, R, Eviews) that are appropriate for its purposes. A limitation of the lab is that it is only open during official university working hours (until 2:30 pm usually). The department should explore ways of increasing lab availability to students (provided of course that there is sufficient use).

The department makes good use of information technologies. The departmental website – which, to their credit, was designed and implemented by department faculty and technical staff – is very functional and is used extensively to communicate information to students. The classrooms are equipped with projectors that allow the use of electronic presentations. In addition, all courses have a site on the e-class e-learning platform to provide students with teaching material and other resources. We commend the use of information technologies and suggest that the Department might consider going a step further and delivering some courses completely online as a way of dealing with declining resources.

#### *Student evaluation*

The department has taken some steps towards moving away from the traditional system of evaluating students with a single end-of-year exam. More than half the courses allow students to do a project that typically counts for 20-30% of the grade. We strongly support this trend and urge the department to move more aggressively towards implementing continuous assessment processes in all courses. This is an effective way of encouraging student participation and enhancing the learning process. The students we talked to were very much in favor of multiple assessments.

#### *Mobility*

The academic staff has an outward orientation and is well connected with the international

research scene. Despite this, mobility in some cases is somewhat limited because of the lack of travel funds and because the small number of staff does not allow much use of sabbatical leave.

Student mobility is very limited. The Department has Erasmus agreements with seven other institutions. In 2007-2012, only 19 incoming and 15 outgoing students participated in the program (the Department expects these figures to increase.) We believe there is significant scope for expanding student exchanges and strongly urge the Department to move in that direction by establishing more agreements and encouraging students to participate. The benefits of student exposure to other cultures, languages and educational systems are immeasurable.

#### RESULTS AND IMPROVEMENT

Overall, the quality of teaching seems to be very good. Teaching procedures are appropriate and the EEC's impression is that they are properly implemented. This is corroborated by students, who did not identify any major problems in this respect. All Department members are active researchers, which helps keep them informed of developments in their field.

Average time to graduation is about 5.5 years. This has improved somewhat in recent years, with most students graduating in 5 years. As is common in Greece, the Department faces a big problem with "eternal students" who clog the system and create tremendous administrative costs.

The Department is well aware of its strengths and weaknesses; they are laid out clearly in its internal evaluation report. It closely monitors the implementation of the curriculum and the quality of teaching. It has taken measures to improve student satisfaction, notably in areas like the use of information technologies. It is also aware of the opportunities offered by the Erasmus program and is taking steps towards making better use of them.

#### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- Set quality targets and implement correction mechanisms for improving teaching quality.
- Stimulate student interest by (a) better linking economic theory to the real world; (b) closer integration of research into teaching and more involvement of students in research projects; (c) use of external speakers.
- Implement continuous assessment processes with projects and/or midterm examinations.
- Increase availability of computer lab and reading room and expand Erasmus program.

## **C. Research**

### APPROACH AND IMPLEMENTATION

The main research areas of the Department are in the fields of microeconomics, labour economics and regional, environmental, and agricultural economics. Some work also covers the fields of applied econometrics, statistics, and macroeconomics. Most of the work is applied, and includes a large number of empirical academic papers and research projects.

The publications in international refereed journals seem to be a central mission of the Department. The faculty members completely understand the quality standards set by the international academic community, but have not set internal standards to explicitly evaluate journal papers. The latter holds despite the widely available information on such standards and for all disciplines.

The faculty members have also worked for an impressive number of projects in various academic fields. The projects are providing a very rich source of external funding and currently seem to be the only means of funding to support academic activities, such as international collaborations and international conference attendance. These are necessary ingredients for the success of the research agenda of faculty members. The projects are mainly funded by the European Union and selection is made primarily from foreign academics on a competitive basis.

The main, but not the only, theme of the projects is the rural and agricultural economic development of the university's region. In this sense, and given the success in the relevant applications, the ongoing projects over the past decade have a clear impact in the regional economy, in line with the directive of the European Union.

Much of the research work is carried out with the help of PhD students, which are active participants in academic projects and co-authors in academic papers submitted to refereed journals. One of the requirements for the completion of the PhD is to publish at least one paper from the PhD thesis in an international refereed journal.

The Department has very limited funds to support research, mainly because the Department's budget cannot be used for research purposes, like conference attendance and initiation of financial motives to improve research outputs through publication in refereed journals. This presents a significant burden on research activities. In contrast, the availability of support for research activities, like software and databases, seems to be more adequate, even though there have been problems in the access of academic journals (our understanding is that the agreement with certain publishers is signed at the national level and there are interruptions). Further, there is no financial support from postgraduate programs, which is one of the most usual sources of research funding for most of the good universities in the world.

Research collaborations are observed mainly at the departmental level and not with other departments of Greek universities or with foreign academics. The reasons behind this preference are somewhat unclear. This comes as a surprise given the lively and established

profiles of the faculty members and could be partially attributed to the lack of funding to attend research seminars and conferences abroad.

In general, there are no serious incentives given to faculty members to encourage high-quality research. International practice usually involves two types of incentives. The first relates to some financial incentives given to faculty members that achieve publications in top-rated journals. The second incentive concerns the teaching work load of faculty members based on research output. Currently, the teaching work load is approximately the same for all faculty members irrespective of their research achievements.

## RESULTS AND IMPROVEMENT

Despite the constraints, the research output of the Department in terms of publications and research projects is noteworthy. The international journal quality lists usually rank academic journals in four or five groups, with the first two being noted as “outstanding by international standards” and “internationally recognized”, respectively, or similar. The faculty members of the Department published many times during the last six years in internationally recognized journals.

Further, faculty members have also published numerous times in lower quality journals. Given the success in publishing in internationally recognized journals, we would urge the faculty members to proceed mainly in this direction and enhance their publication records in such journals in the future.

To achieve this goal we propose the following:

1. The Department should consider adopting a specific (existing) ranking of journals to guide the process of journal publication as objectively as possible.
2. The Department should consider adopting a clear incentive scheme to guide the main three elements with respect to publication output. These are (i) the promotions of faculty members, (ii) reward for publication outputs, and (iii) differentiation of faculty members with respect to their teaching and/or administration load.
3. The University and the Ministry of Education must allow more budgetary discretion to the Department so that it can use its funds for research purposes and for the initiation of clear and explicit research incentives schemes. The Department must then be evaluated by the university based on the proper use of this budget and the results from its actions.
4. The University must allow the Department to make its own choices with respect to post-graduate programs. Specifically, if the Department wishes to attract external sources from a fully-funded Master’s program, then this must solely be its choice. These funds can be used to fully fund the PhD program of the Department and other research activities, and to initiate explicit financial incentives toward top-quality publication outputs on the basis of an explicit guideline (in line with point 1). The University must subsequently evaluate the results of the Department’s choices.

The Department has been very successful in attracting external funds from research programs. We would urge the faculty members to continue this excellent practice. The Department should perhaps better advertise this success through its website.



The Department must consider expanding their collaboration with other faculty members from (i) within the newly-established faculty, (ii) other Greek universities, and (iii) abroad. Given the proper incentives described above, these synergies should enhance the probability of publishing in the very top (outstanding by international standards) journals. The faculty members seem to have the human capital to achieve this goal, but they do need to enhance their network, which is of substantial importance.

Overall, we believe that given the proper incentives from within the Department, the university, and the ministry of education, as outlined above, the Department can better achieve its objectives and fulfill its full potential.

### ***D. All Other Services***

The Department is located in a campus which was not initially designed to be used as such. Therefore, many facilities have been adapted from existing building infrastructure. For example, the Department's offices are located in two different buildings and the its secretariat is located in a third building. Despite that, the Faculty and the administrative staff seem to be adapted to this rather inefficient structure. Some mention was made to this separation as a problematic aspect of their professional life. However, we definitely welcome the creativity in the choice of transforming a military quarter into a University building. Improvements are advised immediately once funds become available.

Some modifications have been made to create accesses for people with special needs towards the classrooms, but it is seems unlikely that these accesses can be actually used by people with specific high levels of invalidity. The problem becomes even more exacerbated with the existence of the three separate buildings. In the buildings of professor offices there is no access and no toilet for individuals with special needs.

The overall infrastructure available is rather satisfactory. Lecture halls are sufficient in number and size, with few exceptions related to the large number of students attending some courses in the beginning of their studies. An additional classroom would ease scheduling. Computational services are comparable with similar facilities in the average good University abroad. Individual PCs are available in all offices. There is a relatively recent computer room available to students, with 40 workplaces, equipped with necessary software (Windows 7, SPSS, MS Office, gretl, etc.) and conference style Audio-Visual equipment. Initially, the lab was supposed to open during a sufficiently long period every day (08:00 – 16:00 and 17:00-20:00), but this was not actually clear to the committee. We recommend compliance with this initial plan for all students.

The large number of students makes it often necessary for groups of students to attend computer-assisted classes sharing the same terminal. There is a good provision of software and data sets. PhD students and faculty members seemed rather satisfied with these resources with few negligible exceptions regarding access to specific datasets. There is a desktop computer for each PhD student and shared printing facilities. There was also a computer lab for postgraduate students with 25 workplaces and shared printing facilities but this is currently not used and obsolete.

Finally in the very near future there will be a high-performance, large computational unit for computationally demanding tasks (DELL Precision T5600 : Standard 825W Base). In order to support courses and the management of information in the context of educational and research purposes, there are several facilities, like Open eclass, departmental websites and special purpose Information Systems. A shortcoming of the actual individual websites is that some of them are not perfectly updated. For example, some of them provide just CVs in Greek through the English link and vice versa. Also, it would be a good idea to place a few selected publications on each individual's main page on the departmental website.

While some inevitable writings on the walls were observed, it seems that they occupy less space than in other Greek institutions. Despite that, an effort should be made to keep spaces clear. Also, we observed some used ashtrays in the meeting room indicating that a stricter enforcement of the non-smoking law might be necessary.

Students complained for a lack of space for working and meeting during off-class hours.

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

It became apparent during our visit and the discussions we held with members of the University's administration and Department staff that the most important inhibiting factor at the State level is the legislative framework with centralized decision making authority at the State rather the University level. It appears that when the State dictates policies and procedures directly affecting the functioning at every level of the University, it creates a climate of mistrust, waste and misinterpretation of laws which, in turn, has a negative impact on students, employee morale and the overall performance on teaching, research and the pursuit of academic and professional excellence.

The current law guiding appointments of faculty members involves a very long period for the appointment process, which deters quality academics from joining Greek universities. In line with this, the law guiding promotions involves a specific period until the faculty members can file for promotion, regardless of academic merit. Both these constraints need to be waived if the Department (and in fact any other Department, especially outside the large city centres) is to grow by attracting top academics.

The Department in Patras has had a particularly difficult time attracting and retaining quality faculty. Several faculty members left the Department over the last ten years. This has led to a high concentration of senior faculty (9 Professors and Associate Professors) relative to junior faculty (6 Assistant Professors and Lecturers). Efforts to attract new faculty have met with little success as most candidates prefer more central locations that offer opportunities for earning supplementary income. This is reflected in the fact that four out of six junior faculty members have a PhD from the University of Patras; only people with a connection to the University or the region choose to work there.

To improve the situation the State should grant greater autonomy to the University to make decisions on key issues affecting the institution's well-being. In turn, the University should allow the Department to have greater saying and control on issues such as:

- The number of students to be admitted. The number of students requested by the Department should be respected and adhered to by both the State and the University.
- Faculty hiring and retention. The Department and the University need to develop strategies and provide incentives in order to retain their existing faculty members and to attract new ones.
- The research budget. The Department should exercise greater control and be allowed more flexibility for the use of research funds especially when the sources of funds emanate from outside sources.

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

The Internal Evaluation Report prepared by the Department along with the meetings we held during our visit provided us with a clear and accurate picture of the Strengths, Weaknesses (Internal factors), Opportunities and Threats (External factors) of the Department. Their short-term goals and proposed solutions appear to be reasonable, realistic, and well documented. However, the Department does not have a medium and long-term strategic

plan at this time.

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

The Department expressed the intent to cooperate with the other Departments on matters of curriculum, teaching and research. In addition, the Department is willing to re-evaluate the curriculum at all levels and raise the quality of research output.

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

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

The EEC would like to underline the fact that the external evaluation process took place in a very positive and constructive manner.

The EEC also would like to underline the fact that the Department of Economics of the University of Patras is dedicated to excellence both in research and teaching. This occurs within an environment of decreasing resources, both human and financial, which means that the medium and long-term planning of the Department is quite uncertain.

The EEC has recommended various improvements within the present report. However, in the conclusion, four major issues seem of high importance:

1. Develop a long term strategic plan, which takes into account the institutional changes related to the creation of a new Faculty and the proximity of other Departments. This could reduce the negative effects of the decreasing human resources; the University could be the catalyst in this process.
2. Create a new postgraduate program, funded with tuition fees, possibly in collaboration with other Departments in Patras. This would give resources and incentives that would make the Department more competitive.
3. Cultivate a network with external partners: other Universities, public and private institutions in order to better adopt the curriculum to the job market, enhance the employability of students, and raise the Department's visibility and status in the community.
4. Decrease the student/teacher ratio. This can be accomplished by significantly reducing annual student intake and strictly applying the 6-year of studies rule.

The Members of the Committee

Name and Surname	Signature
1. _____	
2. _____	
3. _____	
4. _____	
5. _____	