



HAROKOPIO UNIVERSITY

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To: HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE
AND ACCREDITATION AGENCY
44 SYGROU AVENUE – 11742 ATHENS, GREECE

Subject: Response of Harokopio University (HUAA) to the Draft of the External Evaluation Committee (EEC)'s Report, submitted to ADIP and communicated to HUAA (April 2016)

Harokopio University (HUAA) would like to express its sincere thanks to the EEC, both as a team and as individual members, for the great effort given by the Committee, the real interest, the understanding and the diligence with which they have carried out their task of assessing the various parts and aspects of our Institution's present state, structure and work, as well as its aspiration for development in a manner that preserves its unique character. We have especially appreciated their cooperative and constructive spirit in their contacts with the University's Administration, as well as with all groups involved in the process of the evaluation.

We thank for sharing the final conclusions of the Report, which recognize our University's work to preserve and promote its positive sides, which are also reflected in both independent research evaluation reports and international publications' metrics and the very positive experience of our students, which they unanimously declare. We also, honestly, intend to utilize the EEC's valuable recommendations for improvements on various issues, concerning both strategic choices and methods of implementation, as far as our means and external conditions go.

However, there are a number of crucial points where we would like to add some information and comments on specific views contained in the EEC's report with the kind request to be considered in the Final Decision of the Report.

These points are:



3.1.2. Organizational Development Strategy

- *Effectiveness of administrative officials*

The EEC met with the HUAA administrative team (the Rector Prof. Mara Nikolaidou, and deputy rectors Prof. Dimosthenis Panagiotakos, Prof. Katia Lasaridi and Assoc. Prof. Kostas Abeliotis, as well as the ex-Rector, Prof. Dimosthenis Anagnostopoulos and the ex-Deputy Rector, Prof. Evangelia Georgitsogianni) on several occasions, in which, we believe, it became apparent that they are not only aware of the Institution's strategy and objectives, but they are configuring it and adapt it to the developing needs, in co-operation with the Heads of the Departments, as is their duty.

We believe - and hope that we explained to you clearly -that our strategy and goals for academic and research programs are ambitious, but also achievable. We do believe, as demonstrated by the transformation of our funding sources in the last years, that the Institution has and/or can secure sufficient resources not only to serve its current size, but also achieve expansion, as identified in the Rector's presentation. Also, we do expect that the excellent working relationships of our administrative team with the support staff, the faculty and the Schools have become apparent during your visit.

- *Existence of effective operation regulations*

The Administrative efficacy of HUAA is generally restricted by Government regulations applying to Higher Education in the country. We are proud of the "family" culture and "environment" that underpins Administration, Faculty, Staff and Students; however, all internal procedures and regulations are in place and govern all relevant aspects of the University life. Specifically, HUA has its own Internal Regulation of Operation (Εσωτερικός Κανονισμός Λειτουργίας) since its establishment. Moreover, HUA has timely submitted the required by the Law 4009/2011 Organizational Structure and operating procedures (University Chart - Οργανισμός) to the Ministry of Education approximately two years ago and was among the first institutions in Greece to do so. The Chart has not been approved by the Ministry, as yet. As a result, HUA operates using a blend of operating procedures, some of which are prescribed by the



4009/2011 Law and some of which are prescribed by the corresponding 1997 law.

Given these confounding circumstances, we believe that we are doing a very careful and good job of managing the Institution.

3.1.5 Financial Strategy

We would particularly like to thank the EEC for the appreciation given to HUA as regards our Financial Strategy, especially under the condition of the ongoing financial crisis that has affected all Greek Universities and Institutions.

We have provided evidence that in the recent years the financial status of our University in terms of funding from private, national and international sources has undergone a fundamental transformation and improvement, in both the number of research projects obtained, as well as the monetary value of grants achieved. This was a result of a **systematic strategic plan at Institutional level:**

- (a) to highlight priority areas and provision of recommendations for the departments through cooperation of the Research Committee and the financial department;
- (b) to enhance collaborations and partnerships at local, regional, national and international level, by providing attractive and relevant proposals;
- (c) to empower close cooperation with HUA financial management administration services and the departments;
- (d) to provide full technical support needed to achieve the aforementioned strategic goals;
- (e) to guarantee long-term viability of the University strategic planning and matching resources with objectives; and
- (f) to elaborate and implement a clear pricing and costing strategy for the graduate and LLT programs offered by the institution.

So we would kindly like to note that, given the present, country-related constraints, HUA needs and financial management are met more than adequately.



3.1.6. Building and Grounds Infrastructure Strategy

In this section we would like to point out that the intense issues that the University has faced in the previous period, due to the non-proportional increase of the numbers of students' transfers decided by the Ministry of Education, have been resolved, due to the rationalization of the relevant regulatory framework. As these years graduate, HUA has stabilized to a more robust number of students, which however, does not challenge neither its current operation nor its prospects for the planned academic growth.

3.1.7. Environmental Strategy

Concerning the Environmental Strategy, we would like to underline the following.

Developing and implementing an integrated environmental strategy is of high priority for Harokopio University and both our staff and students take part in the effort of creating and maintaining a Green University, through an array of established good practices and a variety of dissemination and awareness activities. More specifically:

a) Environmental sustainability is one of the ten major axes of the Strategic Planning of Harokopio University for the period 2014-2018, as stated in pp. 48-49 of the Internal Evaluation Report. HUA aspires to be a Green University, through integrated environmental protection activities including energy saving, resources conservation and waste prevention and recycling.

«Οι 10 βασικοί άξονες στρατηγικού σχεδιασμού του Χαροκοπείου Πανεπιστημίου για την περίοδο 2014-2018

9. *Πράσινο πανεπιστήμιο (Προστασία περιβάλλοντος – εξοικονόμηση ενέργειας και πόρων, πρόληψη και ανακύκλωση αποβλήτων).»*

b) This is also clearly stated in the new Chart of Harokopio University (Οργανισμός του Ιδρύματος, <http://www.HUAa.gr/index.php/el/administration-3/chart>), which has been approved by the Senate and the Council of the University and submitted to the Ministry for Approval (as required by Greek law). In Article Γ1 - Administration, paragraph 3 (p. 7), a Committee for Environmental management is foreseen.



«3. Λειτουργούν επίσης τα ακόλουθα γνωμοδοτικού χαρακτήρα όργανα: α) Η Επιτροπή Κοσμητόρων, β) η Επιτροπή Προγραμματικού Σχεδιασμού, γ) το Συμβούλιο Φοιτητικής Μέριμνας δ) Η Επιτροπή Δεοντολογίας, ε) η Επιτροπή Πνευματικής Ιδιοκτησίας, στ) η Επιτροπή Βιοηθικής, ζ) Η Επιτροπή Περιβαλλοντικής Διαχείρισης και η) οι Επιτροπές Βιβλιοθήκης, Πολιτιστικής Ανάπτυξης και Αθλητισμού (ΕΠΑΑ).»

Although the process of approval of all new University Charters has stopped, due to changes in the legal framework, the aspects that regulate internal issues of the University, such as regarding the environmental strategy, are fully operational.

c) In the section of «Environmental Policy», the form of the Internal Evaluation Report from HQA included only specific questions on the management of hazardous and municipal waste and on recycling. Our understanding was, obviously mistakenly, that we should not expand on other environmental strategy issues and activities of the University. Some additional information was included in the presentation of the Deputy-Rector of Student Affairs and Administration.

Overall, the University has already taken specific steps to lower water and energy consumption, promote waste prevention and increase recycling. Therefore, we would like to point out the following main actions already implemented as part of the Environmental Strategy of the University, which were not sufficiently described in the Internal Evaluation Report:

- i) Harokopio University offers a unique, for the city centre area where it is located, natural environment/garden of 2 hectares 2 and invests in its maintenance and development. This is widely recognized and awarded, including the 2013 Environmental Award to Harokopio University, for the worth-living environment that offers to the members of the academic community.
- ii) The University has already taken specific steps to lower water consumption, with emphasis on a program to spot and immediately take action for water leakages, while water saving specifications will be required for new purchases of taps and flushes. Moreover, action has been taken for not using tap water for the garden, through the legal activation of an existing well.



iii) With respect to energy savings, the University administration has thoroughly reviewed the energy consumption of its units and pertinent budget needs and prioritized a series of actions, which are planned for implementation in 2016 and 2017, taking also into consideration related funding options:

- use of natural gas on the main campus;
- improving the efficiency of lightening;
- installation of roof-top photovoltaic systems;
- installation of an real-time online energy consumption monitoring system (BMS –Building Management System).

For those actions that cannot be covered by available funding sources, different financing models are being examined.

Regarding «soft actions» for energy efficiency it should be noticed that holidays, personnel vacation time and other university closings are coordinated. In this period - although the University remains accessible to its faculty and researchers –a reduced level of heating and cooling is provided.

iv) With respect to waste, the hierarchy of waste management is fully respected, with special emphasis on prevention and extensive recycling.

Harokopio University is a leading Institution in Greece regarding waste prevention, through the knowledge and best practices developed during the EU LIFE program WASP-Tool (2011-2014). In the context of this program an office waste prevention strategy was developed and implemented in the University, together with related awareness raising events for students and staff.

Regarding recycling, HUA co-operates with Extended Producer Responsibility Systems (EPR) since their establishment for all relevant waste streams (batteries using special bins available in all buildings and waste of electrical and electronic equipment-WEEE) and it fully supports packaging recycling through the Municipal blue bins. Additionally, it has set-up separate collection for printed-paper in all its buildings, which is supported by the facility management companies, through special provisions. Moreover, recycling of printer cartridges is established, with special bins being available in all buildings.



Obviously, the University fully complies with all relevant legal requirements for the management of its waste.

We do apologize for not sufficiently detailing our environmental strategy in our internal evaluation report and underestimating its relative importance during our presentations to the Evaluation Committee. However, we hope that the clarifications provided above will be taken into account by the Committee for its final evaluation.

3.1.9 Internalization Strategy

Harokopio University has a very strong interest in internationalizing education and research, which underlines all aspects of its development strategy, as documented both in the Internal Evaluation Report (IER) and the additional material presented by the Rector during the evaluation visit and the presentation of the Deputy-Rector for Academic Affairs and International Relations provided to the Committee. More specifically:

- In the IER, par. B.3.1. “Mission and Aims” of the Institution, p. 14, the internationalization pillar of the University vision is clearly stated: «στ) Διευρύνει συνεχώς τη διεθνή του παρουσία και τη συνεργασία με εκπαιδευτικά ιδρύματα και ερευνητικούς φορείς στην ημεδαπή και την αλλοδαπή.»;
- In the IER, par. B.3.2, p. 17-19, the internationalization strategy is detailed. In summary, the strategy, which has been adopted at central administration level, lies on 3 pillars:
 - The ERASMUS program, which the University actively embraces and supports. As a result, more than 60 bilateral agreements are currently active, almost one per member of faculty; this places Harokopio University in the higher rank among Greek Universities in this index. In the period 2010-2015 the number of outgoing students has increased by 380% and that of the incoming by 1500%. Currently about 5% of our students have the opportunity to do part of their studies abroad, as ERASMUS students and we aim to increase this number to 10% by 2025



(see graph in the presentation of the Deputy-Rector for Academic Affairs and International Relations). Moreover, HUA actively supports the ERASMUS Placement program, with continuously increasing students' participation. Overall, the funding gained for mobility has increased by 300% in the above-mentioned period. Such achievements can only be the result of concerted action to implement the central strategy and vision of the University.

- The agreement and signature of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for various aspects of educational and research co-operation with Universities and Institutes that share our vision and offer the prospects for mutual benefit, based on the particular strengths and needs of Harokopio University. It is natural that MoU's are facilitated by individual contacts of our faculty, however they do fit and fulfill the main strategic goals of the University (which are encoded in the University Chart).
- There is a clear strategy and vision on the geographical areas the University actively seeks to expand its international activities, as it identifies the best options for its international activities. These include the Middle East, China and South-East Europe. IER p. 19:

“Επιδίωξη σύναψης συνεργασιών και με άλλα ιδρύματα. Ιδιαίτερο ενδιαφέρον παρουσιάζει για το Πανεπιστήμιο ο χώρος της Μέσης Ανατολής καθώς και της Κίνας, όπου υπάρχουν δυνατότητες περαιτέρω ανάπτυξης των συνεργασιών του Πανεπιστημίου. Στο μέλλον θα μπορούσε να αναπτυχθούν και συνεργασίες με το χώρο των Βαλκανίων, όπως π.χ. με τη Ρουμανία, με την οποία το Πανεπιστήμιο έχει ιστορικούς δεσμούς (στη χώρα αυτή έδρασε ο Παναγής Χαροκόπος) και έχει ήδη πραγματοποιήσει συνεργασίες.”

To further expand on this issue, we believe that examples of evidence of the international dimension in research performed at HUA is offered by faculty mobility/exchanges, numerous international collaborative research projects, active international inter-institutional agreements (MoUs) etc.



Examples of evidence of the international dimension in education is offered by the participation in the Erasmus+ inter-institutional agreements (>60 agreements), as well as the MSc program on Sustainable Tourism Management, which is being developed in English in co-operation with Sorbonne and will be open to EU and non-EU citizens, the Erasmus Mundus program Thelxinoe¹ in the field of Smart Cities operated jointly by 9 universities in two continents and the ERASMUS Intensive Program on Spatial Planning, to which HUA is one of the founding members and operates each year in a different European city, under the collaboration of 22 Universities. Examples of evidence of the international dimension in student life is offered by the HUA presence in the Erasmus student network and the portal “Study in Greece” offering support to foreign students in Greece, which is developed and supported by the University.

The University plans to further enhance internationalization through the following strategic steps:

- i. Implement additional MOU’s with a selected of Universities, especially in the above-mentioned areas, to enhance student and faculty exchanges,
- ii. develop joint curricula with international universities,
- iii. design international student programs at HUAA at the graduate and undergraduate level (although the law currently prohibits offering undergraduate courses in English), as well as,
- iv. design virtual classrooms and MOOCs.

The University has an ambitious internationalization strategy, although it realizes that the severe financial constraints of the country may delay its implementation. So far, the University’s internationalization efforts on academic programs are concentrated at the graduate studies level; according to the strategic planning, one graduate program will be offered in English from the academic year 2017-2018, while additional programs are under consideration.

Integration of foreign languages in program curricula (taught by the staff of the foreign languages) and the active assistance offered to students by the staff of the office

¹ <https://www.dit.HUAA.gr/index.php/el/research/projects/34-research/-/747-research-a-development-projects-6>



of Career Services on CV preparation and initiation of connections with professionals in HEI or industry, according to international standards and practices, contribute to the internationalization of the University.

So, we would like to note that the intense presence of internationalization activities in all relevant aspects of the University life and the continuous improvement of relevant metrics, especially during the adverse conditions created by the Greek financial crises, can only be the result of a clear internationalization vision and strategy of HUA and concerted action of both its administration and all its faculty.

3.1.10 Student Welfare Strategy

Regarding the student welfare strategy, we would like to emphasize the fact that our students receive all types of support offered by Greek Universities and in many cases at much high than standard quality, a view well shared by our students. More specifically:

a) Harokopio University does not own or operate a dormitory in its premises. Though, you should have in mind that the National Youth Foundation («Ινστιτούτο Νεότητας») is responsible for providing housing facilities to students in Attica region since 2005. All the dormitories constructed and owed by Universities in Athens, are currently operated by this Foundation and are managed to satisfy the needs of the student population of all the Universities in Attica region. As a result, all students apply directly to the National Youth Foundation to cover their housing needs.

Thus, all eligible students of our University are fully supported to satisfy their housing needs via the following two ways:

- By applying directly to the National Youth Foundation, which manages students' dormitories. These dormitories have a certain percentage of their rooms available for the students of Harokopio University. More specifically, as of end of May 2016, seventeen (17) students of Harokopio are living in the dormitories of the National Technical University of Athens campus and the dormitories of the University of Athens campus, in the Zografou region of Attica;



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- By applying directly to the Ministry of Education for the provision of a housing allowance. The housing allowance (€1,000 annually) is administered centrally by the Ministry of Finance, based on the family income and family status of the applying students. Please note that, up to the end of April 2016, Harokopio University was responsible for receiving the applications by its students for this allowance. However, now the applications of all students are handled centrally by an online system of the Ministry of Education.

Overall, we would like to point out that Harokopio University students enjoy at least the same level of support and rights regarding access to dormitories and housing benefits as all students in Universities of Athens, as selection criteria are defined by the State, while the University services actively assist students through their applications.

b) Our students' refectory in the building of Tavros area is one of the more attractive and well-run refectories in Athens, based on the outcome of students' satisfaction surveys. Additionally, due to the intense efforts of the University in this area, all eligible students have free meals. The University intensively monitors the quality of the service through its established 5-member Catering Monitoring committee, which is headed by the vice-rector of Students' Affairs and operates with the participation of 2 student-members. Moreover, members of both teaching and administration staff regularly eat in the refectory, to have a day-to-day monitoring view of the quality of meals offered to students, which is not common for most Universities in Athens.

Overall, we strongly believe that the refectory services offered to our students are well above average in Greece.

c) Scholarships to students are available not only through the Harokopio endowment, but also – for MSc students - through their program of studies. All MSc courses offered by Harokopio University provide scholarships to their students based on achievement. Moreover, every year a scholarship is awarded to the student achieving the higher graduation grade in each Department, to the memory of Prof. G. Karabatzos, covered by



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the funds of the Research Committee. In addition, HUA gives scholarships to MSc and PhD students who can receive support to present their work to international conferences or may assist in teaching work. Moreover, the students of Harokopio University are eligible to apply to all scholarship programs available centrally by various state and private funds in Greece and they are guided and assisted to that by the Secretariats and academic staff.

d) Regarding sports facilities, indeed the University does not own separate facilities. However, all students of HUA are fully eligible to visit and use the sports facilities of the Municipality of Kallithea, the town in which Harokopio University is located, through special agreements of the University.

Moreover, students' sports and arts activities and teams are fully supported by the University (including financial support from the Research Committee funds). More specifically, the following student teams are active in HUA:

- Football teams (5 on 5) for both men and women. These teams are using the playgrounds of the Municipality of Kallithea and are supported by coaches through our collaboration with the Municipality;
- Dancing team (traditional, Latin and tango), with teachers supported by HUA
- Movie club
- Acting group (guided by a professional director, supported by HUA)
- Photograph club

Every year the student teams participate and perform to the Students' Festival, organized at the end of May, by the Students' Union and supported by the University.

Overall, HUA is very proud of its students' welfare strategy and provisions, including also more intangible issues, such as the continuous uninterrupted university operation – allowing to the educational activities to be always completed in full and on program, which are well above standards in Greece. Therefore, we would like to kindly ask the Committee to reconsider this issue, taking into account the above mentioned



clarifications, while we do apologize for not being able to adequately highlight them during their visit.

3.2.2. Programs of Postgraduate Studies (2nd cycle)

HUA develops a range of highly attractive programs of Postgraduate Studies with fees. This enables HUA to provide its MSc student with high quality education, including lectures by prominent academics and professionals, from Greece and abroad. This strategy, with the active participation of HUA faculty and under their guidance and supervision can be further expanded to other innovative and modern fields of knowledge.

The infrastructure of the University is not considered a barrier to its expansion, on the opposite, it may consider as a strong benefit. HUA is making very good use of its infrastructure, providing a University that stays active for long hours; covering also the needs of employees, which form the main body of its MSc students.

Moreover, infrastructure needs may be covered through renting, as is the case for many Universities especially in Athens. Therefore, we strongly believe that infrastructure a human resources do not pose real barriers to the further development of high quality and widely attractive MSc programs in HUA, according to our development strategy.

3.2.3. Programs of Doctoral Studies (3rd cycle)

As stated in the internal evaluation report, p. 76-77, HUA places particular emphasis on Doctoral studies, which are currently embedded in the postgraduate studies program, according to the existing legal framework. Specific procedures for the selection and enrolment of PhD students are followed by all Departments and the interest for the calls is high, including, to a large extend, candidates from other Universities. The conditions for obtaining a Ph.D. are conforming to the ones defined by the European System of



Higher Education. A PhD student must obtain 180 ECTS during a minimal period of 6 semesters.

According to Law 4009/2011, doctoral studies form a structured 3rd cycle of studies, with courses to attend that cover from 30 to 60 ECTS. These provisions have been incorporated to the new Chart (Όργανισμός) of the University, as was a legal obligation, whose approval by the Ministry of Education is still pending (as is the case for all Greek Universities). Moreover, the Ministerial Decisions required for the operation of the new structure of the 3rd cycle of studies have not been adopted. As a result, doctoral studies in HUA, as in all Greek Universities, operate according to the previous legal framework.

In this context, HUA offers very attractive PhD opportunities, in innovative fields of study driven, and often funded, by the research activity of the faculty, based entirely on research. This means that our PhD students, to a large extent, cooperate with other researchers of HUA but also with other PhD students on research programs. HUA Departments also organize a yearly seminar where PhD students present their work in front of other PhD students and researchers, generating positive feedback for all students.

To be accepted in HUA, a PhD candidate should possess a Master's degree in a relevant field of knowledge. Moreover, the General Assembly of the Department may decide that the candidate should successfully attend specific courses, mainly from the MSc curricula offered by the University, if judged necessary based on her/his previous studies. In order to present their work for the final examination, PhD students should have at least two papers accepted in peer-review Journals. This structure of PhD studies is similar to that followed in most European countries, including the UK, Germany and France.

Overall, we strongly believe that we do offer very competitive and high quality programs of Doctoral Studies and we consider that attributing the drawbacks of the central legal framework to lack of initiative by the University does not pay justice to the hard work of our faculty and Administration, nor the results achieved.



5.1. Central Administration Services of the Institution

In this section we would kindly like to point out some of your statements in the draft evaluation report, which could possibly lead to a re-assessment of your grade.

- The Administrative officials of HUA are well aware of the Institution's strategy and objectives (page 18).
- Effective Administrative team (page 18).
- Good quality of the available support services in regard to libraries, information systems and infrastructure, as well as of welfare services.
- The services that support students (Library, Information Systems, DASTA, students' welfare services), as well as the administration service in each Department (Secretariat of Department) are subject to the systematic evaluation in the context of the internal QA system of the Institution under the overall responsibility of the QAU/MODIP. The EEC had the opportunity to realize the good quality of the available support services in regard to libraries, information systems and infrastructure, as well as of welfare services (page 30).

We sincerely hope that these remarks and additional data may help the EEC reconsider its statements on the points mentioned above so that a completely fair final edition of the report will be elaborated. Obviously, we do remain at your disposal for any further clarifications or questions.

We also appreciate and thank for this additional work in advance.

Prof. Katia Lasaridi

Deputy-Rector

of Academic Affairs and

International Relations

HAROKOPIO UNIVERSITY