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HELLENIC REPUBLIC

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HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE
AND ACCREDITATION AGENCY

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of Geography

Harokopio University of Athens

March 20, 2019

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Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση
Ευρωπαϊκό Κοινωνικό Ταμείο

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



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION
FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Report of the Panel appointed by the HQA to undertake the review of the Undergraduate Study Programme of **Geography** of the **Harokopio University of Athens** for the purposes of granting accreditation

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PART A: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE REVIEW

I. The Accreditation Panel

The Panel responsible for the Accreditation Review of the Undergraduate Study Programme “Geography” of the Harokopio University of Athens comprised the following three (3) members, drawn from the HQA Register, in accordance with the Law 4009/2011:

1. Professor Emerita **Helen Couclelis** (Chair)
University of California, Santa Barbara, USA
2. Professor and Dean **Peggy Agouris**
George Mason University, USA
3. Professor **Michael Tsimplis**
City University of Hong Kong

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

The current Panel for the accreditation review of the undergraduate program in Geography in the Department of Geography of Harokopio University of Athens was formed in February 2019 and received several relevant documents related to the program via Dropbox and e-mail that included the following:

- Guidelines for accreditation
- Guidelines for the accreditation panel (P12)
- Mapping Grid (P13)
- Template for the accreditation panel (P14)
- Standards for quality accreditation for undergraduate programs
- External evaluation report from 2013
- Summary of external accreditation (in Greek)
- Quality indicators 2015-2016, 2016-2017 (in Greek)
- Annual internal report 2016-2017 (in Greek)
- Project report and evaluation of practical exercise for 2017-2018 (in Greek)
- Academic accreditation proposal (July 2018, in Greek) accompanied by the following:
 - Quality policy
 - Study guide
 - Regulation of the undergraduate program
 - Regulation of the practical exercise
 - Regulation of diploma thesis
 - Course outlines
 - Strategic plan
 - Goals
 - Course evaluation form template (in Greek)
 - Minutes from MODIP meetings
 - Annual internal report 2014-2016, 2016-2017
 - Final Report 2015-2016, 2016-2017

The site visit took place on March 11 and 12, 2019. During the site visit the Panel members had the opportunity to tour the campus and visit its various facilities. The Panel also met with the following:

- Rector of the institution
- Deputy rector of Academic Affairs and International Relations, and head of MODIP
- Head of Department of Geography

- Deputy rector of Student Affairs and Administration
- Representatives of OMEA and MODIP
- Graduates of the program
- Employers and partners
- Faculty
- Current students

Overall, the Panel had two days of meetings with all major stakeholders and an extensive tour of the facilities. The response and participation from all stakeholders were enthusiastic.

III. Study Programme Profile

The Department of Geography of Harokopio University of Athens is an unusual department in an unusual university. It was founded in 1999 as one of only two geography departments in Greece. It is also unusual in that it promptly achieved a high level of excellence in teaching and research, while catering to a population of students who include some of the lowest-scoring in the annual nation-wide university entrance examinations («Πανελλήνιες»).

The Harokopio University itself is, in many respects, a curiosity among Greek universities. Situated in the area of Kallithea in Athens, it became part of the Hellenic university system in 1990, though it had existed since 1929 as an educational institution founded by Panagis Harokopos, a national benefactor. Beyond Geography, the University is home to only three other departments: those of Home Economics and Ecology, of Nutrition and Dietetics, and of Informatics and Telematics, which was added in 2006.

Surrounded by walls and vegetation that largely seclude it from view, the original campus surprises the first-time visitor by the beauty of its well-maintained grounds and the impeccable condition of its attractive main buildings. Along with the quality of the instruction and services it provides to its students, Harokopio remains a hidden jewel among Greek universities, one that is greatly appreciated by those who learn and work there.

The Department of Geography demonstrates the intellectual and practical value of an academic discipline that is barely known or understood in Greece, though familiar and highly regarded elsewhere. Its scientific range is vast, as it connects with many other disciplines in the natural and social sciences and is also at the forefront of technological developments. To a large extent, its strength lies in its ability to bring together aspects from any number of other sciences, based on the spatial perspective – that is, it seeks to answer the ‘where’, ‘why there’, ‘how far’ ‘next to what’, ‘where next’, etc. sorts of questions. Examples of critical application areas to which the discipline of geography has much to contribute include natural disasters, climate change, the loss of natural habitats, globalization, migration, transportation, urban growth and change, urban and regional planning, and urban spatial inequality.

With a current core faculty of 17 members, the Department of Geography strives to maintain a program of studies at the cutting edge of the discipline, a goal which is partly achieved at the undergraduate level by combining teaching and research. Instruction is geared towards both scientific knowledge and applicable skills in the following four broad areas:

- Physical geography (geomorphology, hydrology, climatology, oceanography)
- Human geography (economic, political, social, cultural, historical, and population geography)
- Spatial planning and management (urban planning and regional development, environmental management, etc.)
- Geoinformatics (Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Global Positioning Systems (GPS), remote sensing, digital cartography, etc.)

The 4-year curriculum consists of required courses in these four areas and offers a range of elective courses in the last three semesters that allow students to further pursue their own academic interests and support their individual plans for their professional futures. In their final

year students are expected to complete a research project, though they have the option to substitute additional classes for it. The 4-year course of studies culminates with the awarding of a Diploma that includes the grades earned by the student, and which is usually accompanied by a Supplement that lists the student's achievements over and above the units required for graduation. These may include activities strongly encouraged by the Department, such as classes successfully completed at some foreign university through the ERASMUS program, or internships in the private or public sector or at an NGO.

Thus far the Department of Geography has been highly successful in graduating students who are immediately employable or are mature enough for post-graduate studies in Greece or abroad. This is all the more remarkable considering that the students it admits have for the most part weak entry grades due to the Department's location at one of the least well-known small universities in the country, and to the obscurity (in Greece) of geography as an academic discipline. This success is based on the dedication of both faculty and staff to the Department's mission, the comfortable informal relationships between faculty and students, the quality of the physical, technical and human support infrastructure, and the relevance and interest of the study program itself.

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

Principle 1: Academic Unit Policy for Quality Assurance

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD APPLY A QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY AS PART OF THEIR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT. THIS POLICY SHOULD EXPAND AND BE AIMED (WITH THE COLLABORATION OF EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS) AT ALL INSTITUTION'S AREAS OF ACTIVITY, AND PARTICULARLY AT THE FULFILMENT OF QUALITY REQUIREMENTS OF UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES. THIS POLICY SHOULD BE PUBLISHED AND IMPLEMENTED BY ALL STAKEHOLDERS.

The quality assurance policy of the academic unit is in line with the Institutional policy on quality, and is included in a published statement that is implemented by all stakeholders. It focuses on the achievement of special objectives related to the quality assurance of study programmes offered by the academic unit.

The quality policy statement of the academic unit includes its commitment to implement a quality policy that will promote the academic profile and orientation of the programme, its purpose and field of study; it will realise the programme's strategic goals and it will determine the means and ways for attaining them; it will implement the appropriate quality procedures, aiming at the programme's continuous improvement.

In particular, in order to carry out this policy, the academic unit commits itself to put into practice quality procedures that will demonstrate:

- a) the suitability of the structure and organization of the curriculum;*
- b) the pursuit of learning outcomes and qualifications in accordance with the European and the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education;*
- c) the promotion of the quality and effectiveness of teaching;*
- d) the appropriateness of the qualifications of the teaching staff;*
- e) the enhancement of the quality and quantity of the research output among faculty members of the academic unit;*
- f) ways for linking teaching and research;*
- g) the level of demand for qualifications acquired by graduates, in the labour market;*
- h) the quality of support services such as the administrative services, the Library, and the student welfare office;*
- i) the conduct of an annual review and an internal audit of the quality assurance system of the undergraduate programme(s) offered, as well as the collaboration of the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) with the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU);*

Study Programme compliance

On the basis of the written evidence and the outcomes of the site visit, the Panel assesses the Department of Geography as being fully compliant with respect to this principle.

The Department offers a competently developed and run multifaceted undergraduate program of studies, which has been improved by actions taken in response to the external evaluation of 2013. The strategic goals and quality monitoring policy of Harokopio University to which this Department belong are in line with the ADIP's Quality Assurance (QA). The University's policy was developed through the collaboration of MODIP with the Department's OMEA, and aims at

ensuring the continuing improvement of the quality of the curriculum and of the educational outcomes of the undergraduate Geography program.

The Department's program of studies includes practical work, laboratories, internships, and research projects that help develop the students' skills and capabilities, in addition to enabling them to acquire the relevant scientific knowledge within practical as well as theoretical contexts. The program consists of a core set of required courses covering the major branches of geography, and a number of electives allowing students to develop some degree of specialization in accordance with their skills and interests, so as to enter the job market equipped with distinct qualifications. The outline of the program of studies and teaching methodology are settled for the next five years, with small adjustments and modifications planned aiming to further improve quality. All course documents are developed on the basis of learning outcomes and qualifications, in accordance with the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education. However, there is not always a clear link between learning outcomes and the ways these are assessed.

The Panel was shown documents evidencing the annual review of the undergraduate program undertaken by the OMEA and MODIP, as well as the values for the past three years of the various metrics developed as part of the quality assurance system. It is evident that the Department engages in regular objective assessment of the quality of its undergraduate degree.

Within this positive context, a number of mechanisms and procedures have been adopted and are implemented at the degree and course levels. The Panel confirms that all stakeholders that it met with (students, faculty members, management, and employers of students), were aware of the quality assurance policy and expressly in support of it, for a variety of reasons.

The employers that the Panel met praised the breadth of the students' knowledge and their skills, and believe that the way the educational objectives are achieved also cultivates mutual respect, eagerness to learn, and a positive attitude to problem solving through teamwork and collaboration. This was attributed by the students to the existing very good relations between students and teaching staff, which are based on open communication and transparency in a friendly and supportive environment.

Students also appreciate the culture of quality being promoted and the value this adds to their degrees, as well as the Department's emphasis on the marketable skills of geography and its connections with the employment market. The Department is also active in the employment market for the purpose of protecting the interests of its graduates, who, despite having the appropriate academic and practical skills, are often disadvantaged by the existing protectionist professional environment that favors degrees from specific disciplines. This activity does not fall within the scope of this accreditation, but is mentioned here because it underpins a feeling of unfairness evident among faculty members, students and graduates. That state of affairs also restricts the ability of the Department to flourish, as it is seen as offering similar skills but not equal job opportunities with those privileged by established professional rights.

Panel judgement

Principle 1: Institution policy for Quality Assurance	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The Panel recommends that the Department of Geography:

1. Continue the implementation of the recommendations of the 2013 report, including those concerning the recognition of teaching excellence;
2. Expand the use of annual variations data on academic quality in order to better understand the “natural” range of selected metrics, and avoid the emergence of unanticipated problematic situations.

Principle 2: Design and Approval of Programmes

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD DEVELOP THEIR 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.

Academic units develop their programmes following a well-defined procedure. The academic profile 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 National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education are described at this stage. The approval or revision process for programmes includes a check of compliance with the basic requirements described in the Standards, on behalf of the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU).

Furthermore, the programme design should take into consideration the following:

- *the Institutional strategy*
- *the active participation of students*
- *the experience of external stakeholders from the labour market*
- *the smooth progression of students throughout the stages of the programme*
- *the anticipated student workload according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System*
- *the option to provide work experience to the students*
- *the linking of teaching and research*
- *the relevant regulatory framework and the official procedure for the approval of the programme by the Institution.*

Study Programme compliance

The undergraduate program offered by the Department of Geography complies fully with the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education as described at this stage. Also, the system for revision and compliance includes several stages and a check of compliance with the basic requirements described in the Standards, on behalf of the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU). The procedure for approving changes in courses appears overly formalized, and it would probably help the Department to quickly improve its educational output if the procedure were simplified by reducing the number of steps involved.

Student suggestions are taken into account in considering changes in the academic program, through the student representative as well as through formal and informal ways of communicating ideas and wishes to course leaders and the Department Head. Employers and graduates are also consulted and provide feedback on both the desired student skills and the overall expected professional approach and ethos of the students. Employers and graduates alike have great respect for the quality procedures of the Department and feel that their recommendations are welcomed and acted upon.

Student workload is measured on the basis of study hours and in accordance to the ECTS system. There was no indication that particular courses were demanding unreasonable hours of work. The one aspect where differentiation between courses on the basis on effort was identified concerned the fact that some instructors were judged more demanding ('strict') than others. Even so, students appeared happy with the grades they achieved. It thus appears that this issue does not affect the quality of the educational process, except perhaps in one respect, mentioned by one student: that the 'strictness' reputation of optional courses may limit the choices of certain students. The Panel recommends that for quality assurance purposes, this vague notion of 'strictness' be dealt with, e.g. by demonstrating the parity in grades among courses, and by warning the students against acting on the basis of strictness rumors. The Department is aware of this problem and is already trying to deal with it.

A desirable improvement to the study guides would be to expressly present academic integrity and honesty as one of the basic principles of the program, as opposed to the current approach, which is to threaten with the potential legal consequences of copyright and intellectual rights breaches. This last issue is perhaps better handled at the University level, but could certainly be initiated by the Department.

Panel judgement

Principle 2: Design and Approval of Programmes	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The Panel recommends that the Department of Geography:

1. Formalize and document their academic integrity/honesty guidelines and policies;
2. Simplify the process for effecting changes in courses;
3. Continue institutional efforts to facilitate the reduction of the number of students who do not make sufficient progress with their studies;
4. Tackle and resolve the issues regarding courses that are considered by students to be 'stricter' than average.

Principle 3: Student-Centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE 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.

Student-centred learning and teaching plays an important role in stimulating students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in the learning process. The above entail continuous consideration of the programme's delivery and the assessment of the related outcomes.

The student-centred learning and teaching process

- *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 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.*

In addition :

- *the academic staff are familiar with the existing examination system and methods and are supported in developing their own skills in this field;*
- *the assessment criteria and methods are published in advance;*
- *the assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary is linked to advice on the learning process;*
- *student assessment is conducted by more than one examiner, where possible;*
- *the regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances*
- *assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures;*
- *a formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*

Study Programme compliance

The Department is fully compliant with the student-centered learning and teaching principle. The students' motivation and engagement with the learning process are supported by the observations outlined below. They were also brought clearly into focus by the comments made by external stakeholders who have hired students as interns or employees, and by the Panel's interaction with the students, who were clearly fascinated by geography, inspired by their teachers, and convinced about the practical value of developing their skills and knowledge.

The Department has a clearly expressed, student-centered learning and teaching focus, evidenced by the following aspects of the program:

- The participation of student representatives in the development, modification and evolution of courses;
- The program of studies that consists of a core set of required courses covering most major aspects of geography, and an equally important component of elective courses enabling students to develop specializations in accordance with their skills and interests, and to enter the job market equipped with distinct qualifications;
- The facilitation of obtaining an internship for all students who desire one, with the support of commercial and public-sector stakeholders of the students' choice;
- The familiarization with various state-of-the-art instruments used in the collection, analysis, and management of data;
- The written research project that helps develop analytical and synthetic skills in any area of interest to the student;
- The field work, that strengthens student initiative, collaboration, and problem-solving skills;
- The possibility for students to attend courses of interest before deciding on their final selections, including courses offered by other Departments of the University;
- The option to attend studies at a foreign university under one of the exchange programs with Harokopio's many partner universities;
- The development of student's initiative, self-learning, and confidence by engaging them in practical work and projects in several undergraduate courses.

As evidenced by the above list, the Department uses different modes of knowledge delivery and a variety of pedagogical methods, including team work and independent research.

The program is evaluated on a course-by-course basis using a number of methods, such as:

- Statistical analysis of student performance and graduation data;
- Formal assessment of teaching performance through student surveys;
- Procedures for dealing with students' complaints.

Significant complementary ways of assessing the last two points are provided through informal avenues, mostly based on the generally good relationships between staff and students, and the availability of the Department Head to listen to students.

The Panel inquired specifically about the use of standardized student evaluations through approved questionnaires that are analyzed by the OMEA and the MODIP of the University. We heard comments on this issue from the members of MODIP and OMEA, from a group of faculty members not participating in the aforementioned committees, and from the students that met with the Panel. It is the view of the Panel that the use of standardized questionnaires in their current form is deficient and unreliable.

The members of MODIP and OMEA were also very much aware of the difficulties in using such evaluations in view of the still small number of student responses being received. An attempt to use hard copies to be completed in the classroom (a recommendation of the 2013 panel) was unsuccessful. The new electronic way of collecting data has partly improved the situation, though only averages are released. Generally, there is uneasiness over making individual instructor performances based on the collected feedback available to other departmental colleagues. Yet teaching quality assessment through questionnaires should not be based solely on the average response, but also needs to ensure that no courses fall below some minimum level of satisfaction. These are metrics that need to be developed and adopted by the MODIP and OMEA of the institution. The Panel is aware of the efforts made by OMEA and the Department to implement the use of formal feedback from students as a metric and method for quality control. The Department faculty does have additional reservations regarding the value of the questionnaires in view of the low response rates, the fact that these are completed (in some cases) after grades were released to the students, and the fact that the use of electronic media for the completion of forms allowed students who might not have attended a class to complete such forms.

In the absence of more detailed metrics, there are informal intervention methods that have been successfully employed in helping resolve teaching quality issues. These include:

- Finding ad hoc solutions to potentially problematic aspects of a course, such as relating to a recommended textbook or type of examination, or to content overlaps with other courses;
- Having confidential discussions take place about- say - issues of punctuality or performance between the Department Head and the relevant faculty member;
- Dealing with underperforming instructors by enabling external teaching of courses, or by launching informal investigations.

These ways of dealing with problems were considered mostly adequate by the students, who confirmed that the Department has been very responsive to criticisms and complaints. This made them feel comfortable to express their concerns to the relevant lecturers but also directly to the Department Head. The existence of parallel mechanisms to resolve problems, and the view that that the questionnaires are time-consuming partly explain the low response rates. Personal and even political reasons for students boycotting specific lecturers were also mentioned.

There are various ways through which the Department deals with student complaints more generally, and the students are aware of their options. Beyond the informal discussions with faculty and talking with the Department Head, there are the student representatives, the faculty advisor, and the possibility for formal engagement of discrimination procedures. There is, apparently, no method of formally recording complaints, so statistics were not available. However, the student representative confirmed that for this academic year so far, she has not been made aware of any complaints, while the other students and the Department Head confirmed that minor issues that have arisen on occasion have been dealt with informally.

The informal methods employed by the Department, which rely to the generally good relationship between students and staff and the direct access to the Department Head,

currently provide the real basis for resolving student complaints. How these informal methods might be effectively coupled with some form of questionnaires is a challenge that needs to be addressed. The Department may need to experiment with developing supplementary methods for assessing teaching quality, including making the completion of the questionnaires more attractive to students by, for example, adding some bonus points to the class grade to reward questionnaire completion without breaching the survey's anonymity.

The Department's variety of examination methods can accommodate several types of disabilities, and the program of studies attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths. Examination papers are graded by only one examiner but with the option for the student to question his/her grade, and in situations of successive failures, the option for a panel of faculty not including the course instructor to examine the aggrieved student. To prevent accusations of bias, it might also be useful to have an additional grader inspect the failing and the highest-graded papers in each exam. Students however feel that their efforts are rewarded and that their grades reflect their effort level, and unanimously stated that they were happy with the grading system. With respect to project work, the possibility of discussing a draft and make a class presentation in some courses were thought to be good ways of improving the learning experience as well as the chances for a good grade.

Panel judgement

Principle 3: Student- centred Learning, Teaching an Assessment	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The panel recommends that the Department of Geography:

1. Consider improved alternative and innovative methods for assessing teaching quality and teaching quality indices
2. Consider developing a moderation system for grading focusing on fails and very high grades, in order to prevent impressions of bias among students
3. Consider developing a recording system for student complaints
4. Develop a method for resolving complaints against the Department Head, whose role in resolving conflicts between students and faculty members presents a conflict of interest

Principle 4: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD DEVELOP AND APPLY PUBLISHED REGULATIONS COVERING ALL ASPECTS AND PHASES OF STUDIES (ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION).

Institutions and academic units need to put in place both processes and tools to collect, manage and act on information regarding student progression.

Procedures concerning the award and recognition of higher education degrees, the duration of studies, rules ensuring students progression, terms and conditions for student mobility should be based on the institutional study regulations. Appropriate recognition procedures rely on institutional practice for recognition of credits among various European academic departments and Institutions, in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

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).

Study Programme compliance

Due to its small size and the lack of recognition of the discipline of Geography in Greece, the Department is very seldom among the top choices of the students it admits. Furthermore, a governmental social policy results in equal or even larger numbers of lower-performing students being admitted as transfers, over and above those that the Department has already accepted from among the applicants. As a result, the Department's entering student body includes some of the weaker performers at the annual state-wide university entrance examinations.

The Panel was very positively impressed with the way the Department manages to turn around the academic futures of its students, and to graduate so many of them after four years with marketable skills, a solid degree, and optimism regarding their professional futures. This is achieved, among other things, by intellectually motivating the students and also through the establishment of comprehensive regulations covering all aspects of a student's progression through the program, from admission to final degree. Necessary academic and practical skills are imparted early on, flexibility is provided to allow students to search and find the course of study most suitable to their interests, student progression through the program is closely monitored at each step, and individual advice and support by faculty and staff is freely available. Participation in the ERASMUS program and other academic exchange opportunities are encouraged and facilitated by a dedicated office on campus. Thorough Diploma Supplements highlight student achievements over and above the units required for graduation.

Most students progress well through the program, and the metrics on graduation rates are slowly improving. But a significant number of students remain registered for unreasonable periods of time. The resolution of this problem is not, however, within the powers of the Department or the University. The Panel believes that the Department does its best within the existing legislative constraints to improve its metrics in this respect.

The Department has succeeded in implementing effective ways of integrating teaching and research, and in imparting a sense of professional comportment and ethics. Students described how they are required from early on to read research papers and to extract information from these, to be used in their own research projects and in the development of their research skills. Information from the published literature can be combined with data-collecting observation stations belonging to the Department. However, the Panel noted that the program does not presently address the rapidly rising and spreading use of social media as sources of types of information not available elsewhere. Knowing how to find and use such information constitutes a new skill that would enhance the employment opportunities for growing numbers of the Department's graduates. While this aspect does not appear to be included in the program improvement plans for the next few years, the Department could begin experimenting with introducing the collection and analysis of crowd-sourced and other such new forms of data, without waiting for the next review cycle.

In summary, the Panel commends the way the program of studies is developed, and considers the coupling of the various subfields of geography as exemplary and appropriate for the development of skilled scientists, entering the job market with a valuable degree and with the intellectual and ethical resources necessary for successful careers.

Panel judgement

Principle 4: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The Panel's opinion is that the Department of Geography does an excellent job in ensuring that entering students are educated well, are supported in many ways, academically and otherwise, and graduate equipped with solid scientific knowledge and marketable professional skills. It is recommended that the Department:

1. Continue to maintain data that track the students' engagement in their studies as well as rates of attrition, time to graduation, and post-graduation occupations.
2. Consider developing instruction on methods for collecting, analyzing and using information from social media (crowd-sourced and other), as part of the long-term commitment of their undergraduate program to providing an array of relevant skills.

Principle 5: Teaching Staff

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ASSURE THEMSELVES OF THE QUALIFICATIONS AND COMPETENCE OF THE TEACHING STAFF. THEY SHOULD APPLY FAIR AND TRANSPARENT PROCESSES FOR THE RECRUITMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEACHING STAFF.

The Institutions and their academic units have a major responsibility as to the standard of their teaching staff providing them with a supportive environment that promotes the advancement of their scientific work. In particular, 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 recognize 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;*

Study Programme compliance

The Department's teaching staff of 17 includes a number of internationally renowned senior members as well as highly promising younger scholars with growing reputations in their areas of expertise. The Department strongly supports the professional development of all its faculty members, encouraging and facilitating conference participations and sabbaticals within Greece and well beyond. There seems to be considerable positive synergy between scholarly activity and the quality of teaching in the Department, with the latest developments in specific subfields of geography informing instruction and helping to bring up to date the materials in older textbooks. Students are exposed at the outset to novel geographical technologies and concepts, allowing them to appreciate early on the practical value of this much misunderstood discipline.

Instruction on a broad variety of subjects is delivered by these relatively few faculty members who have differing training and educational experiences, on which they draw in order to promote the quality and effectiveness of their teaching. The qualifications of the teaching staff are formally and substantially appropriate, though new appointees are often inexperienced. (It should be noted that not only new staff may be experiencing problems with teaching.) In discussing the support provided to newly or temporarily appointed staff, it became clear that several informal ways of assisting newcomers in developing their teaching skills and in meeting their teaching obligations already exist. However, the legal requirement for autonomous teaching restricts the development of formal support methods within the Department and the University. Informal peer observation of new teaching staff in a classroom setting, and conversely, observation of more experienced teachers by new teaching staff, can support the improvement of teaching effectiveness and satisfaction. Such arrangements can be very effective as long as they are voluntary for the parties involved.

One issue that the Department has been struggling with (which may actually be an unsolved problem at universities anywhere) is how to assess the quality of a faculty member's teaching. The usual reliance on student evaluations at the end of a course is known to be insufficient and flawed for a number of reasons, and certain complementary tools and approaches have been proposed.

It thus appears that the Department needs to develop a multi-pronged approach to teaching evaluation, aimed at testing at the same time the instructional efficiency of faculty members and the relevance of course content from the students' perspective, and at encouraging students to fill out the questionnaires. Regarding the latter, measures that might be considered include: giving points to students who respond; making the phrasing of questionnaires more accessible, and including some items more directly relevant to individual students' interests; shortening or simplifying the questionnaires; requesting input on questionnaire contents from students; helping students understand the purpose of questionnaires and their value to them and to the quality of their education; and more generally, finding ways that might increase the interest of course evaluation to students, and lessen the chore of completing the evaluation instrument.

The Department may also require a separate, signed certification from each student registered in the class to the effect that they did/did not/did not need to discuss with any faculty member(s) problems regarding the course being evaluated. Additionally, teaching faculty may be requested to provide brief self-evaluations for each course taught, so as to help clarify what they feel have been the positive and not-so-positive aspects of their experience with teaching the particular class. Connecting the faculty and student perspectives on a given course might provide surprisingly helpful insights.

Finally, the Panel hopes that eventually, ADIP will be able to work with universities towards developing course evaluation systems adapted to each department's special circumstances. Part of this collaboration could be based on the development of seminars on teaching theory and methods.

The issue of course evaluation in the context of the Department's basic philosophy and structure is discussed at length under *Principle 3: Student-Centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment*.

Panel judgement

Principle 5: Teaching Staff	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The panel recommends that the Department of Geography:

1. Develop course evaluation instruments aimed at testing teaching efficiency and course quality in an integrated manner, and that help compare the instructor and student perspectives on a given course.
2. Discuss with ADIP the possibility of the Agency developing and offering seminars on instructional theory and methods.

Principle 6: Learning Resources and Student Support

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE ADEQUATE FUNDING TO COVER 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 funding and means to support learning and academic activity in general, so that they can offer to students the best possible level of studies. The above means could include facilities such as libraries, study rooms, educational and scientific equipment, information and communications services, support or 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 or international students, students with disabilities) and 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. However, the internal quality assurance ensures that all resources are appropriate, adequate, and accessible, and that students are informed about the services available to them.

In delivering support services the role of support and administrative staff is crucial and therefore they need to be qualified and have opportunities to develop their competences.

Study Programme compliance

The core of the Department's strength as an academic institution undoubtedly lies in its human resources, consisting of 17 internationally active faculty members, 6 lecturers, and 2 staff members. Despite considerable involvement in research and publications, all faculty members are fully active in teaching, often above the call of duty. For example, while the required teaching load is 2 classes (6 hours) per week, faculty members are available additional hours to supervise student projects and post-graduate work. When, on occasion, certain classes are over-subscribed, instructors split these in two or three sections that they then teach separately. They are also willing to hear student questions and help with problems outside their official office hours. In our interviews with students, the availability and approachability of the Department's faculty were mentioned repeatedly as a major positive factor in their studies. The comfortable, non-threatening atmosphere thus created between students and faculty also greatly facilitates student-centered learning and initiative.

Next to the quality of the teaching staff, the Harokopio campus itself is clearly a major resource for the Department and its students. The impeccable condition of the attractive buildings and instructional spaces contrasts very favorably with those of other universities in the wider Athens region, and is highly appreciated by the students, who also cite it as a factor in their decision to join the Department. The Panel also visited the teaching laboratories and other specialized areas used by students, and in all cases found them at least satisfactory and often excellent as to their technological equipment and spatial organization. The computational facilities are state-of-the

art for undergraduate needs in both study and communication, and the constantly updated departmental website appears to enjoy the students' full approval. Finally, the new and growing University library deserves a special mention for its enterprising staff, its long hours of operation, and its support of geographical-themed collections, e.g. of Atlases and rare maps.

Next to visiting the physical facilities, the Panel also met with departmental and University staff providing diverse services to students. Beyond the informal support provided by the faculty, the two Geography administrative staff members are the first points of contact for students for issues relating to their studies, but also for personal issues. Student services from lodging to psychological support, and from ERASMUS applications to helping with internship opportunities, are provided by a campus-wide office.

Panel judgement

Principle 6: Learning Resources and Student Support	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The Panel commends the Department of Geography for their facilities, resources and support they provide to their students, and strongly encourages the Department to continue on the same path to excellence.

Principle 7: Information Management

INSTITUTIONS 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.

Institutions are expected to establish and operate an information system for the management and monitoring of data concerning students, teaching staff, course structure and organisation, teaching and provision of services to students as well as to the academic community.

Reliable data is essential for accurate information and for decision making, as well as for identifying areas of smooth operation and areas for improvement. Effective procedures for collecting and analysing information on study programmes and other activities feed data into the internal system of quality assurance.

The information gathered depends, to some extent, on the type and mission of the Institution. The following are of interest:

- *key performance indicators*
- *student population profile*
- *student progression, success and drop-out rates*
- *student satisfaction with their programme(s)*
- *availability of learning resources and student support*
- *career paths of graduates*

A number of methods may be used for collecting information. It is important that students and staff are involved in providing and analyzing information and planning follow-up activities.

Study Programme compliance

It is the opinion of this Panel that the Department of Geography is doing an excellent job in collecting, maintaining, organizing and analyzing a variety of indicators and data related to their program of study and student performance.

More specifically, practically all program guides and regulations are available and openly accessible online, most of them also in hardcopy as well. Repositories of course materials and theses, and the use of a variety of electronic platforms and applications facilitate processes significantly, reduce bureaucracy, and improve transparency and accountability. The Department maintains a list of indicators which are updated annually and tracks the profile of the student population, and the performance and progress of each student.

Furthermore, the concepts of «φοιτητολόγιο», and «παράρτημα πτυχίου» capture a significant set of information elements that contribute to the formation of a holistic view of student performance on a collective as well as individual basis. The Department of Geography also gathers information via questionnaires that are completed by their students to capture data related to student satisfaction with any aspect of their studies, including their instructors, course content, and available support services, as well as facilities and available resources. One important aspect that is currently not being monitored the employment status of the

Department’s graduates, including their fields of employment, principal skills used, and, where possible, the degree of satisfaction and comments of their employers. It is very important that the Department of Geography make every effort to collect data related to the employment of their graduates (to the degree possible), and based on this data, to populate indicators that will capture the career paths of their graduates, their fields of employment and the satisfaction of employers with respect to the skills of the graduates of the Department, and their capabilities to perform the tasks they were hired to do.

It is also recommended that the annually collected data are used to derive, visualize and analyze multi-year trends regarding student population, performance, satisfaction and employment.

Panel judgement

Principle 7: Information Management	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The Panel recommends that the Department:

1. Track the employment or other occupation of their graduates, and derive indicators measuring the success of the study program in educating a high-quality workforce.
2. Use the annually collected data to study multi-year trends in all critical aspects of its educational efforts.

Principle 8: Public Information

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD PUBLISH INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR TEACHING AND ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES WHICH IS CLEAR, ACCURATE, OBJECTIVE, UP-TO-DATE AND READILY ACCESSIBLE.

Information on Institution's activities is useful for prospective and current students, graduates, other stakeholders and the public.

Therefore, institutions and their academic units provide information about their activities, including the programmes they offer, the intended learning outcomes, the qualifications awarded, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to their students, as well as graduate employment information.

Study Programme compliance

Since the last cycle of evaluation, the Department of Geography has made a significant effort to improve, update and expand its website and to ensure that it is current, useful, and accurate regarding the information that it contains. The Panel feels that the website has reached a very satisfactory level of effectiveness in providing public access to programmatic information, as well as outlining departmental and institutional processes, opportunities and other information relevant to their students and faculty members.

Panel judgement

Principle 8: Public Information	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The Panel's recommendation is for the Department of Geography to ensure that its public portal of information remains up-to-date, easy to access and navigate, and comprehensive, so that students, faculty and all stakeholders and interested parties in general have easy and complete access to accurate information about the programs, procedures, achievements and opportunities related to the Department and the University.

Principle 9: On-going Monitoring and Periodic Internal Review of Programmes

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE IN PLACE AN INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM FOR THE AUDIT AND ANNUAL INTERNAL REVIEW OF THEIR 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 study programmes aim to maintain the level of educational provision and to create 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. Revised programme specifications are published.

Study Programme compliance

As regulated by law, the Department of Geography relies on two committees, OMEA (departmental) and MODIP (institutional), to ensure that there are internal mechanisms and processes to safeguard the quality of studies and level of knowledge that is provided to their students. As mentioned in previous sections, the Department relies on four questionnaires and census forms to capture a variety of data that are subsequently used for their comprehensive annual departmental self-evaluation report. In addition, there is an academic report that is produced at the end of each academic year and comprises information on academic development, research activity and future directions for the Department. All the above are discussed and evaluated during the departmental general assembly, which collectively decides on scientific content updates, programmatic revisions and other corrective actions as needed.

As a result, the Panel judges that the Department of Geography has established a solid, multilayered and transparent quality assurance system that regularly monitors, updates and improves the Department's scientific profile and output, and ensures that their students receive high quality scientific preparation and educational experience.

However, it is not very clear how the Department regularly engages the external scientific and professional community to ensure that its programs are aligned with current and anticipated societal needs, and that their graduates are workforce-ready with all the desirable skills sought by employers. Therefore, it is recommended that the Department seek external input on a regular basis through a more formalized process that could include, for instance, committees comprising stakeholder representatives as well as international experts in fundamental and emerging fields relevant to Geography.

It is also highly advisable for the Department of Geography to establish a group of carefully selected international peer departments, as well as a group of aspirational departments of high quality that will be used to track progress and develop new directions, and strategic goals towards outcomes that are competitive and attractive on a global scale.

Panel judgement

Principle 9: On-going Monitoring and Periodic Internal Review of Programmes	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The Panel recommends that the Department:

1. Regularly seek input from the scientific and professional community, to ensure that its programs are aligned with current and anticipated societal needs, and that its graduates have the skills required for today's job market, and the flexibility to update these skills for tomorrow's requirements.
2. Establish an international network of high-quality cognate departments to help it stay at the forefront of scientific and technical developments in relevant areas of geography.

Principle 10: Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programmes

PROGRAMMES SHOULD REGULARLY UNDERGO EVALUATION BY COMMITTEES OF EXTERNAL EXPERTS SET BY HQA, AIMING AT ACCREDITATION. THE TERM OF VALIDITY OF THE ACCREDITATION IS DETERMINED BY HQA.

HQA is responsible for administrating the programme accreditation process which is realised as an external evaluation procedure, and implemented by a committee of independent experts. HQA grants accreditation of programmes, 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 template's requirements, and as a catalyst for improvement, while opening new perspectives towards the international standing of the awarded degrees.

Both academic units and institutions participate in the regular external quality assurance process, while respecting the requirements of the legislative framework in which they operate.

The quality assurance, in this case the accreditation, is an on-going process that does not end with the external feedback, or report or its follow-up process within the Institution. Therefore, Institutions and their academic units ensure that the progress made since the last external quality assurance activity is taken into consideration when preparing for the next one.

Study Programme compliance

The Panel believes that the Department of Geography in its entirety has embraced and is very much invested in the external evaluation process established and managed by HQA. This was indicated by the Department's compliance to previous recommendations and its comprehensive written response, but also became abundantly clear during the Panel's site visit.

The Department's faculty, staff and students repeatedly stated that they view the evaluation process not as an obligation but as highly beneficial for the growth of their Department and for the improvement of their vision, strategic goals, learning outcomes, and quality of offered studies. The Department made every effort to provide all requested data and information and their overall participation and response has been enthusiastic.

Perhaps most importantly, the Department of Geography responded to every recommendation made during the prior cycle of evaluation, addressed all major points and took several corrective actions to ensure that these recommendations were implemented to the degree allowed by the laws, provisions and regulations of the Greek higher education system.

Panel judgement

Principle 10: Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programmes	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The Panel was impressed by the Department of Geography's response to the HQA-specified process for the external evaluation of its undergraduate programs and strongly encourages the Department to continue to monitor the performance of its faculty, staff and students on a regular basis using multilayered but holistic indicators. It is also recommended for the Department to remain engaged and committed to continually tracking and improving its collective and individual scientific achievements, the quality of offered studies, and national and international visibility and reputation beyond the typical cycles of mandated evaluations.

The Panel expects the Department to take into full consideration the outcomes of this multi-stage evaluation process and to not only implement but also further expand the provided recommendations by developing customized processes and indicators that are better suited to its profile, programs, culture, goals and aspirations.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

The Panel would like to reiterate the Conclusion of the 2013 Report:

“The Department of Geography of the Harokopio University of Athens has established an excellent teaching program and a very respectable research record. The overall assessment of the Committee is very positive. The Department’s success lies in the engaged and highly motivated student community, the excellent credentials of its dynamic faculty members, and the outstanding environment and infrastructure characterizing the Harokopio University.”

That earlier very positive overall assessment still holds. The Department has further improved its undergraduate program, largely because it has already implemented or is in the process of implementing many of the 2013 Report’s recommendations. Evidence of the continuing improvement of this high-quality Department is provided by indicators derived from quantifiable aspects of the program, as well as by the Panel’s interactions with all categories of internal and external stakeholders. Important best practices are as follows:

1. The Department of Geography nurtures a successful learning environment based on an open and supportive student-professor rapport, highly qualified and very dedicated faculty members, outstanding facilities and technical and services infrastructure, a pleasant campus atmosphere, and a well-developed and functional quality assurance system supported by all stakeholders. The Department’s emphasis on quality monitoring and improvement is an additional asset appreciated by both students and external stakeholders.
2. The undergraduate curriculum offers a core of required courses providing a good foundation in all four of the Department’s broad areas of emphasis, complemented by a variety of elective courses that allow students to further pursue topics in their own areas of interest.
3. The availability of internships with external stakeholders to all interested students, and in areas of their choice, is a crucial aspect of the program that provides work experience in marketable skills, while also contributing to making instruction more relevant to available employment opportunities.
4. The genuine interest of the campus leadership and the academic and administrative staff in constantly upgrading the quality of studies and student experience results in their viewing the formal quality assessment process as a valuable tool for improvement rather than as a burden.

II. Areas of Weakness

Harokopio is subject to the same legislative restrictions and limitation as all other universities in Greece. In particular, departments cannot use the lure of higher salaries to attract highly

desirable faculty members, and they cannot actively intervene to improve the teaching of occasionally inexperienced newly appointed faculty. Furthermore, Greece's protectionist employment market favors degrees in some academic areas over others, even though, for any area of application, equivalent if not superior skills may be found in graduates of other, less favored disciplines. The Department's graduates are especially affected by this state of affairs because of the lack of appreciation of the discipline of geography in the country, though a successful internship in a relevant area of application can go a long way towards mitigating that handicap.

The Panel acknowledges certain limitations deriving from the above constraints, for which the Department obviously cannot be blamed. In terms of actual areas of weakness, we were able to find only the following:

- *The unsatisfactory method of obtaining student feedback on instructional quality.*
Admittedly, proper course evaluation is a very challenging issue that many higher education institutions face, in Greece as well as around the world. However, there are two specific eventualities that could have been anticipated and some regulations agreed upon prior to such a situation actually arising. In the absence of a robust methodology for evaluating teaching quality, the Department relies on its excellent rapport with students and on the role of the Department Head to preempt and resolve problems. This, however raises two issues: First, a mechanism is needed to handle any potential teaching problems with the Department Head himself/herself, since in this case a conflict of interest would arise. Second, it is possible that the positive rapport between students and staff might on occasion not be there, in which case some alternative approach would be needed to ensure the continuity of high-quality instruction. Such problems are easier to handle if some framework of regulations is already available.

- *The incomplete development and use of quality indicators.*
The Department's efforts in developing quality indicators and in setting targets for strategic purposes, while technically in accordance with the ADIP guidelines and European directives, do not always capture the desired aspects of quality. For example, taking the global average of student numerical feedback across years and courses cannot assure that teaching quality meets a minimum standard in all courses, nor that clearly inferior teaching does not occur in a specific course over time. Further, the thinking behind setting strategic targets in terms of indicators is not always explained (for example, the target number of publications per faculty per year). Lack of appropriate justification can make indicators look more like wishful thinking than as the outcomes of considered planning.

- *The Department's top-heavy demographics.*

While the Department has little control over the number of new positions available to it to fill, it should strive to hire primarily if not exclusively junior academic staff in order to ensure continuity in the excellent educational services it provides, and to remain current on ongoing and new developments in the relevant areas of the field of geography.

- *The lack of planning to enhance the Department's stature beyond Greece.*

The Department's current focus is on achieving national recognition. The Panel believes that the Department's quality would also justify more far-reaching ambitions, since in our view it compares very favorably with many top-ranked European geography programs. That view is supported by our own academic experiences but also, significantly, by the impressions of Harokopio students who have visited other universities abroad through the ERASMUS program.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

There are several recommendations included in this report under each individual principle. In summary, the Panel recommends that the Department of Geography implement the following:

- Regarding teaching:
 - Continue the implementation of the recommendations of the 2013 report including those concerning the recognition of teaching excellence;
 - Consider the development of an internal support system for new staff and other staff facing difficulties with teaching, including for instance (but not limited to) additional training on teaching theory and methods, addressing issues related to the perception of varying degrees of strictness/difficulty in courses;
 - Employ alternative and innovative methods for assessing teaching quality and capturing adequate teaching quality indices;
 - Formalize and document academic integrity/honesty requirements and their significance in career advancement.
- Regarding procedural improvements:
 - Use the observed annual changes in academic quality in order to understand the "natural" range of the selected metrics and avoid the sudden development of problematic situations;
 - Simplify the process for effecting changes in courses;
 - Continue institutional efforts to facilitate the reduction of students who do not progress in their studies;
 - Develop a recording and tracking system for complaints;
 - Develop a method for resolving conflicts and complaints against the Department Head because of his/her own key role in resolving conflicts between other faculty and students;

- Collect data related to the employment of their graduates (to the degree possible) and based on this data to populate indicators that capture their career paths and fields of employment, the satisfaction of employers with respect to their skills and their capabilities to perform the tasks they were hired to do;
 - Use the annually collected data to derive, visualize and analyze multi-year trends regarding student population, performance, satisfaction and employment;
 - Ensure that its public portal of information remains up-to-date, easy to access (and navigate) and comprehensive so that students, faculty and all stakeholders and interested parties in general have easy yet complete access to accurate information about the programs, procedures, achievements and opportunities related to the Department and the University.
- Regarding programmatic development and improvement:
 - Consider as part of their long-term planning the inclusion of components based on information collected from social media and other novel modalities of data collection, visualization and communication;
 - Establish a group of carefully selected international peer departments as well as a group of aspirational departments of high quality that will be used to track progress and develop new directions, outcomes and strategic goals that are competitive and attractive on a global scale;
 - Seek external input on a regular basis through a process that includes stakeholder representatives as well as international experts in fundamental and emerging fields relevant to Geography to ensure that its programs are aligned with current and future societal needs and that their graduates are workforce-ready with all the desirable skills sought by employers.

Overall, as previously stated, the Panel commends the Department of Geography's response to the HQA-specified process for the external evaluation of its undergraduate program, and strongly encourages the Department to continue its efforts over and above the mandated evaluation cycles. Monitoring on a regular basis the performance of its faculty, staff and students, and study program, and its national and international visibility and reputation, are essential activities intended to safeguard and continually improve the highly commendable achievements of Harokopio University's Geography Department.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

It should be noted that where (only) substantial compliance was achieved, the reasons were often for the most part the same ones cutting across several Principles. The best example is the case of teaching quality evaluation, which penalized the first three Principles (3, 5, and 7) in this category, the problem being the lack of adequate evaluation instruments rather than teaching quality per se.

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are:

Numbers 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are:

Numbers 3, 5, 7, and 9

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are:

None

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are:

None

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

The members of the Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname

Signature

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