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

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

Faculty of Communication and Mass Media Studies

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens



European Union
European Social Fund



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

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External Evaluation Committee

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the Faculty of Communication and Mass Media studies of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens consisted of the following four (4) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by the HQAA in accordance with Law 3374/2005 :

1. Prof.Dr. Sarikakis, Katharine (Coordinator)

(Title) (Name and Surname)

Universität Wien (Austria)

(Institution of origin)

2. Prof.Dr. Tötösy de Zepetnek, Steven

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Purdue University (USA)

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3. Prof.Dr. Kiouisis, Spiro

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University of Florida (USA)

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(Institution of origin)

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

Introduction
<p><u>I. The External Evaluation Procedure</u></p> <p>Dates and brief account of the site visit.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">20/1 - 25/1: Following a briefing by HQA on Monday 20 January in the following days the members of the committee visited all physical facilities of the department, conducted interviews and met with all people involved in the department, including students.</p> <p>Whom did the Committee meet?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Head of Department, Members and Support Staff of the Department · Vice Rector of Academic Affairs · Approximately 30 students · Several classes in progress <p>List of Reports, documents, other data examined by the Committee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · -Internal evaluation · -Syllabi · -Teachers' evaluations · -Department and research projects descriptions · -Statistical data about the department · -Publications and research output of the department · -Students' sample works <p>Groups of teaching and administrative staff and students interviewed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · All of them <p>Facilities visited by the External Evaluation Committee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · All physical locations of the department <p><u>II. The Internal Evaluation Procedure</u></p> <p>· Please comment on:</p> <p>Appropriateness of sources and documentation used</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Extensive and detailed <p>Quality and completeness of evidence reviewed and provided</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Exceptional <p>To what extent have the objectives of the internal evaluation process been met by the Department?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · <p>The short and long term plans of the department are difficult to implement because of the serious lack of funding. Nevertheless, the department developed a short and long terms plan regarding foci of research, teaching, service. The proposed plan should coincide with increase resources for faculty, administrative support, and technology/infrastructure to maintain and enhance the reputation of the department.</p>

A. Curriculum

To be filled separately for each undergraduate, graduate and doctoral programme.

The external committee's assessment of the Department of Communication and Media Studies' curriculum at the University of Athens focuses on the undergraduate and postgraduate program, which awards students bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. Our examination of the curricula included reviewing syllabi, course descriptions, learning objectives, faculty interviews, administrator interviews, student theses/dissertations, and student interviews. At the undergraduate level, the department has two goals in terms of preparing students for more advanced study through theoretical training and for professional careers with application of concepts and ideas. Students must complete 48 courses to receive their degree with a combination of 34 compulsory courses, 11 elective courses, and three compulsory seminars. By all accounts, the program is considered the premiere communication and media departments in Greece and one of the best in the Mediterranean and Southern Europe. A large part of its reputation is based on its strong curriculum.

Overall, we see many strengths in the undergraduate curriculum in fulfilling its dual mission of academic training and professional preparation. For the first, the curriculum is intentionally interdisciplinary and provides students with training from a broad array of perspectives, including communication, journalism, cultural studies, literature, political communication, sociology, and so forth. This approach enables students to be flexible across fields and follow a variety of academic or career paths upon completion of the program.

A second major strength of the undergraduate curriculum is the flexibility it offers students in terms of elective courses. Through combinations of electives, students can gain expertise in subareas of media and communication studies that will complement the generalist training they receive in the compulsory courses. A possible modification in the future might be to "package" elective courses together for students who are unsure about the possibilities of specialization. One major concern we have in the area of interdisciplinary emphasis though is that the decreasing number of faculty members is greatly impacting the breadth and depth of the curriculum for students. For example, internal projections show that the program will lose expertise in journalism, communication technology, arts and culture, and applied communication over the coming years, and the University of Athens will be unable to maintain its strong national and international reputation if faculty resources are not restored and increased.

To achieve its goal of professional preparation, several courses focus on applied aspects of the communication professions, including advertising, public relations, radio television production, and practice of electronic communication. The presence of such courses across compulsory and elective courses makes sure that students will be exposed to professional and applied concepts as part of their undergraduate training. A limitation in this area though is that much of the technology and equipment is not adequate to keep pace with the

changing needs of the communication industries the department serves. Additional investment in technology and technical support is critical going forward if the department is to maintain close linkages with the professions. Further evidence of professional preparation success can be found with the significant number of students who have successfully completed internships in the private, public, and nonprofit sectors. According to internal data, students have completed 433 internships during the accreditation review period for durations of either three or six months, depending on whether the experience was full-time or part-time. The internships have covered a wide range of communication sectors, including news media, strategic communication, and online communication. It is noteworthy that all were paid internships helping safeguard that the organizations providing them offered a quality experience for students. One possible suggestion is that the department formally offers internship credit to provide closer oversight of this important experience for students entering professional careers. In addition, a greater proportion of applied courses might be considered to achieve balance in terms of theoretical and practical courses.

A final strength of the curriculum entails the capstone experience for students writing a bachelor's thesis. The culmination of training into a research project supervised by faculty members enables the student to bring the knowledge they have gathered in the program and apply it in a meaningful way that offers evidence of critical thinking and application. While the capstone process for students writing a thesis is strong, we believe that simply requiring non-thesis students to take two additional elective seminars does not offer a similar experience. As such, the proposed internship course mentioned above might include developing a portfolio project that could be a means for achieving equivalency for both types of students.

Shifting to postgraduate education, the goals of the program are similar to the undergraduate program, but a greater emphasis is placed on theoretical and research training to prepare students for academic and professional careers. According to the internal report, the postgraduate program is divided into five strands for students earning a master's and doctoral degree: (1) European Communications: Structures and Policies; (2) Public Opinion and (Public) communication; (3) Cultural Studies; (4) Conflict Management and Communication; and (5) Digital Communication Media and Interactive Environments. Through a process of curriculum revision, these have been updated for next year as follows: (1) Journalism and New Media; (2) Political Communication and New Media; (3) Cultural and Film Studies; (4) Conflicts and Communication; and (5) Digital Media and Interactive Environments. The iterative process of curriculum revision that is ongoing in the department should be lauded and helps guarantee that the program stays at the cutting edge of graduate education.

Similar to the undergraduate curriculum, we see many strengths in the graduate curriculum. Foremost again is the interdisciplinary emphasis of course content. Our accreditation review shows that students are being exposed to and learning about the major theoretical and conceptual perspectives in communication and media studies from around

the world. The amount of electives is limited though due to reduced staffing and thereby leaves the program vulnerable in terms of breadth and depth of curriculum (as mentioned earlier for the undergraduate program). All students receive training in research methods in order to gain methodological expertise for conducting original research independently or with faculty and student collaborators. While all students are required to take a quantitative research methods course, opportunities for training in qualitative methods are limited in some of the master's program strands due to limited faculty resources. We encourage additional investment for faculty with expertise to teach in this area so that the research expertise and productivity of students is balanced between quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Another strength of the postgraduate program is its emphasis on European communications and international orientation. Faculty research and course topics cover concepts and topics outside of Greece in an insightful and meaningful manner. This, in turn, enhances the international reputation of the program. Based on this strength, we do believe that an opportunity exists to expand the international orientation further by offering courses in English that would focus on international communication and media studies for students from other countries that could be delivered online/in-person or using a hybrid model. This would have potential to serve as a revenue source and reputation enhancer for the department, but would require some significant investment from the university to get started in terms of faculty and technology.

A major objective of the postgraduate program is for students to produce original research via class projects, master's theses, and doctoral theses. The productivity of students in producing conference papers, refereed journal articles, and published books/book chapters is impressive and indicates that the curriculum is strongly meeting this goal. Indeed, our analysis shows that students are producing work in Greek, English, and other languages ensuring that it is being disseminated both nationally and internationally.

While the focus of the postgraduate program is theoretical, our discussions with existing graduate students indicated that the vast majority planned to go into professional careers rather than academic or teaching careers. Similar to the undergraduate program, finding the balance between conceptual and practical training is delicate but important. An opportunity may exist to allow students to choose between both alternatives when starting the postgraduate program and having a thesis/non-thesis option. Such alternatives are allowed at institutions around the world and may be worthy of consideration here as a means to free up resources and more directly meet the goals of the students.

Although no formal curriculum is assigned for doctoral students, our analysis and feedback from the students suggests that they would benefit from seminars specifically for doctoral students focusing on theory, methodology, and the publication process. Such a strategy would enable doctoral students to produce scholarship earlier in the program and likely speed up their time to completion of the degree, thereby increasing the enrollment of doctoral students in the program.

In sum, the curriculum at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels for the Department of Communication and Media Studies at the University of Athens is strong and meets the objectives as defined by the faculty and administration. We believe the following suggestions should be considered if the program is to maintain its excellent reputation in Greece and abroad:

- Group undergraduate elective courses into predetermined categories to allow students to gain expertise in specific specializations.
- Investment in technology and technical support is critical going forward if the department is to maintain close linkages with the professions.
- Increase faculty resources to maintain expertise in strategic interdisciplinary areas.
- Develop internship capstone course at undergraduate level to offer equivalent experience to students writing bachelor's thesis.
- Increase faculty resources with expertise in qualitative research methods.
- Expand international orientation of postgraduate program through course/program offerings in English to be delivered online/in-person or using a hybrid model. Initial faculty and technological investment from central administration would be required to begin, but financial and reputational benefit would be substantial.
- Offer non-thesis option for professionally oriented postgraduate master's students.
- Offer seminars specifically for doctoral students covering theory, method, and the publication process.

B. Teaching

APPROACH:

Does the Department have a defined pedagogic policy with regard to teaching approach and methodology? Please comment on:

- Teaching methods used:

Courses are offered in types of lectures, seminars, and skill courses formal and informal and compulsory and elective and there are internships as well

1) Socratic Method

2) Our impression is that instructors are excellent pedagogues and students at all levels reported this

3) we attended one undergraduate class and observed good interaction between instructor and students

4) the Department's programme is exceptional in that it combines practical skill training and goes as far as providing teaching and expertise in culture and literature; in Europe the usual approach is to have a more practical or more philological approach and rarely both as done by the Department and this is an outstanding quality of the programme

5) an unusual situation occurred as follows: when visiting one of the buildings where the Department's teaching occurs, a student group was present in one of the rooms where they congregate: this student group is against the University administration on all levels and challenged the relevance of the evaluation process and engaged in a discussion about their objection with faculty present, as well as with us as evaluators: were able to observe the faculty's handling of the confrontational situation and we were impressed by the faculty's pedagogically appropriate and resourceful defusing of the situation

6) at this time graduate students do not teach courses on their own (doctoral students can assist occasionally with teaching): doctoral students reported that they would be interested in teaching based on their own expertise and we suggest that the US-American system where graduate students teach undergraduate classes could be implemented and that such teaching would be valuable and necessary experience for doctoral students whose career path would likely be towards university employment

7) at this time the Department does not offer courses or degrees online only: we suggest that online only courses would benefit both students and the Department; as a development occurring globally whereby undergraduate and graduate degrees are taught online only, we suggest that the Department develop and teach such as soon as possible: B.A. and M.A. degrees offered online only would make possible the accepting of international students who would pay tuition fees; thus the global reach and reputation of the Department and the University would increase while at the same time income would be generated for the Department.

Teaching staff/student ratio:

1) at the undergraduate level the instructor/student ratio is too high owing to class sizes especially in compulsory skill modules: international standards suggest that such a situation is untenable

2) at the graduate level the ratio is acceptable and students reported that they have easy and frequent access to supervisors in order to discuss their progress, questions about their research, and any concerns they have and this suggests that instructors are good pedagogues who are outcome oriented; however, there were two cases where the graduate student indicated that he/she was not satisfied with access of intellectual guidance

Teacher/student collaboration:

1) owing to the nature of the field — communication and media studies — collaboration occurs frequently and in particular PhD students work in diverse projects headed by faculty and thus gain expertise

2) collaborative research is performed in several practice-oriented "laboratories"

3) because of the unclear situation in the Greek educational system with regard to the relevance of publications prior to the completion of the doctoral dissertation versus publishing after the completion of the doctoral dissertation, students face a dilemma; nevertheless, despite the undefined situation, multi-authored publications do occur and we recommend that doctoral students publish as soon as possible in international peer-reviewed journals

Adequacy of means and resources:

Use of information technologies:

1) the use of information technology by faculty and students of the Department is a given owing to the nature of the Department

2) owing to the fast pace of new media technology it is obvious that new technology including the acquisition of new computers and other necessary equipment such as cameras and software must follow

3) it is not acceptable that undergraduate classes are taught with computers from 2000 and this must be rectified by funding from the University administration

Examination system

The examination system is adequate and appropriate because it covers both written and oral components in the forms of exams, essays, projects, presentations, etc.

IMPLEMENTATION

Please comment on:

- Quality of teaching procedures: the quality of teaching procedures is superior

- Quality and adequacy of teaching materials and resources: currently the

Department operates with minimal funding and resources and we recommend that it receive funding to update its technical equipment, software, library resources in particular with regard to the purchase of books in digital format and the subscription to data bases including journal aggregates beyond EBSCO; further, it is detrimental to the operation of the Department that it has no IT support for itself and that faculty needs to fix equipment: while there is technical support at the University itself, such is cumbersome and not timely

- Quality of course material. Is it brought up to date? Based on the bibliographies of syllabi the secondary literature used in teaching is up-to-date and international

- Linking of research with teaching: in most cases it appears faculty implements research results in teaching directly and make use of their own publications; further, research done in the laboratories feeds back into graduate teaching

- Mobility of academic staff and students: with regard to faculty, because of cutbacks faculty has little to no sabbatical time to conduct research and this ought to be adjusted; \ said cutbacks affect the ratio of faculty who can participate in the Erasmus Programme (at this point only two slots are available) and this too must be adjusted to a higher ratio

Evaluation by the students of (a) the teaching and (b) the course content and study material/resources:

1) students in general indicated that they are satisfied with the quality of teaching and with the quality of the Department's programme (i.e., the degree they aspire to be awarded)

2) there was one case where the graduate student indicated dissatisfaction with the secondary literature being in other languages than Greek: however, we take this criticism as misguided

1) the Department is operating with reduced to no funding whatsoever: while we understand the general situation of the Greek educational system and the country as a whole, problems arising from the lack of adequate funding must not be carried over to impact negatively on the evaluation of the Department

2) a shortcoming is the inadequate level of support staff because in 2013-2014 there has been a reduction of 60%

RESULTS

Please comment on:

Efficacy of teaching:

2) Our impression is that instructors are excellent pedagogues and students at all levels reported this

3) we attended one undergraduate class and observed good interaction between instructor and students, as well as about 30 students in direct interaction and feedback

Discrepancies in the success/failure percentage between courses and how they are justified: as is the case anywhere else, on the undergraduate level there is attrition, but this has nothing to do with the quality of the particular programme

Differences between students in (a) the time to graduation, and (b) final degree grades:

1) because there is little to no financial support (i.e., scholarships) and thus students need to be employed, graduate degrees take longer to complete than they should: again, were it possible to secure graduate funding, students would graduate in an adequate period of time

2) it appears undergraduate students graduate in an adequate length of time

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

1) as the teaching qualities and practices of faculty are exceptionally good, improvement is necessary on the University funding level with regard to new faculty positions, funding for teaching resources, and technical equipment

2) the Department is proactive in addressing several challenges in face of cutbacks including the development of the Erasmus Programme, the reorganization of administrative staff, the application to EU-funded research projects, the involvement of private companies with regard to research and funding, offer more courses with an applied orientation, etc.

3) although the above outlined performance of teaching of the Department is exceptionally good, because of the lack of funding this excellence cannot be maintained for too long and hence the absolute necessity of funding

C. Research

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

APPROACH

- What is the Department's policy and main objective in research?
- Has the Department set internal standards for assessing research?

The Department of Media and Communication organises its research activity around 'Laboratories'. There are currently five laboratories:

- a. Laboratory for Arts and Cultural Management
- b. Laboratory for Psychology Applications and Communication Planning
- c. Laboratory for New Technologies, Education and Mass Media
- d. Laboratory for Social Research in Mass Media
- e. Audiovisual Laboratory

The Laboratories are designed to be directly linked to the other main areas of activity of the department. Specifically, they contribute directly to the provision of teaching and supervision of research work across the department through their attachment to the Divisions.

The Department's research strategy is largely based on the principles of autonomy of research teams and initiatives by staff under the supervision of senior research staff. As such, there has been limited centrally agreed and acted upon strategic research planning as to the specifics of research directions, research funding and research output and their periodical evaluation and assessment. In recent years, a first attempt has been made to organise funding distribution of state funds not per capita, as has been the case historically, but per project. This means that funding has been channelled towards projects that can demonstrate a 'critical mass' of faculty, so as to make best use of nominal funding.

Due to the country's fiscal governance in relation to the demands of the Financial Memoranda, in the past two years, state funding has ceased completely.

IMPLEMENTATION and RESULTS

The department is particularly active in promoting and supporting research through the laboratories; department based publication outlets; dissemination events of international symposia organised by the department and active dissemination i.e. communication of research to general public through strong presence in the press and media of the country. Structurally, research and research-led teaching and supervision present a coherent thematic organisation and management style.

The department presents an excellent record of international conference organisation and activity, with internationally known academics and visiting speakers. Also, faculty maintains an excellent presence in major academic associations around the world. Over 90% of total faculty are Research, and their work is published regularly in Greek, English, French and often German language publications. The department has a strong tradition in publication of books and book monographs but increasingly the publication output is geared more strongly towards international peer reviewed journals and these include some of the leading journals in the field, thereby following international standards of scholarship. In the examined period, research output in peer reviewed international outlets has taken off, especially among more recent appointments and younger staff. All faculty is polyglot and able to communicate research effectively to international audiences.

Moreover, esteem indicators, such as advisory board memberships, leadership of specialised divisions in international associations, invitations for guest talks and visiting professorships are also a big part of faculty activity. Members are directly involved in the cultural and academic life of the city and the country, such as the directorship of the Greek Film Archives, membership in the National Broadcasting Regulatory Council, Online Gaming Regulatory Council and so on. Internationally renowned academic and cultural personalities have been awarded and have accepted Doctors Honory Causa, such as MIT Professor Nicholas Negroponte; NYU prof Neil Postman, Film Director Michalis Kakogiannis and so forth.

Furthermore, the department produces research publications including the peer reviewed journal Ζητήματα Επικοινωνίας (*Communication Issue*s), which is the only one in the country in the field of media and communication; the arts and culture publication series *Elelef*; and the affiliated University Research Institute of Applied Communication publications of outputs of major projects and conferences (not exclusively all predominantly proceedings). The institute is independent, but reports to the ministry of education. Research funding ceased five years ago. Research at the institute has attracted private sector funding, but this source is also drying up due to the financial collapse of the market.

Media research team projects have seen a steady increase since 2010 and present outstanding work and collaborations with world-renowned institutions. Work in the digital labs, on media literacy, locative media, arts and cinema, policy, children and new technologies, gender, political communication, emotions and media, public relations and media industries are some of the areas that stand out for the volume of research, the quality of research and the level of engagement with public understanding of science and research. The department is particularly strong in communicating with the public and in utilising research for the benefit of the cultural, political and social life of the country, as described.

The department's unique qualities and reputation are based on the integration of humanities and social sciences in the study of media and communication, the work on cultural institutions, applied communication and focus on vulnerable social groups.

As an example, research and collaborative projects on the basis of research dissemination and its public understanding can be found in work on socially responsive culture and cultural production; local point of view in relation to the universal and the global; collaborations with eminent artists in Greece and intellectuals, poets, painters; collaborations with institutions, such as Foundation of Hellenic Parliament, Greek film Archives, solidarity networks; a series of Athens Avant-Garde film festival (in its 7th year); teacher training in media literacy and group dynamics in classroom; ecoKtima: hybrid-pervasive play based learning; location based services for disabled people, to mention a few, but notable, examples.

The infrastructure for research in media and communication labs consists of limited space for drama/performance and mass media practice; computer terminals, software, audiovisual equipment to record and broadcast for the AV labs, and media equipment for social research and social psychology experiments. Overall, hardware equipment is in need of either urgent or forthcoming update; others are severely obsolete and cannot serve current software and research demands. Wi-Fi broadband internet is not available in any but one of the buildings (Stadiou 5 central offices and MA teaching rooms). There is no technical support for labs assigned to the Department.

Despite personal and departmental care of and investment in the labs, overall, their accommodation is dismal and in a building that stands in breach of health and safety regulations in the country. For years, faculty and staff have gone to great lengths to equip labs with modern technology and maintain cleanliness and adhere to health and safety protocols. However, especially at Kalamiotou 2, the building is neglected (there are no regular cleaning personnel or scheduled cleaning services) and it is dangerous since it does not adhere to health and safety regulation of additional exits. We understand the Department has made these issues known to central administration of the University and the Ministry of Education repeatedly.

IMPROVEMENT

- Improvements in research proposed by the Department, if necessary.
 - Initiatives in this direction undertaken by the Department.
- a. the department will benefit from a coordination of research planning, in order to consolidate scholarship
 - b. equally, the consolidation of research outputs in a more selective process for publication will strengthen the international reputation and visibility of the department as the 'Athens School' of media and communication. This means that faculty should continue with more emphasis

on the development of and concentrate more in publishing research in internationally renowned peer review journals.

- c. Further consolidation is also necessary in international collaborations and a clear selection of sustainable, long term collaborations with concrete project outcomes would benefit visibility and internationalisation.
- d. The visibility of work and outputs should be overhauled totally on the websites of the Department and the University, more effective use of all major mailing lists of international associations in the field should be utilised.
- e. Work across laboratories is not strongly visible. The department will benefit from more cross-laboratory collaborations to benefit from scarce research funding available in the market and to establish further their unique place in Greek society.
- f. More established focus on the creative industries as a possible market factor may offer the potential for needed funding, while at the same time providing the resources for long term research.

D. All Other Services

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

APPROACH

- How does the Department view the various services provided to the members of the academic community (teaching staff, students).

The services provided to the members of the academic community are limited. The space is extremely inadequate and dysfunctional (teaching rooms, labs, library, secretary, staff offices are located in different buildings across the centre of Athens). Concerning Information Communication Technology services, the software is adequate, but hardware is very poor (some of the PCs are extremely dated).

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

Several procedures have been processed electronically - courses material, announcements, conducting professors through electronic means. However, more formal administrative procedures are paper-based.

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

Electronic and face-to-face communication with the students and the activities of the laboratories are the main tools of encouraging students' participation.

IMPLEMENTATION

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

The organization and the infrastructure of the department is a critical problem, since department activities are dispersed in five different sites. This has several negative implications regarding the mobility of the staff/students across the different sites; the safety of the equipment; and the administration of the overall activities.

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

The library is well equipped in terms of software services (operation through HORIZON information portal, OPAC, SwetsWise, and EBSCO services, etc.) but not in terms of hardware. There is remote access to the internet service, and Wi-Fi service is available for one of the buildings but not for the rest.

There is an electronic platform (e-class) for the courses; still, it is not used by all the academic staff.

Student counseling is consistent enough; but mostly postgraduate students take advantage of it.

There are fewer chances for students to organize extra curricular activities due to financial problems, as field trips and visits to collaborating departments abroad

RESULTS

- Are administrative and other services adequate and functional?

The material infrastructure (teaching rooms, space for laboratories, and technological equipment) as well as the administrative and technical personnel are inadequate. Due to the recent suspension of the duties of the administrative personnel both the secretary and the library can hardly support the needs of the department.

Regarding the secretarial administration, it has been severely reduced from eight to four people, and there is still an ongoing process of reducing these positions further (the duties of one of the secretarial staff were already under suspension the week the committee visited the university). As such, the secretariat of the department cannot function properly. There is no allocation of duties since everyone has to do everything; the administration cannot follow the schedule because of increased workload per person and the administration personnel undertakes extra duties (ex. cleaning) because there is no personnel at the moment for these services. During the week of our visit the Erasmus office encountered also serious problems due to the suspension of the duties of its staff.

The library at the moment operates with three staff, however the duties of two of them are expected to be suspended in the coming days. The lending system of the library is restricted (only postgraduate students can borrow textbooks; but the rest they must either read them in the library or photocopy the material). In addition, the building where the library is based is very old and the library cannot expand further.

The technological equipment is not sufficient for the activities of the department (ex. there are only three computers available for the students in the library). Moreover, the lack of

technical support (web administrator, technician for ICTs) creates a lot of problems; as it is up to the academic staff with relevant skills the ones who undertake the task.

- How does the Department view the particular results?

Both academic and administration staff and students recognise these limits as important deterrent factors, and they are demoralised.

IMPROVEMENTS

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

The department is in contact with upper administration to find solutions to the problems it faces, but the financial situation in Greece makes them to work on a day to day basis.

Regarding Erasmus program there is the intention to increase the number of teaching staff mobility as well as to include postgraduate students in the new agreements of Erasmus + program.

- Initiatives undertaken in this direction.

The relocation of most of the activities of the department in a new building will improve the services in many areas addressed above. This is not the case for the library it will be relocated in another old building, merging with the library of the political science (though there is a possibility here for more PCs to be available)

Collaboration with social, cultural and production organizations

Please, comment on quality, originality and significance of the Department's initiatives.

There are strong relations and networks with social, cultural and production organisations nationally and internationally, which is reflected on the other categories of the evaluation: the internships practice of the undergraduate program; conferences/events/scientific meetings; and the cooperation of the five laboratories with diverse social actors and media organisations in specific.

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

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

Please, comment on the Department's:

- Potential inhibiting factors at State, Institutional and Departmental level, and proposals on ways to overcome them.
- Short-, medium- and long-term goals.
- Plan and actions for improvement by the Department/Academic Unit
- Long-term actions proposed by the Department.

The main inhibiting factors faced by the Department based on the evaluation review are primarily resources in terms of faculty positions, staff positions, and technology/infrastructure. The years of reductions and cuts have reached a point that further cuts will devastate the Department's core missions of teaching, research, and service. To overcome these obstacles, the Department suggests that they:

- Adopted prerequisite courses
- Reorganize administration service of the faculty in light of ongoing cutbacks
- Further develop the Erasmus program
- Become more integrated in competitive European projects
- Offer applied courses
- Establish television and restart Internet radio station
- Emphasize interdisciplinary efforts of department

We concur with these recommendations and suggested course of action, and recommend the Department

- explore additional revenue sources through central administration allocations,
- develop an international master's program to be delivered online/in-person or a hybrid,
- further seek funded research projects from private, public, and non-profit sources
- include more courses in English to internationalise both Undergraduate and postgraduate programmes

As noted earlier, the Department of Communication and Media Studies is the premiere communication program in Greece and is among the best in Southern Europe. Without additional investment though, its reputation is in great jeopardy at one of Greece's most important institutions of higher education.

F. Final Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC

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

Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC on:

- the development of the Department to this date and its present situation, including explicit comments on good practices and weaknesses identified through the External Evaluation process and recommendations for improvement
- the Department's readiness and capability to change/improve
- the Department's quality assurance.

The Department of Communication and Media was set up in the early 1990s, as one of the first departments in Greek universities to offer courses in media and communication. In the course of the past 23 years the department has grown and succeeded in becoming one of the preeminent departments in Greece and the region. It has developed into a department that combines an active research programme and teaching and has provided programmes of study that correspond to the needs of the country and provide innovation in the areas of media technology, humanities as related to media and communication, and social science and the media. The development in curriculum and research has not been adequately accompanied by a systematic investment by central administration. The outcome has been the dispersion of offices, teaching and research sites across several locations and inadequate accommodation. However, we are aware that the university is now providing a building that the department as a whole will be housed. We would like to strongly emphasise the immediate need for this to be completed in the next few months. We find that the Department has shown great versatility in dealing with financial challenges in the past, while maintaining high quality of teaching and indeed increasing research quality and output. We note that without investment, however, the department will not be able to support its core mission.

The Committee is impressed by the width and in-depth spectrum of the curriculum and teaching in the department. We feel that it would benefit the further development of the department's reputation and profile, if the department strengthened the threads and common elements that underpin and bind its curriculum and research activities. In other words, strategic planning as to the identity of the work undertaken at the Department would lead to a formalising of an identity for which the 'Athens School of Media' can be known for.

In connection to this, we suggest that the accomplishments and activities of the department are communicated in a more strategic manner through coordination with the University's communication office. The Department should pay more attention to its image and reputation in more effective ways. A way would be to appoint a faculty member to look after i.e. take responsibility of the external image of the department and communicate productivity.

We recommend then the Department explores synergies with other University departments in cognate areas, such as the Dept. of English, and strengthen the international character of courses. Furthermore, the Department should expand its postgraduate education and internationalise its student body, so as to come in line with major universities around the world. Most importantly, we strongly recommend that the University provide the means to at least maintain faculty number for faculty that will be retired in the next five years and taking into account lost positions in the past three years.

The Members of the Committee

Name and Surname

Signature

- 1. Prof Katharine Sarikakis**

- 2. Prof Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek**

- 3. Prof Spiro Kiouisis**

- 4. Acc.Prof Pantelis Vatikiotis**