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Accreditation Report
for the New Undergraduate Study Programme in
operation of:

Digital Systems

Institution: University of the Peloponnese
Date: 3 October 2022



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



Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the New Undergraduate Study Programme in operation of **Digital Systems** of the **University of the Peloponnese** for the purposes of granting accreditation

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part A: Background and Context of the Review	4
I. The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel.....	4
II. Review Procedure and Documentation	5
III. New Undergraduate Study Programme in operation Profile.....	6
Part B: Compliance with the Principles	7
Principle 1: Strategic Planning, Feasibility and Sustainability of the Academic Unit.....	7
Principle 2: Quality Assurance Policy of the Institution and the Academic Unit.....	13
Principle 3: Design, Approval and Monitoring of the Quality of the New Undergraduate Programmes	16
Principle 4: Student-centred Approach in Learning, Teaching and Assessment of Students.....	20
Principle 5: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition of Academic Qualifications and Award of Degrees and Certificates of Competence of the New Study Programmes.....	23
Principle 6: Ensuring the Competence and High Quality of the Teaching Staff of the New Undergraduate Study Programmes	26
Principle 7: Learning Resources and Student Support of the New Undergraduate Programmes...	29
Principle 8: Collection, Analysis and Use of Information for the Organisation and Operation of New Undergraduate Programmes	32
Principle 9: Public Information Concerning the New Undergraduate Programmes	34
Principle 10: Periodic Internal Review of the New Study Programmes.....	36
Principle 11: Regular External Evaluation and Accreditation of the New Undergraduate Programmes.....	38
Principle 12: Monitoring the Transition from Previous Undergraduate Study Programmes to the New Ones.....	41
Part C: Conclusions	43
I. Features of Good Practice	43
II. Areas of Weakness	43
III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions	44
IV. Summary & Overall Assessment	45

PART A: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE REVIEW

I. The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

The Panel responsible for the Accreditation Review of the new undergraduate study programme in operation of **Digital Systems** of the **University of the Peloponnese**, comprised the following five (5) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

- 1. Prof. Petros Drineas (Chair)**
Purdue University, USA

- 2. Ms. Evangelia Athanasiadi**
University of Thessaly, Greece

- 3. Prof. Costas Iliopoulos**
King's College, UK

- 4. Prof. Constandinos Mavromoustakis**
University of Nicosia, Cyprus

- 5. Prof. Sotirios Skevoulis**
Pace University, USA

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

For the purposes of this evaluation, the Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE), implemented an online accreditation review of the undergraduate study programme of the Department of Digital Systems of the University of Peloponnese. Meetings and briefings were conducted using Zoom. Before the online meetings, the EEAP received the review timeframe with Zoom links as well as a wealth of material from the department and the university. It is worth noting that there was no prior External Evaluation Report for the department, because the department recently transitioned from a TEI undergraduate study programme to an AEI undergraduate study programme. EEAP members discussed strategy and items to be considered during the review and the chair allocated tasks for each panel member during the introductory meeting. Additional documentation and presentations were requested by EEAP and provided by the departmental staff during and after the completion of the online meetings.

The review started on Monday, September 26 with an introductory meeting among the EEAP members, followed by teleconferences with the Vice-Rector/President of MODIP and the Head of the Department. Monday's schedule concluded with a detailed presentation on (most of) the 12 evaluation principles by department faculty and staff. On Tuesday, September 27, the committee had the opportunity to meet with teaching staff, laboratory teaching staff, and laboratory technical staff, as well as with a small number (five) of the department's students. The evaluation continued with a tour of the department's facilities and meeting with employers, social partners, and local stakeholders. Finally, the evaluation concluded with a debriefing including departmental faculty and staff, the department head, as well as the vice rector and members and staff from MODIP. A detailed schedule of the review and the participants at each meeting is available by HAHE.

Over the following days, EEAP continued working on key findings of the review. The EEAP acknowledges the spirit of cooperation shown by the department and the university. From September 28 to October 1, EEAP members worked both independently and as a team on their assigned tasks on the Accreditation Report. Follow-up EEAP team meetings were conducted via Zoom.

III. New Undergraduate Study Programme in operation Profile

The Digital Systems Department of the University of the Peloponnese was established by law in 2019, as a continuation of a related TEI department at the same university. It currently provides an undergraduate curriculum targeting the science and technology of modern computer and communication systems. It is part of the School of Economics and Technology of the University of the Peloponnese and is physically located in Sparti, Greece; it is the only department of the School of Economics and Technology that is located in Sparti.

The number of incoming students is determined annually by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. The total number of registered undergraduate students during the current academic year seems to exceed 1,330, with approximately 200 students in the first year of their studies. The department also has eight graduate students at various stages of their PhD work.

The Undergraduate Program is based on IEEE/ACM curricula. Offerings include 42 courses plus an additional six courses that address the so-called Pedagogical and Teaching Cycle. There are 27 core (mandatory) courses and 15 elective courses, in three subject areas and specialisations (see below). The total duration of the studies is expected to be four years and during the last year (7th and 8th semesters), students are expected to work on a diploma thesis (required). In summary, graduation requires the accumulation of 240 ECTS credits (27 mandatory courses, nine elective courses, and the diploma thesis).

The Department currently has seven full-time faculty, all at the Assistant Professor level, one Laboratory Teaching Staff (EDIP), one Special Technical Laboratory personnel (ETEP), one administrative staff member, and a librarian. The department has three areas of specialisation, but no research laboratories/divisions (not allowed by law, given the size of the department):

- Computer Software and Information Science
- Networks, Telecommunications systems, Internet Services and Technologies
- Computer Hardware

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

Principle 1: Strategic Planning, Feasibility and Sustainability of the Academic Unit

Institutions must have developed an appropriate strategy for the establishment and operation of new academic units and the provision of new undergraduate study programmes. This strategy should be documented by specific feasibility and sustainability studies.

By decision of the institutional Senate, the Institutions should address in their strategy issues related to their academic structure in academic units and study programmes, which support the profile, the vision, the mission, and the strategic goal setting of the Institution, within a specific time frame. The strategy of the Institution should articulate the potential benefits, weaknesses, opportunities or risks from the operation of new academic units and study programmes, and plan all the necessary actions towards the achievement of their goals.

The strategy of their academic structure should be documented by specific feasibility and sustainability studies, especially for new academic units and new study programmes.

More specifically, the feasibility study of the new undergraduate study programmes should be accompanied by a four-year business plan to meet specific needs in infrastructure, services, human resources, procedures, financial resources, and management systems.

During the evaluation of the Institutions and their individual academic units in terms of meeting the criteria for the organisation of undergraduate study programmes, particular attention must be placed upon:

a. The academic profile and the mission of the academic unit

The profile and mission of the department should be specified. The scientific field of the department should be included in the internationally established scientific fields of Higher Education, as they are designated by the international categorisation of scientific fields in education, by UNESCO (ISCED 2013).

b. The strategy of the Institution for its academic development

The academic development strategy for the operation of the department and the new study programme should be set out. This strategy should result from the investigation of the factors that influence the studies and the research in the scientific field, the investigation of the institutional, economic, developmental, and social parameters that apply in the external environment of the Institution, as well as the possibilities and capabilities that exist within the internal environment (as reflected in a SWOT Analysis: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats). This specific analysis should demonstrate the reason for selecting the scientific field of the new department.

c. The documentation of the feasibility of the operation of the department and the study programme

The feasibility of the operation of the new department should be justified based on:

- *the needs of the national and regional economy (economic sectors, employment, supply-demand, expected academic and professional qualifications)*
- *comparison with other national and international study programmes of the same scientific field*
- *the state-of-the-art developments*

- *the existing academic map; the differentiation of the proposed department from the already existing ones needs to be analysed, in addition to the implications of the current image of the academic map in the specific scientific field.*

d. The documentation of the sustainability of the new department

Mention must be made to the infrastructure, human resources, funding perspective, services, and all other available resources in terms of:

- *educational and research facilities (buildings, rooms, laboratories, equipment, etc.)*
- *staff (existing and new, by category, specialty, rank and laboratory). A distinct five-year plan is required, documenting the commitment of the School and of the Institution for filling in the necessary faculty positions to cover at least the entire pre-defined core curriculum*
- *funding (funding possibility from public or non-public sources)*
- *services (central, departmental / student support, digital, administrative, etc.)*

e. The structure of studies

The structure of the studies should be briefly presented, namely:

- **The organisation of studies:** *The courses and the categories to which they belong; the distribution of the courses into semesters; the alignment of the courses with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).*
- **Learning process:** *Documentation must be provided as to how the student-centered approach is ensured (modes of teaching and evaluation of students beyond the traditional methods).*
- **Learning outcomes:** *Knowledge, skills and competences acquired by graduates, as well as the professional rights awarded must be mentioned.*

f. The number of admitted students

- *The proposed number of admitted students over a five-year period should be specified.*
- *Any similar departments in other HEIs with the possibility of student transfers from / to the proposed department should be mentioned.*

g. Postgraduate studies and research

- *It is necessary to indicate research priorities in the scientific field, the opportunities for interdisciplinary research, the challenges towards new knowledge, possible research collaborations, etc.*
- *In addition, the postgraduate and doctoral programmes offered by the academic unit, the research projects performed, and the research performance of the faculty members should be mentioned.*

Relevant documentation

- *Introductory Report by the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) addressing the above points with the necessary documentation*
- *Updated Strategic Plan of the Institution that will include its proposed academic reconstruction, in view of the planned operation of the new department(s) (incl. updated SWOT analysis at institutional level)*
- *Feasibility and sustainability studies for the establishment and operation of the new academic unit and the new study programme*
- *Four-year business plan*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The EEAP evaluated a multitude of documents provided both by the institution and the department to address the objectives of Principle 1. Additionally, the department and its leadership presented in detail their thoughts on Principle 1 during zoom meetings. The committee appreciated the institutional and departmental effort to comply with the objectives of this principle. The profile and mission of the department was compliant with UNESCO (ISCED 2013) standards. The institution has a SWOT analysis in place for the department, both with respect to the operation of the department and its development; the analysis included a discussion of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the department. The feasibility of operation of the department with respect to the local and regional economy, the comparison with national and international programmes of study for the same scientific field, and the differentiation of the department from other similar, existing departments was discussed (concerns were raised by the committee and will be discussed below). Sustainability and structure of studies were discussed in relative detail; again, concerns were raised by the committee and will be discussed below. The number of admitted students was specified and the committee recognized that this is beyond the departmental and even institutional control. Graduate studies were briefly discussed, since the department is relatively new and there is only a small number of graduate students (about eight).

II. Analysis

The committee deemed that the department is compliant in terms of UNESCO standards and that the institutional SWOT plan reasonably addresses departmental planning and strategic aspects. The feasibility of operation of the department raised concerns: it is unclear whether the department has performed a rigorous comparison of its undergraduate study program with other peer departments in Greece. While the number of courses offered by the department is quite large, there is limited data to support whether the courses are offered successfully: student success, as measured by grades, seems to be an issue; student reviews are also very limited. The differentiation of the proposed department when compared with peer departments in Greece is also limited. It is unclear whether the department has a niche within digital systems that could help differentiate it from other departments. Sustainability is also a significant concern: the department has a very small number of (truly enthusiastic and hard-working) faculty members and limited (almost non-existent) administrative support. The committee was impressed by the quality of the existing facilities (at least to the extent that they were presented to us via zoom), but the reality is that given the size of the department (approximately 200 undergraduate students per year) the existing classrooms are not sufficiently large for the number of admitted students. Workarounds are possible and have been implemented by the department and they seem to keep the problem at bay, at least thus far. Other issues related to housing and dining facilities will be discussed in more detail later in the report. The committee does recognize that some of these issues are beyond departmental control, but they do affect the department significantly, resulting in a less cohesive environment for the students and the faculty.

The structure of studies seems to follow other similar programs. However, it has not been tested "in the field". The department has not yet graduated a single student. To clarify, this is

not the department's fault: the timing of the UGP evaluation (as the committee was told) was mandated by HAHE. The EEAP feels that this timing is somewhat unfortunate since there is limited data to evaluate the potential for success of the proposed undergraduate curriculum. For example, significant concerns are raised by early signs of the curriculum implementation, such as the high failure rate of students in the 2020-2021 academic year (over 60%). Without more detailed data, student evaluations, and departmental self-assessment it is hard to identify the source of such high failure rates. It is worth emphasising that all courses have learning outcomes and are aligned with ECTS. Student centred learning approaches seem to be important for the teaching faculty, but without teaching evaluations the committee cannot determine whether such approaches are implemented successfully.

The number of admitted students is beyond departmental control. Given existing facilities, 200 incoming students per year is a tall order for the department.

III. Conclusions

The institution and the department have made significant efforts to comply with Principle 1, and the committee appreciated those efforts. However, a number of concerns were raised and EEAP deemed the department to be substantially and not fully compliant with this principle.

Panel Judgement

Principle 1: Strategic planning, feasibility and sustainability of the academic unit	
a. The academic profile and the mission of the academic unit	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
b. The strategy of the Institution for its academic development	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
c. The documentation of the feasibility of the operation of the department and the study programme	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
d. The documentation of the sustainability of the new department	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
e. The structure of studies	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
f. The number of admitted students	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Principle 1: Strategic planning, feasibility and sustainability of the academic unit (overall)	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- The department should identify a niche area that differentiates it from similar departments in Greece and adapt its undergraduate curriculum to train undergraduates to be leaders in that niche area. Given the small size of the department this could help streamline and perhaps even reduce course offerings to lighten the teaching load of the faculty.
- The institution should work towards supporting the department with faculty and staff. The committee recognizes that this is a challenging task given legal and other constraints, but without immediate growth in these areas the department will face an existential threat, since the number of students admitted each year is very high and comparable to the number of students admitted to other departments in Greece with many more faculty members and staff.
- The institution should expeditiously help with infrastructure: the department will need more classrooms and other facilities. The lack of a dining venue is a major concern and should be fixed, perhaps in collaboration with the local municipality.
- The department should urgently work towards a self-assessment with respect to the implementation of its current undergraduate curriculum. Faculty should discuss the success rate and student evaluations of their courses openly and form a strategic plan to address student concerns and increase success rates. Informal mechanisms should be implemented to seek student feedback, beyond the formal course evaluations which seem to be unsuccessful due to low student participation.
- The sequence and material covered in introductory courses should be revisited to better align with departmental priorities.

Principle 2: Quality Assurance Policy of the Institution and the Academic Unit

The Institution should have in place an accredited Internal Quality Assurance System, and should formulate and apply a Quality Assurance Policy, which is part of its strategy, specialises in the operation of the new academic units and the new study programmes, and is accompanied by annual quality assurance goals for the continuous development and improvement of the academic units and the study programmes.

The quality assurance policy of the Institution must be formulated in the form of a published statement, which is implemented by all stakeholders. It focuses on the achievement of special annual quality goals related to the quality assurance of the new study programme offered by the academic unit. In order to implement this policy, the Institution, among others, commits itself to put into practice quality procedures that will demonstrate: the adequacy and quality of the academic unit's resources; the suitability of the structure and organisation of the curriculum; the appropriateness of the qualifications of the teaching staff; the quality of support services of the academic unit and its staffing with appropriate administrative personnel. The Institution also commits itself to conduct an annual internal evaluation of the new undergraduate programme (UGP), realised by the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) in collaboration with the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) of the Institution.

The quality assurance policy of the academic unit includes its commitment to implement quality procedures that will demonstrate: a) the adequacy of the structure and organisation of the curriculum, b) the pursuit of learning outcomes and qualifications in accordance with the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education, c) the promotion of the quality and effectiveness of the teaching work, d) the adequacy of the qualifications of the teaching staff, e) the promotion of the quality and quantity of the research work of the members of the academic unit, f) the ways of linking teaching with research, g) the level of demand for graduates' qualifications in the labour market, h) the quality of support services, such as administration, libraries and student care, i) the implementation of an annual review and audit of the quality assurance system of the UGP through the cooperation of the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) with the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) of the Institution.

Relevant documentation

- *Revised Quality Assurance Policy of the Institution*
- *Quality Assurance Policy of the academic unit*
- *Quality target setting of the Institution and the academic unit (utilising the S.M.A.R.T. methodology)*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

During the assessment of the Quality Assurance Policy of the Department of Digital Systems at the University of Peloponnese, the EAAP has evidently found that the Department is following the University's System and Quality Assurance policy. The Internal Evaluation Committee (OMEA) is responsible, in collaboration with the University's Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP), to oversee the quality assurance processes of the Department and to evaluate their effectiveness.

The EAAP found that the Quality Assurance Policy is communicated to all relevant stakeholders. The quality policy of the Department of Digital Systems is harmonized with the quality policy of the University of Peloponnese and aims at the implementation of quality

objectives related to the organization and operation of the Undergraduate Study Program. The Department should enable mechanisms and be committed to the implementation of a quality policy that supports the academic character and orientation of the undergraduate programs, aims at promoting its purpose of existence, and at designing and implementing the strategic goals of the Department.

II. Analysis

The EAAP recognises the tremendous efforts which the very small number of faculty members and staff have made for the first years of operation and recognises their significant contributions. However, the small size of the Department has meant that many of the prevailing academic and research standards, found in other similar and directly comparable Departments, are only beginning to become an established practice in this Department. Hence, the quality assurance processes concerning the monitoring, feedback and academic attainment, the reflection on teaching methods, the embedding of research into teaching, the development of tangible links with external stakeholders to enhance student employability prospects, and the general collaborative links with the wider National and International community, are not at the anticipated level at this point. The EAAP recognises the number of faculty members and the number of students that correspond to these faculty members, the number of courses and the teaching hours of each faculty. However, these parameters directly affect the quality of teaching and the quality of anticipated research for achieving a qualitative and quantitative level. Additionally, EAAP recognises the strong teaching and research ethos which underpins the growing academic team of the Department. It also recognises the emerging research agenda promoted by the faculty and the short-term plans to enhance the level of co-creation of research outputs with undergraduate students.

The annual review of the programme-in-reference targets to collate feedback from all the relevant stakeholders and, as indicated by the EAAP, is in need of further significant enhancement. The process followed thus far, has not been sufficiently reflective or pluralistic enough as a result of not engaging external stakeholders effectively. There is a need to establish clear performance indicators which will need to be monitored carefully on a periodic basis. Similarly, student feedback from questionnaires but also other indirect means, teaching and research related observations, and reflections from academic teaching staff, should also become more prominent in the annual cycle of performance and attainment evaluations.

III. Conclusions

The process followed to-date is deemed not sufficient for reflecting, demonstrating, and utilising all quality procedures, so that an effective and monitored teaching and learning process by the members of the Department is projected. External stakeholders and potentially external reviewers/auditors of the programme may help towards this direction. There is a need to establish clear performance indicators by which the programme and the Department's efforts and performance will be monitored and reviewed carefully on a periodic basis by the respective committees in Departmental and University levels.

Panel Judgement

Principle 2: Quality assurance policy of the Institution and the academic unit	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- It is recommended that the Department reassess its academic and research identity (Niche research field) to reflect the profile of the Department and how it can be best interfaced with the existing research fields of faculty members (ways of linking teaching with research).
- The Department should continue to encourage students and enhance the use of the student feedback questionnaires to supplement the existing informal mechanisms of gathering indirect feedback from the students.
- Take steps at Departmental, Institutional, and State level for ensuring the actual participation of students in the decision-making bodies of the program. Ensure that the departmental targets and KPIs incorporate the relevant views of external stakeholders, specifically those which relate to employability and graduate prospects.
- The periodic reviews of the program should be formalised, well documented, and embraced by all involved stakeholders.

Principle 3: Design, Approval and Monitoring of the Quality of the New Undergraduate Programmes

Institutions should design the new undergraduate programmes following a defined written process, which will involve the participants, information sources and the approval committees for the programme. The objectives, the expected learning outcomes, the intended professional qualifications and the ways to achieve them are set out in the programme design. The above details, as well as information on the programme's structure, are published in the Student Guide.

The Institutions develop their new undergraduate study programmes, following a well-defined procedure. The academic profile, the identity and orientation of the programme, the objectives, the subject areas, the structure and organisation, the expected learning outcomes and the intended professional qualifications according to the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education are described at this stage. An important new element in the structure of the programmes is the introduction of courses for the acquisition of digital skills. The above components should be taken into consideration and constitute the subject of the programme design, which, among other things, should include: elements of the Institution's strategy, labour market data and employment prospects of graduates, smooth progression of students throughout the stages of the programme, the anticipated student workload according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), the option of providing work experience to the students, the linking of teaching and research, the international experience in study programmes of similar disciplines, the relevant regulatory framework, and the official procedure for the approval of the programme by the Institution.

The procedure of approval or revision of the programmes provides for the verification of compliance with the basic requirements of the Standards by the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU).

Relevant documentation

- *Senate decision for the establishment of the UGP*
- *Curriculum structure: courses, course categories (including courses for the acquisition of digital skills), ECTS awarded, expected learning outcomes according to the EQF, internship, mobility opportunities.*
- *Labour market data regarding the employment of graduates, international experience in a related scientific field.*
- *Student Guide*
- *Course outlines*
- *Teaching staff (list of areas of specialisation, its relation to the courses taught, employment relationship)*
- *QAU minutes for the internal evaluation of the new study programme and its compliance with the Standards*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The EAAP has concluded that the Department's curriculum, its learning and teaching methods, the quality assurance provision, and the expanding monitoring and enhancement mechanisms, meet partly the expected National and International standards of educational provision in the area of Digital Systems and the tightly coupled/related fields. The Department is on a positive trajectory of developmental growth, and it is expected to continue to improve in the future taking into consideration the well-defined and highly competitive programme of study in the field. The development of the programme of study being reviewed was developed in accordance with the relevant policies of the Institution. As part of these policies, the institution's Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP) oversees the process of internal and external evaluation of the University's academic Departments and their programmes.

The Department through actions of MODIP has established a series of actions, through which the implementation of quality-related objectives is achieved, the continuous monitoring of the course of their achievement and their revision, some of which are noted below:

- The establishment of a curriculum committee;
- The establishment of a strategic planning committee;
- The implementation of the institution of the academic advisor;
- The application of an electronic course and teacher evaluation system;
- Informing students about the undergraduate program and about a series of issues of academic life;
- Recording of research results and their dissemination.

The program of study aims to incrementally show the continuous improvement of its educational and research work, as well as the high-quality and efficiency of its offered services, in accordance with the international practices of the European Higher Education Area as well as the principles and guidelines of HAHE. However, some of the main principles are not precisely followed as indicated below.

II. Analysis

The programme offers a great variety of courses covering a broad aspect of Computer Science including the core and related fields. The faculty has put up great effort within the study programme guide in articulating the set of learning objectives that its students are expected to meet at time of graduation. The guide is currently provided only in the Greek language, which eliminates the possibilities for foreign students to consider the Department as a probable destination during their participation in the student exchange ERASMUS+ program. Additionally, there is no online web-based and accessible link that contains the course outlines for interested students, including the learning objectives and of each course, aims as well as the course leader. Mainly this comprises the primary problem for the extrovert behaviour of the Department (unexpectedly poor website presence of the Department and programme's curriculum, not accessible outlines, information that should be freely available online to everyone).

The program of study should be reviewed on a periodic basis and keep up to date the curriculum with industry needs (i.e., learning outcomes of the programme, number of hours (face-to face, individual study etc.) and credits). The learning outcomes of the programme, the number of teaching hours of each course (in case of face-to face, individual/independent study courses etc.) and the course credits should be available to all students and visitors of the Departmental website in English language.

The Department is encouraged to establish systematic processes for eliciting input from external stakeholders, like industrial partners and alumni, for reviewing and /or consulting purposes towards the continuous enhancement of its study programme using the well-defined QA policy and processes. The input by external stakeholders is strongly encouraged to be established so that the programme is aligned with the industrial needs, trends and demands. To this extend, a consolidated feedback report with the extracted outcomes should be -on a periodic basis i.e., annually- provided by both academic and industry/external advisors on the quality of the program. Thorough review procedures should exist for the evaluation and improvement of the program with integration of latest research in the discipline, adjusting to the needs of society, effectiveness of students' assessment, students' expectations, workload progression, learning environment, support services and support offered to people with disabilities.

There isn't any adequate up-to-date information on the Department website (KPIs, analysis, statistical data). Additionally, the programme is not well translated from the Greek language to the English language (some pages are totally missing) and therefore it will be difficult to be accessed by non-Greek speaking visitors. Monitoring, assessing, and analysing the extracted data is the only way to excellence and to be able to target a Niche pathway in the field.

The Department should ensure that there is a clearly defined process for faculty self-assessment (self-assessment appraisal report) whereas results should be shared among all members of the academic unit (including faculty, students, and non-teaching staff). Additionally, the Department -based on the assessment reports- should create an action plan with aims, objectives, and goals of their short- and long-term goals based on the feedback obtained by the involved stakeholders (i.e., students, alumni, external evaluators etc). Finally, it is strongly suggested that a Curriculum Advisory Programme Committee should be formed with contributions from all involved stakeholders (i.e., students, social partners etc).

III. Conclusions

The Department should establish formal processes for involving external Advisory Board members, including but not limited to external ones like industrial market players/partners and alumni in order to maintain the program innovation and align with the market requirements (the industrial partners called it "Osmosis with the market"). This will enable even smoother career pathways for the students, and more prepared students for the market needs. Finally, the program needs both a more explicit short term and long-term strategic plan for faculty hiring and curriculum development.

Panel Judgement

Principle 3: Design, approval and monitoring of the quality of the new undergraduate programmes	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	X
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- The department should establish formal processes for involving external Advisory Board members (i.e., as audit members), including but not limited to external ones like industrial market players/partners and alumni in order to maintain the program innovation and align with the market requirements.
- The department should formalise the appeal system procedure and make students aware upon their entry to the program of study.
- The Department is required to keep up-to-date information (KPIs, analysis, statistical data) and in a clearly readable manner so that the readers could extract constructive conclusions.
- The Department should ensure that there is a process for faculty self-assessment whereas results should be shared among all members of the academic unit (including faculty, students, and non-teaching staff).
- Development of Departmental website with up-to-date information in English language and provide a more extrovert profile of the Department. The Departmental web pages may need further attention as some links are redirecting to the default/initial webpage and some material is missing.
- Better interaction and coordination with industry may enhance the curriculum, will stimulate research further, and may result in additional funding that will support more students.
- The program needs both a more explicit short term and long-term strategic plan for faculty hiring and curriculum development.

Principle 4: Student-centred Approach in Learning, Teaching and Assessment of Students

The academic unit should ensure that the new undergraduate programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process. The assessment methods should reflect this approach.

In the implementation of student-centered learning and teaching, the academic unit:

- ✓ *respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths*
- ✓ *considers and uses different modes of delivery where appropriate*
- ✓ *flexibly uses a variety of pedagogical methods*
- ✓ *regularly evaluates and adjusts the modes of delivery and application of pedagogical methods aiming at improvement*
- ✓ *regularly evaluates the quality and effectiveness of teaching, as documented especially through student surveys*
- ✓ *reinforces the student's sense of autonomy, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teaching staff*
- ✓ *promotes mutual respect in the student-teacher relationship*
- ✓ *applies appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints*

Relevant documentation

- *Questionnaires for assessment by the students*
- *Regulation for dealing with students' complaints and appeals*
- *Regulation for the function of the academic advisor*
- *Reference to the planned teaching modes and assessment methods*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The EAAP reviewed multiple documents provided by the department, a presentation by the department's teaching faculty, and held discussion sessions via zoom with the relevant members of the department. The faculty seemed to be well-aware of the importance of a student-centred approach in learning, teaching, and student assessment. The department seems to have procedures and policies in place to facilitate such activities. Their implementation however seems to be challenging, perhaps due to the fact that the size of the department is quite small, and the faculty are overloaded.

II. Analysis

On the positive side, the department has in place assessment criteria and methods to evaluate student satisfaction. These criteria seem to be publicly available, and the department seems to provide multiple reminders to the students to complete the student satisfaction surveys. A major plus is that the teaching faculty has a good rapport with the students, and they are readily available to respond to student questions and concerns (at least according to the

feedback that the committee received from the students during our meetings). The department's environment is very friendly, and the faculty should be congratulated for this accomplishment.

The EAAP noticed several shortcomings. First, there is a lack of extracurricular activities and clubs that would help develop students' skills, while also developing a collaborative atmosphere that would encourage students to spend more time on campus. For example, there seem to be no student organisations to promote areas of interest (related to digital systems, but also beyond) for the students, which seems to make student-centred learning harder. Furthermore, some lines of communication between the students and the faculty/staff members of the department seem broken. For example, some students seemed unaware of the existence of formal procedures for grade appeals, as well as about their rights regarding such procedures. This is further emphasised by the very small number of responses to the Student Satisfaction Surveys that are conducted twice a year, despite the efforts of the faculty to increase participation in this important process. The committee recognizes that this is a systemic issue with many departments and also that legal constraints further restrict the department's ability to get larger-scale data on student satisfaction. However, the committee would like to notice that there are ways to collect student feedback through informal surveys and that the department could (and should) carefully analyse grading data for exams, homework, midterms, projects, etc. from the courses that are offered each semester, since such data offer important indicators on student performance. Finally, the committee could not determine (due to lack of hard data) the success of the academic tutoring program, which seems to be restricted to a few one-to-many meetings each semester (one academic tutor, many student participants). This is hardly a successful tutoring program; the committee does recognize that given the extreme overload of the faculty member, imposing extra duties is impossible. The institute should pay attention to this issue and remedy the situation by providing additional resources to the department. A simpler alternative might be to implement tutoring programs where more senior students (once such students actually exist in the department) help supervise and tutor more junior students.

III. Conclusions

In conclusion, the committee determined that the department is only partially compliant with respect to Principle 4. The department seems to have, at least on paper, a decent approach to address this principle, but implementation aspects are lacking.

Panel Judgement

Principle 4: Student-centred approach in learning, teaching and assessment of students	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	X
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- Improve the collection of student satisfaction data, perhaps by conducting informal surveys to assess student satisfaction.
- Enhance communication lines between faculty and students regarding formal procedures, such as grade appeals.
- Improve the tutoring program, perhaps by involving students.
- Help students self-organise in clubs and groups that promote student interests in digital systems and beyond.

Principle 5: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition of Academic Qualifications and Award of Degrees and Certificates of Competence of the New Study Programmes

Academic units should develop and apply published regulations addressing all aspects and phases of studies of the programme (admission, progression, recognition and degree award).

All the issues from the beginning to the end of studies should be governed by the internal regulations of the academic units. Indicatively:

- ✓ *the registration procedure of the admitted students and the necessary documents - according to the law - and the support of the newly admitted students*
- ✓ *student rights and obligations, and monitoring of student progression*
- ✓ *internship issues, granting of scholarships*
- ✓ *the procedures and terms for writing the thesis (diploma or degree)*
- ✓ *the procedure of award and recognition of degrees, the duration of studies, the conditions for progression and assurance of the progress of students in their studies*

as well as

- ✓ *the terms and conditions for enhancing student mobility*

Appropriate recognition procedures rely on relevant academic practice for recognition of credits among various European academic departments and Institutions in line with the principles of the Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region. Graduation represents the culmination of the students' study period. Students need to receive documentation explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes, and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed (Diploma Supplement).

All the above must be made public within the context of the Student Guide.

Relevant documentation

- *Internal regulation for the operation of the new study programme*
- *Regulation of studies, internship, mobility and student assignments*
- *Printed Diploma Supplement*

Certificate from the President of the academic unit that the diploma supplement is awarded to all graduates without exception together with the degree or the certificate of completion of studies

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The EAAP reviewed multiple documents provided by the department, a presentation by the department's teaching faculty, and held discussion sessions via zoom with the relevant members of the department. The department seems to have good procedures and policies in

place to facilitate activities related to this principle. These activities also seem to have been properly implemented.

II. Analysis

It is evident that the department does its best to support first-year students, by introducing them to university life via a welcoming Ceremony as well as by one-to-many meetings with a study advisor. The students' progression is being monitored by standard procedures, including midterms (infrequent), homework (more frequent), and final exams (ubiquitous in all courses). ECTS criteria seem to be applied throughout the curriculum. The undergraduate program has also a well-defined set of quality requirements for the diploma thesis. The committee has no evidence of the existence of a Thesis Handbook, but thesis requirements seem to be well-communicated by the teaching staff.

The department has a practical training internship in place, which is a valuable part of the programme. It used to be mandatory, since the department was a TEI prior to being converted to an AEI. The department's network for the practical training could be better developed. The local stakeholders seemed to have a real need for students to work in local companies and venues (both public and private) and the department could take advantage of this situation.

On the negative side, the number of students involved in mobility programs such as Erasmus and Erasmus+ is very limited. The students cannot get a partial transcript in English (even informally); having access to such documentation might help mobility.

III. Conclusions

The Panel is considering the department to be substantially compliant with respect to this feature, since the department seems to satisfactorily adhere to most components of this principle.

Panel Judgement

Principle 5: Student admission, progression, recognition of academic qualifications, and award of degrees and certificates of competence of the new study programmes	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- Expand the department's network for practical training and perhaps even for diploma thesis by connecting with the local stakeholders. Perhaps forming a (formal or informal) committee of stakeholders to work with the department towards that end would help.
- Simplify, to the extent possible, the procedures for the students to obtain transcripts and graduation certificates in English. Consider even informal transcripts and certificates since they might help student mobility.

Principle 6: Ensuring the Competence and High Quality of the Teaching Staff of the New Undergraduate Study Programmes

Institutions should assure themselves of the competence, the level of knowledge and skills of the teaching staff of the academic units, and apply fair and transparent processes for their recruitment, training and further development.

The Institution should attend to the adequacy of the teaching staff of the academic unit, the appropriate staff-student ratio, the suitable categories of staff, the appropriate subject areas and specialisations, the fair and objective recruitment process, the high research performance, the training – development, the staff development policy (including participation in mobility schemes, conferences and educational leaves- as mandated by law).

More specifically, the academic unit should set up and follow clear, transparent and fair processes for the recruitment of properly qualified staff and offer them conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching and research; offer opportunities and promote the professional development of the teaching staff; encourage scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research; encourage innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies; promote the increase of the volume and quality of the research output within the academic unit; follow quality assurance processes for all staff members (with respect to attendance requirements, performance, self-assessment, training, etc.); develop policies to attract highly qualified academic staff.

Relevant documentation

- *Procedures and criteria for teaching staff recruitment*
- *Regulations or employment contracts, and obligations of the teaching staff*
- *Policy for staff recruitment, support and development*
- *Performance of the teaching staff in scientific-research and teaching work, also based on internationally recognised systems of scientific evaluation (e.g., Google Scholar, Scopus, etc.)*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The Department follows, in a transparent way, the procedures set up by the Ministry of Education in recruiting and hiring of new faculty. Policies to attract highly qualified academic staff are not different from those in other Greek Universities. All members of the faculty are properly qualified and active in their research areas. They are keen to strengthen the link between research and teaching. The importance of teaching and research is recognized by the faculty and the department. The EEAP observed a significant effort of the teaching faculty to bring quality research into the undergraduate classrooms.

II. Analysis

While the members of the teaching staff are regularly (every semester) evaluated by their students. It should be stated that the number of students who participate in these evaluations is low. The established process of evaluating the teaching staff every semester is done by asking the students to fill electronic questionnaires/surveys through an electronic system. This is a highly commendable and private process. However, the problem lies with the student turnout which is very low making the results of the process mostly unusable and the teaching evaluation impractical. EEAP recognizes that this situation is difficult to remedy but the Department should increase the efforts to encourage and incentivize the students to participate in the process, since this is directly linked with the evaluation of the faculty members and their professional advancement. Currently, Erasmus and sabbatical leaves are the only means for teaching staff mobility. However, because of the very small number of teaching faculty (7) it becomes extremely difficult for faculty to make use of these resources without creating a severe shortage in faculty available to teach in each semester.

III. Conclusions

The department is fortunate to have a group of committed, high quality faculty members and special teaching staff (i.e., EDIP). They maintain high standards in their teaching and research duties. The selection and promotion of the teaching staff of the department are set to follow the well-established procedures mandated by Greek law and observed by all universities in Greece. Being a rather new department, these policies have not been applied yet.

Panel Judgement

Principle 6: Ensuring the competence and high quality of the teaching staff of the new undergraduate study programmes	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- Institute peer review processes among its members both for teaching and research evaluations and combine those with the ones by the students.
- Create a comprehensive research strategy and various criteria to evaluate the implementation of this strategy by the faculty members.
- As more faculty will be added soon it might be a good idea to establish mentoring processes for junior faculty to support their first steps towards teaching at high level and successful grant proposal writing.
- Establish frequent (at least once every two years or annually) self-assessment procedures for its faculty. This could be facilitated by the creation of a self-report (Faculty Activity Report) for all faculty where they will be asked to report their teaching/research/service as well as achievements/participation in committees etc., every academic year. This will help the faculty to prepare their tenure and/or promotion dossiers as well as provide them and any external/internal evaluation committee a chance to glance over their achievements on a particular year or set of years.

Principle 7: Learning Resources and Student Support of the New Undergraduate Programmes

Institutions should have adequate funding to meet the needs for the operation of the academic unit and the new study programme as well as the means to cover all their teaching and learning needs. They should -on the one hand- provide satisfactory infrastructure and services for learning and student support and -on the other hand- facilitate direct access to them by establishing internal rules to this end (e.g., lecture rooms, laboratories, libraries, networks, boarding, career and social policy services, etc.).

Institutions and their academic units must have sufficient resources, on a planned and long-term basis, to support learning and academic activity in general, in order to offer students the best possible level of studies. The above means include facilities such as, the necessary general and specific libraries and possibilities for access to electronic databases, study rooms, educational and scientific equipment, information and communication services, support and counselling services. When allocating the available resources, the needs of all students must be taken into consideration (e.g. whether they are full-time or part-time students, employed students, students with disabilities), in addition to the shift towards student-centred learning and the adoption of flexible modes of learning and teaching. Support activities and facilities may be organised in various ways, depending on the institutional context. Students should be informed about all available services. In delivering support services, the role of support and administration staff is crucial and therefore this segment of staff needs to be qualified and have opportunities to develop its competences.

Relevant documentation

- Detailed description of the infrastructure and services made available by the Institution to the academic unit to support learning and academic activity (human resources, infrastructure, services, etc.) and the corresponding specific commitment of the Institution to financially cover these infrastructure-services from state or other resources
- Administrative support staff of the new undergraduate programme (job descriptions, qualifications and responsibilities)
- Informative / promotional material given to students with reference to the available services

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The Department has the following facilities as the core of the teaching and learning environment for the new undergraduate programme: there is an amphitheatre (capacity: 120), 4 classrooms (capacity: 63-144), 4 Labs (capacity: 24 each), and admin offices. It appears that no equipment inventory is kept. In the campus there is also a library with places for students to study candidates.

There is a range of support services available to the university students. They have access to the webmail, e-class platform, free wi-fi connection, library etc. Additionally, they can use the services offered at the main campus of Peloponnese based in Tripoli or Nafplion, such as the Office of Student Support Services (welfare etc), Career Office etc. Students can use the Sports Facilities of another faculty located in Sparta. There is one administrative staff that supports students and academic staff. A student councillor is assigned to each student.

The teaching facilities are located 15-30min (traffic dependent) outside Sparta. There are no catering or refreshment facilities at this remote location (Kladas). Students and staff have to commute back and forth to the main city, Sparta, for lunch and/or refreshments. There is a regular bus to transfer students and staff between Kladas and Sparta. There are no dormitories provided for the students. There is some (partial) monetary support for housing.

The Head of the Department is located in Tripoli and the Dean is located in Nafplion. Six members of DEP are located in Sparta and one in Kalamata.

II. Analysis

The capacity of the teaching rooms is below the number of students (this year's intake is 181 students). The labs are not well equipped, and the equipment seems to be out of date. The lab capacity is inadequate, as a result, the lab sessions have to be repeated several times.

Student support from distant locations (Tripoli, Nafplion) is not ideal. It is difficult for students to travel to Nafplion for career advice and Tripoli for welfare advice (although this is overcome with local referrals).

The lack of catering facilities at Kladas is detrimental to the welfare of staff and students. It is also time consuming, as they need to travel to Sparta.

The lack of dormitories is also a problem, as the students cannot develop a community.

III. Conclusions

The department is under development; the EEAP hopes these problems will be resolved when the development is completed.

Panel Judgement

Principle 7: Learning resources and student support of the new undergraduate programmes	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	X
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- Ensure that the students are well informed about the processes as well as the role and the responsibilities of the administrative staff
- Develop an inventory of the available equipment and other assets of the Department and audit it regularly
- Expand and improve the teaching facilities
- Establish Catering/refreshment facilities at the main teaching buildings at Kladas
- Provide dormitories for the students
- Establish student support services locally
- The Departmental management should be located in Sparta

Principle 8: Collection, Analysis and Use of Information for the Organisation and Operation of New Undergraduate Programmes

The Institutions and their academic units bear full responsibility for collecting, analysing and using information, aimed at the efficient management of undergraduate programmes of study and related activities, in an integrated, effective and easily accessible way.

Effective procedures for collecting and analysing information on the operation of Institutions, academic units and study programmes feed data into the internal quality assurance system. The following data is of interest: key performance indicators for the student body profile, student progression, success and drop-out rates, student satisfaction with the programme, availability of learning resources and student support. The completion of the fields of National Information System for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NISQA) should be correct and complete with the exception of the fields that concern graduates in which a null value is registered.

Relevant documentation

- *Report from the National Information System for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NISQA) at the level of the Institution, the department and the new UGP*
- *Operation of an information management system for the collection of administrative data for the implementation of the programme (Students' Record)*
- *Other tools and procedures designed to collect data on the academic and administrative functions of the academic unit and the study programme*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The student information is currently handled by a central university system (e-University system). The EEAP understands that all students enrolled in the Department are on that system. In April 2022, they commissioned a new system, based on software developed by the Aristoteleio University of Thessaloniki; the system is currently not operational, it is expected to be fully functioning in the next few months.

There is e-Class. The online course evaluations are handled via internally built software that looks to be basic. MODIC has its own system for staff evaluation. It has not been proven that this fragmented collection of Software systems, developed in house, is capable of handling key performance indicators (KPIs) such as student retention/progression, academic success, research quality, and collaboration with other institutions. Because the Department is in transition and only runs for two years, there are limited graphs and summaries accessible to the EEAP for data analysis.

II. Analysis

The available data only are limited to be used for the improvement of teaching and other services provided to the students and the academic staff. However, there are several crucial areas that require additional procedures to enable the reporting of quantifiable actions on

courses and services. In its absence, the dates of implementation and the prior activities and their influence on each course's delivery may not be determined.

III. Conclusions

The EEAP determined that Departmental information management is inadequate; (i) there is limited data because the Department is only in the 2nd year of operation, (ii) there is insufficient data collection, analysis, and processing.

Panel Judgement

Principle 8: Collection, analysis and use of information for the organisation and operation of new undergraduate programmes	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	X
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

Develop and document data collection in a complete and formal manner, improve processing and analysis procedures, using robust software.

Principle 9: Public Information Concerning the New Undergraduate Programmes

Institutions and academic units should publish information about their teaching and academic activities in a direct and readily accessible way. The relevant information should be up-to-date, clear and objective.

Information on the Institutions' activities is useful for prospective and current students, graduates, other stakeholders and the public. Therefore, Institutions and their academic units must provide information about their activities, including the new undergraduate programmes they offer, the intended learning outcomes, the degrees awarded, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to their students. Information is also provided, to the extent possible, on graduate employment perspectives.

Relevant documentation

- *Dedicated segment on the website of the department for the promotion of the new study programme*
- *Bilingual version of the website of the academic unit with complete, clear and objective information*
- *Provision for website maintenance and updating*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The department's website contains information about its facilities, staff, undergraduate and graduate degree programs and guides, announcements, events, policy of quality assurance, and internal assessment reports. This information is provided in the form of webpages, in the form of downloadable PDF documents, or both. All courses have an e-class component, through which students can get access to all materials of the course, access their grades, contact their instructor and peers, etc. EEAP did not locate a link to the comprehensive course outlines through the course catalogue. That prevents potential students from looking over course outlines.

II. Analysis

Moreover, the AP could not find policies related to students' rights and responsibilities (appeals, academic integrity, etc.) Most of the informational pages merely list the services provided and offer phone numbers for students to call. Most of the department's pages lead back to the University of Peloponnese. Even the central University website has broken links. For example, if someone attempts to access the department of Digital Systems from the min University webpage it gets an error message. Moreover, web content is barely offered in English, with some pages only offering skeletal information without details. The research-oriented information publications, research projects, Ph.D. theses etc. cannot be found on the department's website. Given that one of the department's strengths lies in the quality of research performed by the faculty members, adding and maintaining this information should be of highest priority. In addition to the above, the website offers little help to students after graduation in their effort to search and secure jobs. The website has a page called " Γραφείο Διασύνδεσης", but it has very few links and of those links which are active, they lead to either

a PDF or are dead links. While PDF files are a starting point with information, a modern website must be dynamic, searchable and offer up to date information.

III. Conclusions

The website of the department is the fundamental interface with the rest of the world. Visitors, academics, and potential students first look at the website to familiarise themselves with the academic unit and then interact with it. Subsequently, a well-designed, dynamic, interactive, up to date and informative website is a crucial element that will help the department to develop a brand name and disseminate its strengths and make itself known to the rest of the world.

Panel Judgement

Principle 9: Public information concerning the new undergraduate programmes	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	X
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- The department should ensure that all information provided through the web site is up to date, dynamic, accurate and as complete as possible.
- The department should disseminate any policies and regulations related to students' rights through the web site, beyond emails and phone numbers where students can get help with their questions.
- The website could feature more pertinent information for incoming ERASMUS+ students. For instance, it should be easy to find courses offered in English per semester. As the department moves forward and, in an attempt, to strengthen its extroversion, the website should include all relevant information for non-Greek speaking students.
- The PDF version of the Study Guide is comprehensive, but its contents should also be available as a 'hypertext' to allow selective access. It should be offered in English too for non-Greek speaking students.
- The pass rates and the graduate employment information should be made widely available to the students on the Departmental website.

Principle 10: Periodic Internal Review of the New Study Programmes

Institutions and academic units should have in place an internal quality assurance system, for the audit and annual internal review of their new programmes, so as to achieve the objectives set for them, through monitoring and amendments, with a view to continuous improvement. Any actions taken in the above context, should be communicated to all parties concerned.

Regular monitoring, review and revision of the new study programmes aim at maintaining the level of educational provision and creating a supportive and effective learning environment for students. The above comprise the evaluation of: the content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up to date; the changing needs of society; the students' workload, progression and completion; the effectiveness of the procedures for the assessment of students; the students' expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme; the learning environment, support services, and their fitness for purpose for the programme. Programmes are reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders. The information collected is analysed and the programme is adapted to ensure that it is up-to-date.

Relevant documentation

- Procedure for the re-evaluation, redefinition and updating of the curriculum
- Procedure for mitigating weaknesses and upgrading the structure of the UGP and the learning process
- Feedback processes on strategy implementation and quality targeting of the new UGP and relevant decision-making processes (students, external stakeholders)
- Results of the annual internal evaluation of the study programme by the QAU and the relevant minutes

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The Department's study program has been designed recently and has not been assessed yet. In general, the program follows the international standards and provides courses covering a number of different and diverse topics. However, there is no clear evidence of scheduled and/or frequent periodic internal reviews and monitoring processes to take place in the future. The program was not self-assessed until recently and the outcome of such processes was not sufficiently recorded, and the findings were not properly communicated with the academic community.

II. Analysis

The Department and staff have fully declared their commitment to complete and realise detailed action plans currently under development, to assure the regular monitoring, review and revision of the study programme. Due to the real staff limitations, there was no sufficient evaluation of the needs of social partners. Although the students which participated in the meetings expressed their satisfaction regarding the programme's workload, they appeared to have limited information on the review processes. There is no evidence of a widespread

sharing of the results among the other members of the Department (students, non-teaching staff) and neither a formal process of collectively evaluating the results of the self-assessment.

III. Conclusions

In the EEAP meetings with faculty, staff, students and graduates, it was evident that there is a friendly and mutually respectful relationship among them. To that end, there were very positive comments regarding the availability, assistance, and support that the students enjoy during their studies. This positive relationship must be reflected in the program’s review and monitoring processes.

Panel Judgement

Principle 10: Periodic internal review of the new study programmes	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	X
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- The department should create formal, well-defined procedures to obtain, use and evaluate feedback from students and external stakeholders. Introduce clear, measurable action plans, set up and fully document processes to assure the periodic and annual evaluation and improvement of the study programme.
- Clearly communicate the appropriate actions to all stakeholders (internal and external) and get them involved, possibly in the form of an informal External Advisory Committee in a periodic monitoring and review process of the study programme.
- Set up and implement formal and informal procedures for eliciting and effectively using input from all stakeholders (faculty, staff, students, external stakeholders).

Principle 11: Regular External Evaluation and Accreditation of the New Undergraduate Programmes

The new undergraduate study programmes should regularly undergo evaluation by panels of external experts set by HAHE, aiming at accreditation. The results of the external evaluation and accreditation are used for the continuous improvement of the Institutions, academic units and study programmes. The term of validity of the accreditation is determined by HAHE.

HAHE is responsible for administrating the programme accreditation process which is realised as an external evaluation procedure and implemented by a panel of independent experts. HAHE grants accreditation of programmes, based on the Reports submitted by the panels, with a specific term of validity, following to which revision is required. The accreditation of the quality of the programmes acts as a means of verification of the compliance of the programme with the Standards, and as a catalyst for improvement, while opening new perspectives towards the international standing of the awarded degrees. Both academic units and institutions must consistently consider the conclusions and the recommendations submitted by the panels of experts for the continuous improvement of the programme.

Relevant documentation

- *Progress report on the results from the utilisation of the recommendations of the external evaluation of the Institution and of the IQAS Accreditation Report.*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The faculty members are aware of the importance of the external review and its contribution to the improvement of the program and how the latter may be exploited. Based on the information gathered during the online discussion, it appears that the faculty, lab personnel, and administrative staff have realised the importance of the external review process and its contribution to improvement. All stakeholders of the programme, including academic, administrative and support staff, and undergraduate students, are actively engaged in the current review. During the meeting, the staff members demonstrated that they are fully aware of the importance of external review and the positive effects that can result from it.

II. Analysis

Although thorough review procedures exist at the Department of Digital Systems for the evaluation and improvement of the program, nothing is followed precisely for the integration of latest research in the discipline, changing society needs, effectiveness of students' assessment, students' expectations, workload progression etc. The evaluated program (as this is the first review of the programme) was not -obviously- thoroughly reviewed (internally). Minimizing discrepancies is an important aspect of periodic review, and this process should have been initiated by faculty members and revised on a periodic and regular basis (keeping assembly meeting minutes of the Departmental meetings for this purpose). This is a process

where students' and stakeholders' involvement are necessary. Department is encouraged to carry-on internal quality assurance procedures for audit, annual internal review of the courses of the programme of studies to assure that they achieve the objectives, and through monitoring the continuous improvement. The revision process of the programme should be periodically described in the Departmental proposal (for modifications) and should follow the procedures indicated in the Department's code-of-practice for any modification and should be confirmed and approved during the meeting with representatives of the MODIP and OMEA. For all the above actions, and in order to have the above steps accessible for progress monitoring purposes, minutes of the assembly meetings with all involved stakeholders should be kept.

III. Conclusions

As there was no other review in the past, the Department's commitment to the spirit and the processes of Quality Assurance should be evident in all principles and aspects. The Department should establish formal, well-defined procedures to elicit, use and evaluate feedback from students and external stakeholders (social partners). The importance of having all the meetings of the different committees and the actions taken or to be taken written in minutes is valuable for monitoring purposes. Therefore, it is strongly suggested that the Department keeps minutes with all the meetings and for all the different formed committee meetings for quality assurance purposes.

Panel Judgement

Principle 11: Regular external evaluation and accreditation of the new undergraduate programmes	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	X
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- The Department is advised to come up with follow-up yearly reports that would allow external entities (e.g., the University, the HAHE, etc.) to follow up on the implementation of the recommendations included in this report.
- The Department should establish formal, well-defined procedures to elicit, use and evaluate feedback from students and external stakeholders (social partners).
- The Department should employ innovative and efficient procedures for collecting meaningful and actionable feedback from the students and external stakeholders. All their actions and committee meetings should formally be recorded in minutes so that actions/responsibilities can formally be assigned to internal stakeholders.
- To fully achieve the Department's objectives, it is necessary to have more flexibility in its operational and planning framework, which relates directly to staff recruitment, student numbers, facilities and services.
- The Department should identify and implement further actions to achieve better awareness of the quality assurance process among all stakeholders, enhancing their involvement in all aspects of the required activities.
- The Department should keep minutes with all the meetings and for all the different formed committees for quality assurance purposes.

Principle 12: Monitoring the Transition from Previous Undergraduate Study Programmes to the New Ones

Institutions and academic units apply procedures for the transition from previously existing undergraduate study programmes to new ones, in order to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Standards.

Applies in cases where the department implements, in addition to the new UGPs, any pre-existing UGPs from departments of former Technological Educational Institutions (TEI) or from departments that were merged / renamed / abolished.

Institutions should implement procedures for the transition from former UGPs to new ones, in order to ensure their compliance with the requirements of the Standards. More specifically, the institution and the academic unit must have a) the necessary learning resources, b) appropriate teaching staff, c) structured curriculum (courses, ECTS, learning outcomes), d) study regulations, award of diploma and diploma supplement, and e) system of data collection and use, with particular reference to the data of the graduates of the pre-existing UGP. In this context, the Institutions and the academic units prepare a plan for the foreseen transition period of the existing UGP until its completion, the costs caused to the Institution by its operation as well as possible measures and proposals for its smooth delivery and termination. This planning includes data on the transition and subsequent progression of students in the respective new UGP of the academic unit, as well as the specific graduation forecast for students enrolled under the previous status.

Relevant documentation

- *The planning of the Institution for the foreseen transition period, the operating costs and the specific measures or proposals for the smooth implementation and completion of the programme*
- *The study regulations, template for the degree and the diploma supplement*
- *Name list of teaching staff, status, subject and the course they teach / examine*
- *Report of Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) on the progress of the transition and the degree of completion of the programme. In the case of UGP of a former Technological Educational Institution (TEI), the report must include a specific reference to how the internship was implemented*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The EEAP committee was given access to all relevant documentation described above. The committee concurred that the UGP incorporates all necessary transitional provisions for students with TEI status, aiming to facilitate their graduation according to Greek law and taking into account a variety of educational restrictions. Specifically, students with TEI status admitted to the department in 2018-19 are allowed to complete graduation with the new university (AEI) status, provided that they complete all TEI obligations (including thesis and internship) after applying for an AEI degree. They also need to complete their studies within six years. Additional prerequisites for TEI students include two elective courses and a university quality diploma thesis. The department has in place a four-year operational plan that provides (to the best of our understanding) support for TEI students.

II. Analysis

Following the aforementioned provisions, four TEI students applied to change status in 2021-22, a number that is expected to grow in upcoming years. About 50 students graduate with TEI status each year, a number that is also expected to grow in upcoming years. There are no graduates from the new Digital Systems Department yet.

III. Conclusions

The committee concurred that the department is doing its best to accommodate the transition from TEI to AEI. No specific recommendations were made for this principle.

Panel Judgement

Principle 12: Monitoring the transition from previous undergraduate study programmes to the new ones	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

No recommendations.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

The committee recognized that there are numerous “good practice” features in the department. These features have already been discussed in our detailed presentations of principles 1-12 and we will not repeat them here. We will, however, highlight the most significant ones:

- The department fosters a friendly and respectful atmosphere between faculty, staff, and students.
- The faculty have an open-door policy that seems to encourage interactions between students and faculty.
- The faculty are able to cope with a very heavy teaching load, a very heavy committee (service) load, and be reasonably successful in their own research. This is truly impressive, and the committee feels that the institution should strive to increase faculty numbers and staff numbers as soon as possible to help departmental success.
- The local stakeholders and social partners were eager and even enthusiastic to work with students from the department, either in practical training or in diploma theses.

Overall, the committee feels that the faculty and staff of the department are faced with an almost herculean task, trying to run a full undergraduate curriculum, perform research, and run the day-to-day operations of a relatively large department. Given that the institution’s administration is not physically present at the department’s location, the departmental success is commendable.

II. Areas of Weakness

Instead of repeating the areas of weakness that are identified in our discussion of principles 1-12, we will attempt to succinctly summarise our major concerns regarding the undergraduate curriculum.

- A major concern is that the curriculum that the committee is evaluating has not been fully implemented, since the department has not graduated a single student after its transition from TEI to AEI.
- There is a lack of hard data supporting the curriculum’s success. Student evaluations offer limited data (at least in the way that they are currently implemented), while the failure rate of the students during the 2020-21 academic year is alarmingly high.
- The departmental strategic plan is lacking niche areas have not been identified and comparison to peer departments within Greece fail to highlight areas of

excellence that could be somewhat unique to the department. This strategic plan could help identify hiring priorities.

- The department seems to lack an internal self-assessment mechanism to identify curriculum-related issues (failure rates, prerequisite courses that become bottlenecks, student satisfaction evaluations, etc.). There is no clear evidence of scheduled and/or frequent periodic internal reviews and monitoring processes or perhaps the outcome of such processes was not sufficiently recorded, and the findings were not properly shared with the relevant parties.
- The number of students participating in exchange programs such as Erasmus and Erasmus+ is limited; connections with local stakeholders could be improved. The department should make every effort to increase student participation in such programs.
- The web presence of the department is rather poor with missing components (i.e., description of course content, prerequisites, and learning objectives in English, study guide in English, etc.). The committee recognizes that this involves significant additional work for the faculty and staff and the committee would recommend that the department keeps working towards improving its online presence.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

The committee provided numerous recommendations in discussing principles 1-12. Our discussion of the department's weaknesses above highlights areas of concern that we believe the department should work to address.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: **6 and 12.**

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: **1, 2, and 5.**

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are: **3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11.**

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are: **None.**

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

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname

Signature

- 1. Prof. Petros Drineas (Chair)**
Purdue University, USA
- 2. Ms. Evangelia Athanasiadi**
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- 3. Prof. Costas Iliopoulos**
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- 4. Prof. Constandinos Mavromoustakis**
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