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HELLENIC REPUBLIC
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 HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE AND
 ACCREDITATION AGENCY

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

DEPARTMENT: Journalism and Mass Communications

UNIVERSITY : Aristotle University of Thessaloniki



European Union
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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 Department of Journalism and Mass Communications of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki consisted of the following three (3) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by the HQAA in accordance with Law 3374/2005 :

1. **Professor Katharine Sarikakis (President)**
(Title) (Name and Surname)
University of Vienna, Austria
(Institution of origin)

2. **Associate Professor Pantelis Vatikiotis**
(Title) (Name and Surname)
Izmir University of Economics, Turkey
(Institution of origin)

3. **Associate Professor Stelios Stylianou**
(Title) (Name and Surname)
Cyprus University of Technology, Cyprus
(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

I. The External Evaluation Procedure

The External Evaluation Committee (henceforth the "Committee") visited the Department of Journalism and Mass Communications (henceforth the "Department") at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (henceforth the "University") from February 24-26, 2014.

On the first day of the visit, the Committee attended an introductory meeting at the University Senate Room where three presentations were delivered, one by the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs, Professor Despo Lialiou, one by the Dean of the School of Economic and Political Sciences, Professor Evgenia Petridou and one by the Head of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communications, Associate Professor Gregoris Paschalidis.

On the second day of the visit, the Committee visited the main building and the two laboratories of the Department and attended a series of presentations by faculty members, about the structure of the undergraduate and the graduate programs of study, about quality assurance procedures and student evaluation of faculty, about the practicum, library services and lab facilities. The Committee also had the opportunity to meet and interact with the majority of faculty members, to interview two secretarial staff and to visit the departmental library and lecture rooms. The Committee did not view offices or student dormitories or sports facilities.

On the third day of the visit, the Committee attended presentations about research, international relations, European programs, life-long learning programs, conference organization, relations and collaborations with local organizations and about problems and prospects of the Department. The Committee also had the opportunity to interview four undergraduate, seven postgraduate and five doctoral students, as well as five graduates of the undergraduate program.

The following materials were made available to the Committee:

- 18 slide presentations (as mentioned above)
- Undergraduate and Graduate Study Guides

- Samples of undergraduate theses
- Samples of Master's theses
- Samples of PhD Dissertations
- The Internal Evaluation Report
- Annual Evaluation Reports
- Samples of booklets and other print media issued by the Department

The Committee also received a letter, dated 17.2.14, from one of the faculty members who could not attend the evaluation meetings in which she expressed her opinion about the Department.

The Committee would like to express its appreciation for the well prepared and cordial reception and hosting it has received at the Department. All available faculty members participated in the presentations and the meetings and were responsive in providing the Committee with useful information. Further, our discussions with faculty and other staff as well as with students and graduates were both pleasant and effective.

II. The Internal Evaluation Procedure

The Committee finds that the Department met the objectives of the internal evaluation procedure. The internal evaluation report was prepared by a team of six faculty members, coordinated by the Head of the Department. The report was prepared with the participation of all members of the Department and was reviewed in three departmental meetings. The report contains complete and detailed information about all aspects covered by the objectives of the evaluation. Given the difficulties the Department faces with respect to secretarial support, the preparation for the evaluation has been an achievement that cost faculty dozens of hours of work and this is evident in the quality of the report.

A. Curriculum

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

The assessment of the external committee on the curriculum includes undergraduate and postgraduate programs that award students bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees.

The examination of the curriculum has been based on reviews of course descriptions, learning objectives, syllabi, theses and dissertations, as well as presentations of the coordinators of the programs and interviews with faculty members and students of all programs.

Undergraduate program

The undergraduate program aims to advance the study of mass media and communications, provide theoretical training and prepare the students for professional careers along with their specialization on the use of different technological applications.

During the academic year 2005-6 the Department revised radically the structure of its program introducing two strands - (1) Journalism; (2) Mass Communications - and reducing the number of the courses, from 74 to 48 (6 instead of 9 per semester). The students must complete 24 compulsory courses, 24 elective courses, and the thesis (compulsory) to receive their degree.

The program is the only academic one that provides for the dedicated study of and training in journalism in Greece. Its strong curriculum is considered to contribute to its international reputation (QS World University Rankings) significantly.

Since the academic year 2011-2012 the Department adjusted its curriculum to the ECTS system and has been providing the Diploma Supplement. The department has set a procedure for the revision of the program for the academic year 2015-16.

The committee believes that the undergraduate curriculum fulfills successfully its dual mission of academic training and professional preparation. The academic training is supported by the intended interdisciplinary approach of the curriculum, including different perspectives - journalism, sociology, political communication, law, and so forth. Such an approach allows students to draw on different paths and reflect accordingly. A possible modification for the revision of the undergraduate program would be to include more courses from the area of cultural studies.

One of the strengths of the undergraduate curriculum is its flexibility. In addition to the compulsory courses that provide the general training, the elective courses have been grouped into categories, according to the tracks offered, allowing thus students to specialize in the area of media and communication studies.

Another strength of the program is the presence of courses, both compulsory and elective ones, that focus on applied aspects of the communication professions - advertising and public relations; press, radio, and television production; and new media practices. These courses expose students to professional and applied concepts that are important for their competent training. In addition, foreign language compulsory courses (English, French, German) are offered for specific purposes (terminology, media

context and content), enhancing the internationalization of the curriculum in journalism and media studies.

A major concern the Committee has in this area is that the new quota of undergraduate students set by the Ministry of Education last year - increasing the number of students from 60 to 170 (including special categories) - along with limited resources of the department (space, technical staff, and equipment) may affect the program structure. In order to maintain the program quality standards, many courses will have to run in multiple sessions, resulting in excessive teaching hours (given current staffing prospects). This will impact negatively on the breadth of the curriculum.

The professional preparation of the students has been facilitated by the considerable number of students' internships in the private, public, and nonprofit sectors. The internship program was revised during the academic year 2011-12 when the department got funding (ΕΣΠΑ) for it in order to satisfy the increasing students' demand, to face problems of monitoring the procedure (ensuring that organizations offer a quality experience for students) and cover insurance of the students. According to internal data, students completed 87 internships of three months duration during the period 2011-2013. The internships have covered a wide spectrum of media sectors (press, radio, television) and different communication and cultural practices.

Finally, curriculum's strength entails writing a bachelor's thesis, where students apply the knowledge they have gathered in the program into a research project. A compulsory course on study skills in the first semester of the program, a methodological course on the second year (compulsory for students of the Mass Communications strand), and the supervision of faculty members support the process. The committee strongly recommends that all students (including those of the Journalism strand) receive basic training in research methods.

Postgraduate Program

Regarding postgraduate education, the goals of the program place great emphasis on theoretical and research training to prepare students for academic and professional careers in the area of Journalism and Mass Media and Communication Studies.

Since 2002-03 the Department participates in an interdepartmental postgraduate program in 'Advanced Systems in Computers and Communication'.

During the academic year 2008-9, the Department introduced a postgraduate two-year program, divided in two strands for students earning a master's and doctoral degree: (1) Journalism and New Media; (2) Communication and Culture. The students must complete 3 compulsory courses, 6 elective courses (10 ECTS each course), and the MA thesis (30 ECTS) to receive their degree.

Similar to the undergraduate curriculum, one of the strengths in the graduate curriculum is the interdisciplinary emphasis of the course content. Students are being exposed to various theoretical perspectives and conceptual tools in communication and media study traditions from around the world. Moreover, the predetermined categories of elective courses on the basis of the two strands enable students specify on diverse

areas of their research interests.

Students of both strands receive courses in research methods in order to gain methodological expertise for conducting original research. There are two courses (one compulsory; one elective) on research methods that provide opportunities for training in both quantitative and qualitative methods. For this reason, the Committee suggests that both courses be compulsory, securing a more balanced and comprehensive research expertise and productivity.

The process of introducing a fee based program in English is ongoing in the Department (waiting for the approval of the Rector's office) - MA in Digital Media, Communication and Journalism, divided in three strands: (1) European Journalism; (2) Digital Media, Culture and Communication; (3) Risk Communication and Crisis Journalism. The Committee believes that offering the program in English will expand the international orientation of the Department.

Doctoral Program

Since 2012, the Department introduced seminars for doctoral students where they present part of their work, getting feedback from faculty members and other postgraduate students. The committee believes that doctoral students would also benefit from seminars that cover theory, methods, and the publication process. This strategy would give the chance to doctoral students to participate more often in discussions and seminars related to their research interests, taking into consideration the absence of any financial support for them to participate in conferences abroad. The committee also believes that doctoral students would benefit from visiting scholars from other universities (e.g., Erasmus mobility program). This would help students to further disseminate their work, nationally and internationally.

Other Programs

Two additional programs support the curriculum of the undergraduate and graduate programs.

Since 1999, the Department has introduced a special program for Erasmus students offering courses in English - two semesters: 8 (fall) + 14 (spring) courses. The program is very prolific. However, there is a possibility that the demand for extra sections for courses of the primary curriculum (due to the increase of student quota), may affect the availability of the faculty to offer these courses.

Finally, the Department the last three years runs a series of annual life long learning summer programs on Environment Journalism; and this year it will run an International summer school for postgraduate students in Environment Journalism and Communication (5 ECTS).

In sum, the curriculum on both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels is strong and meets the objectives as defined by the Department.

B. Teaching

APPROACH

The Committee has been convinced that the Department is committed to delivering high quality education. The current curricula are overall well designed and the teaching methods implemented to satisfy their goals are appropriate.

For the undergraduate program, teaching methods include lectures, lab sessions, project assignments (individual and group), online platforms (Blackboard, Moodle, etc), a practicum and the assignment of a bachelor's thesis. The Practicum requires the presence of the student at the host organization for a period of three months. The bachelor's thesis is mandatory for all students and involves extended personalized student-teacher interaction.

The master's programs include a mandatory master thesis.

The doctoral program includes the mandatory PhD dissertation, which is the major component of the program and a series of research seminars, which require all doctoral students to present their work at least once before graduation. The doctoral program does not include taught courses, a comprehensive exam and it does not require students to teach.

- *Teaching staff/ student ratio*

The ratio of students to Research and Teaching Staff (ΔEII) has been about 18 (for the examined period, 2007-2013) and that of students to Special Teaching Staff ($EIII$) about 58. The former ratio is within the normally expected range (by international standards), while the latter deviates significantly. As a result members of the Research and Teaching Staff are involved in teaching above the normally expected load of 6 hours per week (about half teach more than two courses per semester).

- *Teacher/student collaboration*

Faculty members work closely with students in the course of several collaborative teaching and learning activities. Of particular importance is the supervision of undergraduate, graduate and doctoral students for their theses/dissertations. Doctoral students are typically further involved in research collaboration with their supervisors, which occasionally results in co-authored publications and conference presentations. Students are also involved in research programs coordinated by faculty members. There is not much involvement of doctoral students in supervised teaching (which is another form of mutually beneficial collaboration between students and faculty).

- *Adequacy of means and resources*

The Department has four lecture rooms (with capacities of 100, 60, 30 and 15) equipped

with boards, projectors, television sets and internet access facilities and two labs, the "Media Computer Applications Lab" with a capacity of 18 and the "Electronic Media Lab" with a computer room (capacity 18), a small TV studio, a small radio broadcasting studio, a control room and a post-production room. These infrastructures are insufficient for the size of the Department. Several courses are as a result taught in lecture rooms belonging to other departments, which sometimes are not adequately equipped. In addition, lab courses cannot be offered to audiences larger than 20 people, which results in the need of more teaching hours for the teaching faculty.

It is also noted that the lecture rooms, the departmental library and the secretariat are located in the center of the city at a distance of about 2.5 km from the computer labs. Further, the condition of the lecture rooms and the faculty offices is not inspiring. More important is the absence of a reading room and a "commons" space.

Nevertheless, the Department is able to support its undergraduate and graduate programs to a satisfactory degree.

Difficulties have started to emerge as a result of a recent decision by the Ministry of Education to implement new rules both for the base number of incoming first-year students as well as on the exceptions and additional admissions. This resulted in a first year cohort of about 150 students in the Fall of 2013 (from about 60 in previous years). The mere quantitative aspect of this fact allows little optimism that the Department will manage to maintain its pedagogical excellence in the coming years. The problem becomes more serious if we take into consideration that the undergraduate program includes a large number of laboratory courses which cannot be offered to audiences larger than the capacity of the labs of the Department (about 20 students per session). Many more undergraduate courses will require large amphitheatres which the Department does not have. Even if this need is accommodated by the University, large audience lectures must be supported by small discussion sections ran by Teaching Assistants, otherwise, some of the pedagogical progress achieved in the last few years will be lost.

- *Use of information technologies*

The majority of the teaching staff uses slide presentations in their teaching and many use the Blackboard platform. During the 2012-13 academic year two courses were fully recorded and made available to the public through the AUTH Open Courses web site. Further, a significant number of courses requires the use of current information and communication technologies (information retrieval, preparation of slide presentations, online surveys, use of specialized software, etc).

- *Examination system*

The main forms of evaluation are written exams (midterm and final), written assignments and class presentations. Grading criteria are announced to students at the beginning of the semester and can be found in the Department's Study Guide which is available online.

IMPLEMENTATION

- *Quality of teaching procedures*

Based on the information provided by the Department (course design philosophy, course outlines) as well as on the feedback received from students during the site visit, the Committee thinks that the teaching procedures implemented by the Department are of very good quality.

- *Quality and adequacy of teaching materials and resources.*

With respect to teaching materials, many courses have required textbooks, which are normally made available to students by the library services. Teaching materials in electronic format are also available online. As discussed in more detail above, the sudden increase in the number of incoming students will deem the existing resources in terms of staff and buildings inadequate.

- *Quality of course material. Is it brought up to date?*

The course material is of good quality and is regularly updated.

- *Linking of research with teaching*

The current curriculum has been designed in accordance with faculty members' areas of specialization and research interests. Naturally, faculty members integrate their research with their teaching, which offers students an exposure to the current state of affairs in scientific research. Of particular interest is the fact that not only Research and Teaching Staff but also Special Teaching Staff are committed to do research. This means that the vast majority of courses are taught by active researchers.

- *Mobility of academic staff and students*

The Department maintains Erasmus agreements for student and faculty mobility with 37 departments in 18 countries. The Department offers a generous Erasmus undergraduate program which runs every semester with about 8 courses offered during the fall semester and 14 courses offered during the spring semester.

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

At the end of each semester students can evaluate their courses online. The evaluation instrument includes items about the teachers, the course content and the study materials. Recent results place the Department in a very favorable position among all AUTH Departments.

RESULTS

- *Efficacy of teaching.*

In general, the Department is very effective in terms of teaching. Based on the materials provided and the feedback received from students and graduates during the site visit, the Committee believes that the pedagogical philosophy of the Department is consistent with contemporary teaching and learning principles and that the teaching methods used are well suited to the learning outcomes of the curricula. Many graduates now work in the media and they have been well received and positively evaluated. The AUTH BA degree has a good reputation in society.

- *Discrepancies in the success/failure percentage between courses and how they are justified.*

The overall success rate in undergraduate courses is about 90% and no significant between-course deviation was reported.

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

The average time to graduation of the undergraduate program is 5.63 years. About 15% of the students graduates in four years, about 45% in five years, and about 23% in six years, giving a cumulative graduation percentage of about 83% in the first six years. Still, a non-negligible percentage of about 17% delays its graduation for up to 10 years.

With respect to final degree grades, their distribution is quite regular (roughly 5-10% in the range 8.5-10.0/10.0, about 1/3 in the range 7.0-8.4/10.0 and about 20-30% in the range 6.0-6.9/10.0). The differences observed between cohorts in the last few years are statistically insignificant and seem to result from random variation.

- *Whether the Department understands the reasons of such positive or negative results?*

The figures quoted above show that there are no "negative" results, with the exception of the fact that about one in six undergraduate students delays her/his graduation beyond the sixth year. This however is a result of social conditions and facilitative state policies.

IMPROVEMENT

- *Does the Department propose methods and ways for improvement? What initiatives does it take in this direction?*

Although the Department is currently well self-serviced in terms of delivering high quality education, it is also quite active in seeking collaborations with other departments and universities. Beyond the Erasmus mobility program, the Department already offers an interdepartmental master's degree and opens up its horizons even further by running collaborative life-long learning programs. Thus, the Committee feels that the Department is committed in improving its teaching services.

C. Research

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

The Department of Journalism and Mass Communications maintains a sustained record of research output in the major areas of journalism studies, certain aspects of cultural studies and mass communication. Faculty is research active with a good research output by the majority of its members, in general terms. Its research is interdisciplinary, utilizing a variety of methodological approaches, with input from technological, sociological, political scientific and cultural studies knowledge fields appearing as the strongest. Staff also produces monographs and textbooks predominantly for national publics and students and has a plethora of publications of and in edited books.

Due to the nature of the subject matter and the mission statement of the Department's curricular orientation, as set by the Greek Law, a strong practical element is to be expected in the outputs of faculty. This is common among most media and journalism departments, including the challenges and advantages it entails. The nature of the subject matter of journalism studies often proves a defining factor for the number and nature of these publications. Still, the number of faculty involved in research with measurable research output that adheres to scientific and scholarly conventions, as opposed, e.g., to journalism investigation-based publications, has increased steadily over the examined period. Within this context, the Department manages to maintain a satisfactory research profile, which could potentially prove rather strong in its development.

Publication output has increased significantly in the examined period. There is an increasing tendency to publish in collaborative formats, and the department proposes to follow this model in its future research and publication endeavors, thereby enhancing interdisciplinarity. In the examined period, around 50 publications derived from collaborative work with an average of 6 per year. These extend also to collaborative projects involving about 16 faculty members or otherwise an estimated 55% of the faculty engaging in collaborations. This has born fruit, as we believe it contributes to the identity the department manages to convey and benefit from.

Faculty is active with a high number of national oriented publications that enjoy strong national recognition. Overall, the main corpus of the research output consists of chapters in edited collections, monographs and textbooks and international peer reviewed articles in that order. The department serves the local and wider community of Thessaloniki and Northern Greece but also the journalism profession, functioning as the flagship department for the study of journalism in the country. Consequently, a focus of its research repertoire is on journalism and journalistic texts. Publications are in Greek and some staff has published entirely in Greek. The committee understands and is of the opinion that publishing in the Greek language is necessary for the fulfillment of the mission of the department as an educational organization in the specific area of journalism.

The committee, however, believes that the generally extrovert approach of the Department in its other academic activities (Erasmus, life long learning and conference participation and organization) must be supported by a sustainable program of

communicating research among international peers. It is vital that the department unfolds a strategy geared towards international publications of peer-reviewed journals in a systematic way that will supplement and support the publications in the Greek language. It is our assessment that most faculty are in a position to do so, due to their familiarization with other academic programs and traditions. A plan that will take advantage of and improve upon the Department's respectable presence in international rankings of Higher Education Institutions is recommended.

Externally funded research projects do not occupy a large part of the department's research profile. Possible reasons and conditions identified for this are the following:

- a. an overall prohibitive climate caused by the financial crisis in the country which resulted in reduced funding possibilities from almost the start of the examined period (since 2008);
- b. pre-existing scarce funding opportunities for scholarly research in social sciences and humanities
- c. underdeveloped research strategy and planning, due to both structural and administrative hindrances and concentration on teaching provision as a priority.

The faculty is beginning to show signs of successful grant bidding especially with projects that are oriented towards technological applications and education in connecting the university and department with the wider local community.

An internationally recognized standards strategy to support research is the established practice of sabbatical leave. The department has made full use of the sabbatical possibility, which is regulated as a leave between 2 months to 12 months after the completion of 3 years of service and can be taken at any rank. According to existing statutory regulations, it is the Rector's Office that ultimately rules over the approval and monitoring of sabbatical leave.

It is the view of the Committee that the Department can take a more active role in incorporating the sabbatical system into a systematic research strategy to enhance international esteem and impact of research. Nevertheless, an expectation for a specific 'measurable' output in the form of publication/s should be built into the system. Moreover, the return of colleagues could be accompanied by dissemination of results within the department.

International faculty also visits the department during their sabbatical leaves. The department offers office space, access to resources and library.

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).*

Information Communication Technology services provided by Aristotle University of Thessaloniki are very good, including also several applications, platforms (e.g., blackboard) that support the learning process.

The central library of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki is fully equipped and spacious. On the other hand, the space for Department's library is extremely small and the budget very limited, which prohibit the expansion of the relevant collection.

The main problem of the Department is its dysfunctional spatial organization: teaching rooms, labs, library, secretary and staff offices are located in three different buildings across the center of Thessaloniki.

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

Most of the administrative procedures run by the Department are processed electronically, including course material, announcements, as well as formal procedures, including registration of students, grading, and so forth.

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

One of the problems for the students is that the Department's premises are not part of the University campus. Nevertheless, students have an active presence in the Department's activities.

IMPLEMENTATION

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

The dispersed activities of the Department in different sites is a critical problem; it affects the mobility of the staff and the students; it creates problems for the safety of the equipment; and it makes the overall administration of the activities hectic.

- *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 central library of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki hosts more than 1.000.000 books, over 3.000 scientific journals, around 450.000 e-books, and audiovisual material; and it provides access to main electronic sources and databases (though occasional problems have occurred over the last few years due to the delay of central administrative system of Greek universities to pay the memberships).

Department's library hosts 5.100 books, 40 scientific journals, audiovisual material (films and documentaries), graduate/postgraduate/doctoral theses. Moreover, it is linked to the central library's catalogue (OPAC); it participates in the inter-loan system of Greek libraries, and it runs seminars for first year students of the Department on the evaluation of informational education and open access platforms. However, due to the limited space, there is no study room, and the technical infrastructure is poor (PCs, printers and scanners).

Information and Communication Technologies are highly employed in the teaching process. There is an electronic platform (e-class) for the courses that is broadly used by the students. During the academic year 2012-13 two lectures were video recorded in terms of the OPENCOURSES program. In addition, the websites of the labs were updated in terms of EΠΕΑΕΚ II program (2000-2006).

Student counseling is very good and the students of all programs are very satisfied with it.

RESULTS

• *Are administrative and other services adequate and functional?*

The limited number of the administrative personnel and the technical staff cannot support the needs of the department.

Regarding the secretarial administration, it has been severely reduced to two people (the duties of one of the secretarial staff were suspended the week the committee visited the university); this has had as a result an extreme increase of workload per person. Moreover, there is no head administration and no allocation of duties; everyone has to do everything.

For a long time labs were lacking technical staff to support their activities (although normally the Department has a provision for 20 people). Since last week one technical staff joined the Department and one more is expected in the near future.

• *How does the Department view the particular results?*

The academic and administration staff as well as students consider these limits important deterrent factors for the proper function of the Department.

IMPROVEMENTS

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

The Department works with the Dean of the recently formed Faculty of Economic and Political Sciences, which it recently joined, and the upper administration to find solutions to the problems it faces.

• *Initiatives undertaken in this direction*

The Department has submitted a proposal to the central administration of the University for the relocation of its premises and the recruitment of academic and technical staff.

• *Please, comment on quality, originality and significance of the Department's initiatives.*
 There are very strong relations and networks with local and national social, cultural and production organizations and cooperation with diverse social actors and media sectors in specific

Collaboration with social, cultural and production organizations

The Department has an impressive record of collaborations with organisations in the broader community and of social, cultural and production character. It has collaborated with the Open University, the Journalists Union, various media and cultural organisations. The biggest loss for the department is the one deriving from the shut down of the ERT the Public Service Broadcaster by the government and which closure left the Department without a major quality partner in journalism education and cultural production.

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.

The Department of Journalism and Mass Communications has enjoyed a successful development in the past two decades and managed to establish itself in the region and the country as the leading and most trusted institution for the education of new generations of journalists and media and communication professionals. It has also very successfully entered the international rankings based on the quality of a number of performance criteria and has produced excellent graduates. It has done so while overcoming serious administrative, institutional and infrastructural deficiencies and weaknesses. Some of these challenges and inhibiting factors are still present at least in the short term. The most important ones are the centralization of decision-making for the future of the Department at State and University levels; the current financial crisis and the uncertainties it creates; understaffing at all levels, and the demands on sustaining the performance levels that led to its entering world rankings.

At the undergraduate level, the decisions made by the State about the number of admissions will create significant problems in hosting, accommodating and training of new cohorts of students, due to two unchanged parameters: the level of staffing and the limited facilities for the Department.

At departmental level, proposals have been submitted for larger and more modern lab facilities for the training of journalists. At the same time, the levels of staffing depend on State decisions. Currently, administrative support staff are reduced to 2, effectively serving over 800 staff and students. The quality of the learning experience will be compromised

even if numbers of incoming students are kept at around 150, which equals to double the hitherto existing numbers with which the department has managed to build its excellent reputation and provide excellent pedagogical support. This would immediately mean that the staff-student ratio would increase with the consequence of lower performance on the student learning quality criterion in the international rankings. Also importantly, the Department would not be in a position to fulfill its mission as set down by Law.

At postgraduate level the consequence of not replacing four members of staff who are entering retirement in the short term, coupled with the uncertainty of financial viability, would seriously compromise not only the quality of postgraduate curriculum, but also jeopardize the carefully planned future MA programs, and hence, hinder growth. The postgraduate level is one area of academic growth that would lead into more doctoral students and therefore the building up and maintenance of academic reputation of the Department's work. If neglected, the links to the international community as well as the possibility of a sort of income supporting other academic activities might be also jeopardized.

The Department has put careful planning into its future and has provided a detailed plan of action. The Committee feels that the priorities set by the Department are appropriate and target the right objectives, namely to maintain and increase its international standing and to maintain its commitment to teaching excellence. Both are ambitious goals with regard the dangers deriving from inability to act with professional autonomy. Red tape seriously hinders innovative action to develop programs that can attract international students and raise visibility for the Department and the University. This is not an area the Department can affect. The areas that are to some extent in the hands of the Department are the ones that faculty has already excelled, such as commitment to high quality teaching. In the meantime, the energy and innovation that has characterized faculty is part of the goals for its long term future through the development of new MA programs, revision and rejuvenation of the undergraduate programs, the ambitious aim to set up an open access peer reviewed international academic journal, and the attention to the development of start-ups deriving from innovative collaborations between students and faculty.

The Department already has all the skills necessary to make all this happen, but it depends on the conditions around it, the level of autonomy it can gain to better manage its own affairs and lead its own development.

F. Final Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC

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

Our overall impression of the Department's performance in the examined period was very positive from the beginning of the evaluation process and has remained very positive until its completion.

Although relatively young, the Department has managed to meet high standards in teaching, has produced notable research output and has achieved local and international recognition.

The Committee has examined all aspects of the Department and has noted several strengths, including:

- Well designed curricula
- Commitment of faculty to excellence in teaching
- Commitment of faculty to research
- Very good academic and social climate
- Student satisfaction
- Systematic reflection and self-evaluation
- Very good relationships with a variety of organizations
- Developing international reputation

The Committee has noted the following weaknesses, some of which are beyond the control of the Department:

- Reduced state funding
- Centralized decision making (University and State levels)
- Limited infrastructure
- Absence of self-generated income
- Disproportionately few Special Teaching Staff members (EETI)
- Lack of support teaching staff (e.g., teaching assistants)
- Inadequate number of secretarial support staff
- Limited participation of faculty in externally funded projects
- Limited record of international peer-reviewed publications
- Design of the doctoral program

The Committee is convinced that the Department is committed to maintaining its high standard as an educational and research unit as well as to make more progress toward excellence. In this direction, the report will conclude with a brief discussion of certain issues already mentioned in the main part and certain suggestions.

(1) Faculty

The teaching load of Research and Teaching Staff already exceeds what is normally understood as maximum load (2 courses per semester). In addition, to maintain its excellence in teaching, the Department will need to accommodate the large incoming undergraduate cohorts.

(a) The Department can collaborate with the two sister departments (Political Science and Economics) to offer common courses.

(b) The University should make every effort to hire more Special Teaching Staff (EET), including lab specialists.

(c) At the University level, budgetary adjustments can be made to allow for the hiring of Teaching Assistants (e.g., doctoral students). Beyond the benefit to the Department, such policy will enhance the collaboration between faculty and students, and will be very valuable to the doctoral students themselves who will gain experience in teaching and will enrich their academic profiles.

(2) Undergraduate Program

A social science research methodology course (first or second year) should be required for all undergraduate students.

(3) Postgraduate Program

The Committee supports the initiative of the Department to launch a new MA program in English (MA in Digital Media, Communication and Journalism).

(4) Doctoral Program

Although the doctoral program enjoys good reputation among students and academics, a more structured design should be considered. The following are possible options in this direction:

(a) A research methodology seminar delivered by research active professors.

(b) Comprehensive major exam: To secure that all doctoral students have read the major works in their field and have been introduced to current issues and debates.

In addition, during the course of their doctoral studies, students should be supported and encouraged to be involved in teaching (as teaching assistants and/or independent lecturers).

(5) Research

The Committee recommends that the Department develops a comprehensive short and medium term research strategy, which will provide structure and common goals to the various initiatives and activities, currently undertaken on a rather ad hoc basis. This strategy must be coupled with a long term vision that serves the Department's international

visibility and proven strengths in teaching excellence. The Department should pay particular attention to

- (a) enhancement of international publications
- (b) securing research funding
- (c) integration of doctoral students
- (d) internationalization of researchers

The Committee applauds the pro-active manner in which the Department approaches these challenges, e.g., the initiative of launching an international peer-reviewed journal. It also applauds the establishment of four new Laboratories: two of them, the Laboratory of Social Media and the Laboratory of Peace Journalism have recently been established, while another two, the Laboratory of Cultural & Visual Studies and the Laboratory of Political Communication & Communication Policy are due to be established in the following semester.

The Members of the Committee

Name and Surname	Signature
1. Katharine Sarikakis	
2. Pantelis Vatikiotis	
3. Stelios Stylianou	