

HELLENIC REPUBLIC

HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION AGENCY



**REPORT ON QUALITY
IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

2009

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**ATHENS
July 2010**

COMPOSITION OF THE HQA

On 31 December 2009, the composition of the plenary of the HQA was as follows (Law 3374/2005, article 11):

PRESIDENT

Spyros A. Amourgis

Architect-Town Planner, Emeritus Professor California State Polytechnic University

MEMBERS

Yiannis Vlachos

Professor, TEI of Heraklion

Achilleas Gravanis

Professor, University of Crete

Kostas Diamantaras

Professor, TEI of Thessaloniki

Louiza Loukopoulou

Director of Research, National Hellenic Research Foundation

Napoleon Maravegias

Professor, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Kostas Margaritis

Professor, University of Macedonia

Kleomenis Oikonomou

Professor, TEI of Athens

Vasilis Panagou

Professor, TEI of Kalamata

Vasilis Papazoglou

Professor, National Technical University of Athens (until 30/11/2009)

Anna Symeonidou-Anastasiadou

Professor, Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki

Panos Tsakoglou

Professor, Athens University of Economics and Business (until 31/08/2009)

REPORT ON QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

2009

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PART ONE

ASSESSMENT OF THE WORK OF THE HQA IN 2009

1. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE COMPOSITION OF THE HQA

1.1 Members of the HQA

In 2009 the following changes occurred in the composition of the authority:

- July 2009: C. Paliadeli-Saatsoglou, professor at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, stood down as a member of the Authority on her election to the European Parliament. She was replaced by A. Anastasiadou-Symenonidou, also a professor at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

- August 2009: P. Tsakoglou, professor at the Athens University of Economics and Business, stood down as a member of the Authority on his appointment to the Study Committee on national insurance. No replacement had been appointed by the end of 2009.

- November 2009: V. Papazoglou, professor at the National Technical University of Athens, stood down as a member of the Authority on his appointment to the position of Special Secretary for Higher Education at the Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs.

1.2 Support staff

Since its foundation the authority has had problems with support from administrative and academic staff. Until 31-12-2008 the work of the HQA was supported exclusively by:

- a limited number of project contracts, funded by the Operational Programme II for Education and Initial Vocational Training, and

- a small number of staff, on secondment from HEIs and other public sector services.

With the completion of the OP Education on 31-12-2008 all the aforementioned project contracts ceased to exist.

The Authority made an effort throughout 2009 to second suitable staff from other public sector services. Through these efforts, only in the last months of 2009 was the secondment of five (5) employees secured, of whom four are from agencies of the Ministry of Education and one from the Ministry of Culture. The secondments of three members of staff were renewed, while two seconded staff members left the Authority of their own volition.

An especially positive development in supporting the work of the HQA was the secondment, on an invitation, of Dr Dimitris Deniozou, a leading member of the General Secretariat for Research and Technology of the Ministry of Education, with a long and significant experience, undertook the general management of the HQA's administrative services from the end of 2009.

2. LEGISLATIVE REFORMS

In the first three years of its operations (2005-2008), the HQA faced a series of difficulties on an institutional level which created problems and insurmountable impediments, especially regarding the absorption of funds to remunerate the external experts (see the 2008 HQA Report, Part One, para. 2).

For this reason, throughout 2009 the Authority prepared a lengthy series of amendments to its basic operational law (3374/2005), which it submitted to the Ministry of Education, with the goals of:

- facilitating its operations
- the transparent and speedy completion of the procedures for evaluating the academic units
- saving resources by cutting down on unnecessary expenditures

A small part of the Authority's proposals (concerning the Members of the Authority and the manner of compensating the external experts) was integrated into its founding Law 3374/2005 in September 2009. Based on this reform, in November 2009 the Authority proposed to the Minister of Education that a joint ministerial decision be issued, although none had been issued by 31-12-2009. However the main part of the requested amendments was still pending (including the problem of legal support for the Authority).

2.1 The internal regulations

Also pending at the Ministry of Education since January 2008 were the draft Internal Regulations of the HQA, without which it is not possible to second staff from the public sector. The Internal Regulations were resubmitted in March 2009 and remained pending in the Minister of Education's office. In December 2009, the new administration at the Ministry of Education agreed to certain improvements to the HQA's founding law, and it was thus considered necessary to re-examine the draft Internal Regulations and adapt them appropriately, in light of the anticipated amendments to the law in the first half of 2010.

3. FUNDING

After the completion on 31-12-2008 of the OP Education project "Development of a National Quality Evaluation System in Higher Education", which was the main source of the HQA's funding, the Authority's total expenses for the year 2009 were covered by its Regular Budget (part of the Ministry of Education's budget). Until 2008, OP Education's activities covered a total budget of €2.63 million, of which it was possible to use only €0.5 million. This low absorption was due to the complete lack of (a) legal support for the specialist administrative staff from 1/9/2006 until January 2008, and (b) reliable information provided to the HQA by the responsible services of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance on the financial management procedure relating to independent administrative authorities (which are not foreseen in the Constitution).

In December 2008 the Authority submitted an application for ESPA funding for the period 2009-2013 ("Development of an Evaluation System for Quality and Documentation in Higher Education Institutes"), with a budget of € 14,641,756. The Ministry of Education had initially foreseen a budget of €25 million for the HQA. However, after the cost estimation for the external evaluations and a few of the Authority's operations needs, the HQA proposed to the Ministry of Education that the remaining approximate €11 million be given to the HEIs for (a) the organisation and support of the QAUs, the internal Quality Assurance Units in each HEI, and (b) the creation of a database in each HEI which would collaborate with the Ministry of Education and the HQA. The Ministry accepted this proposal and in June 2009 it invited HEIs to submit funding applications.

The HQA's ESPA project proposal for 2009-2013 was approved and the Project was then initiated on 13/7/2009, although the signing of the relevant implementing decisions (Joint Ministerial Decisions) by the Ministries of Education and Finance was

delayed due to the change in government after the national elections in October 2009.

From the above it can be seen that until 31-12-2009 the Authority was not able to absorb ESPA funds and, hence, to restart the external evaluations (see below).

4. PARTICIPATION IN CONFERENCES AND OTHER EVENTS

24-25 February 2009 Participation of the President at the presentation on evaluation methods and Centres of Excellence in Universities 2010-12, held by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) in Helsinki.

March 2009 Participation of HQA member Professor Yiannis Vlachos in the European Universities Association (EUA) conference in Rome.

6-7 April 2009 Visit by a representation from China (the Deputy Minister of Education of Region of Shanghai and other services) on their request, in order to be informed about the HQA and Quality Assurance procedures in Greece.

8 April 2009 Speech by the President of the HQA at the one-day conference organised by the Union of Greek MPs and MEPs on "Evaluation in Higher Education" at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs amphitheatre in Athens.

15-16 June 2009 Participation of the President of the HQA in the ENQA seminar on "Internal Quality Assurance - Facing common challenges" in the Hague.

26 June 2009 The President of the HQA updated the Rectors Synod in Ioannina.

2 July 2009 The President of the HQA updated the Synod of TEI Presidents in Kavala.

September-October 2009 Presentation of the principles of quality assurance by HQA member Professor Yiannis Vlachos at awareness-raising meetings held at the Athens School of Fine Arts (9/9/2009), the University of the Aegean (29/10/2009) and the Hellenic Open University (30/10/2009).

24 September 2009 Presentation by the President of the HQA, and HQA members Professor Yiannis Vlachos and Professor Anna Anastasiadou-Symeonidou to the President and Members of the HQA of the Agricultural University of Athens

28-29 September 2009 Representation of the HQA at the annual General Assembly of the ENQA in Barcelona.

1 October 2009 Meeting at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki with the presidents of the QAUs (Vice Rectors of the universities of Thessaloniki, Macedonia,

Thrace, Western Macedonia and Thessaly, as well as the Presidents of the TEI of Kavala, Serres, Western Macedonia and Larissa) on internal evaluation procedures (annual academic unit reports and QUA reports).

7-10 October 2009 EUA Conference at the University of Giessen. Presentation as invited speaker by the President of the HQA at the conference on "Transnational provision of education services, procedures and impacts for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)".

29-31 October 2009 Presentation to Greek and foreign Greek-language professors of linguistics by HQA member Professor Anna Anastasiadou-Symeonidou, on quality assurance procedures in education and their participation as external experts in the HQA's work. This presentation was given at the 9th International Conference on Greek Linguistics at the University of Chicago.

19-20 November 2009 Participation of HQA members Professors Vasilis Papazoglou and Yiannis Vlachos at the Fourth European Quality Assurance Forum of the EUA in Copenhagen.

3 December 2009 Presentation by the President of the HQA to the Presidents of the TEIs at their Synod in Messolonghi.

9 December 2009 Presentation to the members of the HQA of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki by HQA member Professor Anna Anastasiadou-Symeonidou on preparing QAU Internal Reports.

17 December 2009 Participation of the President of the HQA at the Hellenic Institute of Architecture workshop in Athens on Green Development and Architecture and its Protection, as an invited speaker.

5. PROBLEMS AND DYSFUNCTIONS

The inability to continue the external evaluations in 2009 as a result of the ending of the OP Education funding programme and the lack of support staff was exacerbated by the problems the Authority encountered from the Ministry of Education's auditing bodies. Specifically, the Authority had repeatedly submitted in 2008 for approval by the Minister of Education, which oversees the Authority "to inspect the legality of its actions" (Article 10, para. 1 of Law 3374/2005), a draft decision for the approval of work assignment contracts for external collaborators for the support work for the HQA, with funding from OP Education. The HQA's proposal was rejected by the Minister, who issued specific guidelines through the Special Secretary for University Education (document 51649/21-4-2008). The Minister of Education's guidelines, however, on the basis of which the Authority proceeded to

sign contracts assigning projects with a total cost of €187,000 for the second half of 2008, were subsequently questioned by the relevant auditing services of the Ministry of Education. This development threatened to exclude the projects, however, with a serious cost to the public purse of €0.5 million. Undoubtedly, the lack of legal support, specialised staff and accurate and clear guidelines for the HQA had the effect of slowing the rate of absorption of OP Education funds and, ultimately, necessitated the return of most of the HQA's approved funding for that period from EU funds.

Eventually, the government, realising the seriousness of the work done by the HQA and the fact that it erred in this case by following the inaccurate guidelines of the Ministry of Education, legalised these contracts through a legislative amendment.

6. CONCLUSIONS OF PART ONE

The aforementioned problems in the operations of the HQA are the product of the systemic problems of public administration, which in the past years have been exacerbated by the adverse – and today dramatic – economic conditions. The HQA was founded in 2005 as a "flag-bearing" authority. Nonetheless, even today it has few specialised administrative staff and faces unacceptable bureaucratic problems on a daily basis.

The HQA's funding has come from structural funds, firstly the OP Education and today ESPA, with specific end dates (2008 the first, 2013 the second). The inability to set up a Special Account for absorbing the significant available EU funds means that all expenses are subject to an auditing body, which does not understand the special needs that arise from (a) implementing the obligations that Greece has towards the EU, and (b) the need for the urgent recruitment of support staff for the completion of the external reports and, especially, (c) the particular concern to provide good hospitality and prompt compensation to the experts/evaluators from abroad. It should be noted that the compensation for the foreign experts is essentially to repay them for the travel and accommodation expenses that they themselves have already paid, and not additional remuneration!

It is very difficult to absorb the ESPA funds, however, without the necessary management support infrastructure and the appropriate institutional framework. As a result, the operations of the HQA effectively rely on the sacrifices of its members (many of whom, it should be noted, travel also outside Athens to perform their duties in the HEI in which they are employed), and on its very few but honourable seconded staff and employees.

PART TWO

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Introduction

With Law 3374/2005, the government introduced the institution of Quality Assurance in Higher Education for the first time in Greece and established the HQA as the independent administrative authority responsible for its coordination and implementation.

The significance of this legislation was slow to be appreciated, both by its main stakeholders, i.e. the academic community, teachers and students, and by wider society. Paradoxically, however, it was undervalued by the state itself, which had established it with great delay as a result of commitments it had made in 1999 towards the European Union and not because there was a particular awareness at the time of the need for such an institution to improve and rationally design the functions and goals of the HEIs, in accordance with international standards.

Today, five years after the passing of Law 3374 and four years since the HQA was first established, the situation has, in one area at least, changed significantly:

The value of quality assurance and the evaluation procedures it introduced are now acknowledged by a significant section of the administration and academic faculty of the HEIs, who actively participate both through their representation in the HQA and in implementing the internal and external evaluation procedures in their institutions.

The importance of quality has been less appreciated by aspiring and current students and by wider society, which sees higher education as a simple springboard for gaining degree titles and employment rights.

As for the state, which perhaps thought that the legislation and establishment of the Committee automatically ensured quality, it believed that the successful operation of institutions that were novel for Greek reality, yet unknown to the administrative and public financing mechanisms, could proceed without experienced administrative and technical support staff or the appropriate accommodation and, especially, without provisions or even the simple understanding of the problems that it encountered. These include, for example,

inviting and providing reasonable hospitality and the timely and decent reception of distinguished scientists as evaluators from abroad. In this way, although it secured from the OP Education all the necessary funds for the operation of the HQA, their absorption was not only dramatically delayed, with the result that it had to return the largest portion of the approved OP Education funds, but it created the risk that the whole project would be excluded from it, with the accompanying burden on the public budget (see above).

The results of these problems is that the initial estimation for preparing external evaluations in 2009 was overturned, and unfortunately their progress in the coming years is also under threat, despite the fact that **the speedy completion of the external evaluations would provide objective data on the most rational and effective way of developing higher education policy.**

1. CULTURE OF QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The main goal of Law 3374 and the work - *inter alia* - of the HQAs is to introduce, establish, and develop a **culture of quality within the higher education institutions** themselves by creating organs and internal procedures to provide continuous monitoring and assessment of the work and operation of the academic unit in particular and the institution more generally.

To achieve this goal, the legislators established specific organs within the HEIs, namely the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) on the academic unit level, the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) on the institutional level and, on the central level, the HQA as the independent administrative authority, responsible for coordinating (a) **internal** and (a) **external quality assurance procedures.**

It is commonly understood by those responsible (academic community, state) and the stakeholders (public opinion) that quality in higher education is conditional and depends upon **External Evaluation**, when this is done with guarantees of experience, credibility, transparency and objectivity. The value of the "outside witness" is indisputably great and can function as a lever for recognition but also, primarily, improvement. The HQA's conviction, which is confirmed by international experience, is that of even greater significance, especially in the long term, for quality in higher education is the adoption, establishment and continuous development of healthy procedures for **Internal Evaluation (Self-Evaluation)**, as these constitute continuous and secure foundations for the reinforcement and diffusion of a **Culture of Quality and Accountability**, which guarantees continuous improvement and helps avoid slipping back into bad practices. Indeed, the change in the mentality of HEIs with the adoption of continuous improvement through self-

evaluation in all their activities will create in the long-term solid foundations for the anticipated growth of the spirit of excellence, which higher education needs.

Above all, however, the systematic operation within the HEIs of internal evaluation procedures will provide an important tool for the further development of the autonomy of HEIs, as the continuous monitoring of information and data on the operation of all their academic units will enable informed interventions the improvement of their central administration at all levels of the institution, and will also provide evidence for the requests that the HEIs make to the state.

2. EXTERNAL EVALUATION

The suspension of the external evaluations throughout the whole of 2009 was a significant problem. The restarting of the external evaluation programme in 2010, after the release of the additional funding (see above p. 6) is expected to help speed up the process. It is, however, a fact that the wider acceptance of the institution of quality assurance within the HEIs has already led to the accumulation of a large number of Internal Evaluation Reports (see Tables 3-4) and that the unavoidable delay necessitates the revision of the initial programming of the external evaluations. With its current capacity, the HQA is in a position to conduct approximately 120 external evaluations by the end of 2010. This number could increase if the following limiting factors did not act as impediments:

- The Authority continues to operate with a small number of alternating, seconded support staff without specific experience.
- Most experts, as they are from abroad, require at least three to six months' notice, which has postponed the starting date for the majority of evaluations to after September 2010.
- The intolerable, complex procedures for returning the expenses for transport and accommodation already paid for by the experts and the continuing nascent administrative problems in their compensation procedures have created a feeling of insecurity among the staff and members of the HQA and much dissatisfaction on the part of the external evaluators, which threatens to derail the whole procedure internationally. When compared with the process in other countries, where external evaluators are fully compensated for their expenses and even receive an additional remuneration, the problem is even greater.
- The HQA will have to replace many of its most experienced members, whose term ends on 31 August 2010. As a result of this, and in combination with the lack of experienced staff, there is a danger of creating further difficulties for speeding up completion of the Authority's work.

3. INTERNAL EVALUATION PROCEDURES

3.1 The intervention of the HQA in support of the QAUs

Among its efforts to establish and develop a "culture of quality" in higher education and support the QAUs also after the preparation of the final budget for the project ("Development of a National Quality Evaluation System in Higher Education", see above p. 6) the HQA had proposed already at the end of 2008 to the ESPA Managing Authority that approximately €11 million (from the initial forecast for the HQA of approximately €25 million) be made available, through an open competition for a special project with particular specifications to assist the HEIs and with the QAUs of the universities and TEIs as beneficiaries. The proposed project would have given all HEIs the opportunity to create digital databases for all the information and data on their operations, useful for the more effective monitoring of their diverse work and for drawing reliable and constantly updated data from the central administration and from the HQA.

- The HQA's proposal was judged useful and led to a call from the ESPA Managing Authority and the OP "Education and Lifelong Learning" for the "QAU" project (24/6/2009), through which the amount of approximately €11 million has been made available to 39 HEIs. In the call for this project it is clearly stated that it involves:

*"the creation of a local IT support system for each institution, **compatible with the operations of the HQA**, which will include support procedures for the organisation of the evaluation with the ability to securely enter standardised data and the reliable management of the results and publication of reports in an online environment."*

In addition to this important initiative and with the aim of helping the HEIs conform to the strict funding preconditions set by the Managing Authority, the HQA:

- prepared guidelines for creating Digital Databases in individual HEIs and for the format of the data entered, securing compatibility both between HEIs as well as with the central database both of the HQA and with the Ministry of Education's central administration.
- In September and December 2009 it held a series of special meetings to provide information and clarifications with the Presidents (Vice Rectors of Universities and Vice Presidents of TEIs) of the QAUs. The meetings primarily concerned the work of the QAUs and the Internal Reports of the HEIs. Indicatively, meetings were held with the representatives of the QAUs of the universities and TEIs of Northern Greece, Thessaly and Central Greece, Athens, the Peloponnese and Crete, as well as visits to the Aristotle University of

Thessaloniki, the University of Macedonia, the TEI of Messolonghi, the TEI of Kalamata, the University and TEI of Crete, etc.

- It also held advisory meetings with the presidents of university academic units and heads of TEI academic units, offering them guidelines for completing the forms for the "Annual Internal Report" and the operations of the quality assurance organs in individual academic units.

Alongside this, the HQA:

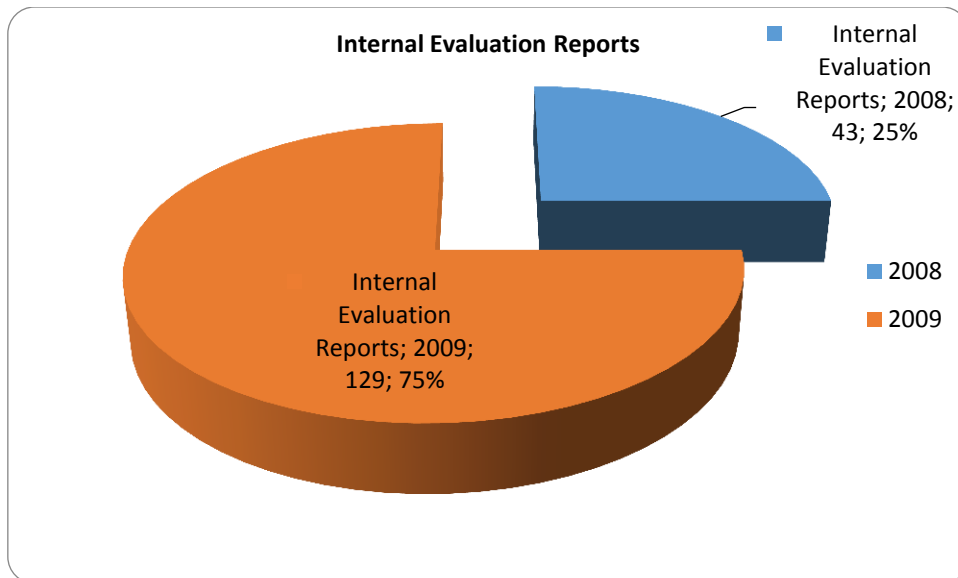
- Prepared and distributed a special publication with guidelines and analytical tables of the data and information for completing the "Data Reports" by the academic units and institutions (*Annual Internal Reports* and *Internal Reports* of Law 3374/2005, article 2).

As a result of the HQA's above initiatives, the academic units of the HEIs and the QAUs prepared the first "Annual Internal Reports of the Academic Units" and the first collated "Internal Reports" of the Institutions, which are already proving to be a useful tool in the management of their operations by the central administrations of the HEIs. Moreover, the proposals submitted by the QAUs for ESPA funding, as mentioned above, were approved and initiated in early 2010.

With ESPA funding for the "QAU" action, it is anticipated that Quality Assurance Units will be established in all HEIs, that they will be staffed and the IT system for supporting their activities will be implemented.

3.2 Preparation and submission of "Internal Evaluation Reports – Self-Evaluation"

The preparation and submission of Internal Evaluation Reports, which began at a slow pace in 2007 and exclusively on the initiative of certain academic units – the first to recognise the importance of quality assurance procedures – was significantly speeded up in 2009, signifying a clear change in the policy of the HEIs, perhaps as a result of the policy and actions of the HQAs. This rise can be seen in the following chart:



The HQA continuously monitors the submission of the Internal Evaluation Reports (Self-Evaluation) and corresponds with the academic units, indicating to them on a case-by-case basis things that need completing, improving and updating, in order to secure the greatest possible coverage and completion of the Report in the light of the planned External Evaluations.

The increasing activity for the preparation and submission of the Internal Evaluation Reports of the academic units is expected to intensify in 2010. Over 50% of approximately 500 academic units in Greece are expected to have submitted their Internal Evaluation Report to the HQA before the end of the year.

3.3 Observations on the activities of the academic units

Of interest is the fact that the distribution of institutions that have so far submitted their reports is not even. While there is a relative balance between universities and TEIs (respectively, 105 out of 286, 37% and 67 out of 213 reports, 31%), the same cannot be said for the distribution on the basis of institution. Thus, reports have been submitted by 11 out of 24 universities. Correspondingly, the reports submitted by TEI academic units come primarily from only 12 out of 16 institutions (see tables 1-7). This increasing positive differentiation in the attitude of the HEIs to the quality assurance institutions enables us to presuppose that the rate of submission of Internal Evaluation Reports will continue to increase.

3.4 Findings and conclusions from the Internal Evaluation Reports

By the end of 2009, the HQA had received 172 of the 220 Internal Evaluation Reports that have been submitted thus far. The submission of an Internal Evaluation Report activates the External Evaluation process. The HQA first studies the Reports, checking that they are complete and respond to the quality assurance procedures and criteria, as these have been set out by the HQA. Approximately 2/3 of the reports were complete and contained, in addition to the quantitative and descriptive information, a solid and in-depth analytical discussion. Significant lacunae were observed in 1/3 of the reports: inadequate description of the academic unit's activities, no analysis of the evaluation data, and non-conformity with the quality assurance criteria. A small number of reports, however, were specious, superficial and unsuitable for external evaluation. These were returned to the academic units with detailed observations for their partial or radical rewriting.

During its communication with the academic units to support them in the internal evaluation procedures and for the preparation of the internal Evaluation reports, the HQA noted the **overturning of the initial climate of suspicion towards the institution**. In the overwhelming majority of internal evaluation reports, the usefulness of the organised and substantiated documentation of the academic unit's activities for the future planning of their goals and activities was noted.

It is also acknowledged that these procedures have introduced into the academic units a completely new way of exchanging ideas and organising activities for improving their educational and research work. Some Internal Evaluation Reports express the **concern that perhaps the whole evaluation procedure will end up as a simple automatic, bureaucratic procedure**, overlooking the fact that the systematic collection of data is a basic obligation of the administrations of the academic units and that, effectively, from now on they are not needed on an annual basis as a simple updating of the information will suffice. The **need to develop a flexible IT system, capable of being adapted to the e-Infrastructure of each HEI** is also underlined, so as to facilitate the electronic collection of the necessary data. Moreover, the need to simplify the forms proposed by the HQA for documenting the findings of the evaluation. As mentioned, the above concerns led the HQA to propose that part of its ESPA funding be offered, with an open competition, to fund the organisation of the e-Infrastructure and secretarial support of the QAUs. This has now been done, and 38 HEIs will receive funding in the coming months to the amount of €0.2-0.5 million per institution to develop the related infrastructure of their QAU. The HQA hopes that this e-Infrastructure will contribute significantly to simplifying and facilitating the procedures for collecting the necessary data for the internal evaluation. Moreover, the HQA monitors and will adapt as needed the proposed outlines in its forms, taking into account the recommendations of the

academic units.

Through its communication with the HEIs on the completion of the Internal Evaluation Reports, the HQA has noted the inability of the QAUs to comprehend their institutional role and their understandable lack of experience in coordinating the evaluations of the academic units. To improve the operations of the QAUs, the HQA organised from 2009 – and will continue with even more in 2010 – a series of visits by its members to different parts of the country, with the aim of raising awareness and supporting the QAUs in the region.

In some of the Internal Evaluation Reports the academic units express their concern at the lack of a commitment by the state to resolve the problems outlined in the evaluations. The academic units complained that there are no motives for improvements nor rewards for performance, beyond ethical ones. They overlook, however, that the obligation for the resolution of the findings and for improvements, to the extent that they are attributable to them, belong (a) to the academic units themselves, (b) to the administrations of the institutions and, of course, (c) to the state, which is bound by the Constitution to provide a high standard of higher education.

The Internal Evaluation Reports, at least those that provide a critical analysis of the data and indices, offer rich information that will of course be used during the external evaluation. Of particular interest are the best practices that some academic units describe, such as:

- attempts to attract good faculty members for other institutions and abroad,
- the continuous renewal and updating of their undergraduate programmes of study, in accordance with internationally recognised models,
- the development of educational collaborations with HEIs abroad for the mobility of students (low, thus far) through the ERASMUS programme,
- research collaborations with HEIs abroad and integration into important European research networks through participation in international research proposals,
- the qualitative and quantitative improvement of research activities and corresponding scholarly publications.
- the progressively increasing use of electronic media and the Internet in the educational and research process.

The Reports also point, however, to many lacunae, weaknesses and disadvantages that it is expected will be highlighted by the external experts and be used to prepare useful recommendations.

PART THREE

GENERAL FINDINGS ON THE STATE OF EDUCATION

As anticipated, the progress of the Quality Assurance procedures brings to light and showcases the virtues as well as all the known problems of Greek higher education. The urgent need for quality assurance in education necessitates that the weaknesses be confronted with drastic interventions.

The following points are highlighted by the HQA as being particularly important, the result in particular of the thoughtless decisions of the past 30 years.

- **Unclear national development goals for human resources.** Doubt is cast on the absorption of the large number of graduates in certain academic fields and the need for the existence and growth of many of the existing academic units of HEIs is also questioned.
- **Geographical distribution** of the HEIs and the higher education units.
 - This has resulted in the existence of even single academic units in small provincial towns or islands.
 - There are even "twin" academic units (one on the HEI's main campus and the other belonging to the same HEI in another town).
 - This distribution is not justifiable on quality criteria, while it results in unjustifiable costs, operational problems and overlaps in human resources and infrastructure.
- **Excessive number of academic units and programmes of study.**
 - These are characterised by usually unclear – and often very similar to related academic units – goals and resulting degree titles.
 - Their object is not a specific academic discipline, as is befitting for undergraduate studies, but a specialisation.
 - Their goals (and subsequently the degree titles they award) are a combination of different academic disciplines.
- **Large number of higher education institutions** in proportion to the country's population. Comparison with other EU countries with a similar population or even larger population, such as France, demonstrates the excessive numbers in Greece.

Moreover, the following phenomena also have negative impacts on the development of quality in higher education:

A. GENERAL

- Approach to HEIs that does not take into account **society's needs and their particularities and mission.**
- **Creation of "rubber-stamped academic units"** that accept students before they have even acquired a basic number of permanent staff and infrastructure.
- **Unequal distribution of resources and infrastructure** both in absolute and in relative terms in proportion to the number of students served, with the result that the regular budget is **underfunded.**
- **Significant inequalities in the distribution of teaching and administrative staff.** In some places there are too many and elsewhere dramatic absences.

B. PROGRAMME OF STUDIES

- Arbitrary **development of specialisations at undergraduate level**, with excessive – effectively postgraduate – specialisations and interdisciplinary academic units, in contrast with international trends of first degrees that offer basic knowledge, which is specialised through postgraduate studies and lifelong learning programmes.
- **Creation of a large number of postgraduate programmes**, without clear entry procedures and employment prospects, leading to an excessive number of degrees.
- **Doctoral studies are not always organised** as a coherent doctoral programme.
- **Need to define "prerequisite" courses**, in order to preserve a logical sequence on the programme of studies.
- Need for a greater **emphasis on research** and, especially, familiarising students with research.
- **Need to enrich teaching methods** on a case-by-case basis, with the use of technology and an **emphasis on practical exercises** and knowledge application.
- Need for a greater **connection of the HEIs with the local society** and the programmes of study with economic growth.

C. STUDENTS AND STUDYING

- **Limited student evaluation of courses and teaching faculty.** Most of the academic units evaluate their teaching work through questionnaires completed by the students, they control the quality and effectiveness of teaching and offer established procedures for utilising the results of this evaluation. In several cases, however, student evaluation of the teaching was done for the first time as part of the preparation for the Internal Evaluation Report.
- **Multiple examination periods.** In several institutions there are three "double" examination periods, since all courses are effectively examined in January/June/September, thus resulting in examinations every trimester at the expense of the courses.
- The **standard of the students is low**, a result of the entrance system: students with little relationship to the subject matter are accepted.
- **Great fluctuations in the annual number of new students**, with the result that in some years there is an excessive number of new entrants and other years too few.
- **The problem of the "double entry" of students:** there should not be students of "two speeds".
- **Large number of new student entrants** in proportion to the country's population, but also an **unequal distribution of students** (popular academic units and academic units with no students). In each case, this leads to a degradation of the quality of their education.
- **Non-obligatory attendance on courses: only a very small percentage attends lectures.** Student interest is limited to exams. Attendance must be obligatory for theoretical classes and not only laboratory ones, so the coherence of the course is maintained.
- **Inability to attract excellent postgraduate** students and postdoctoral researchers who go abroad given the lack of motives and studentships.
- **Significant differences in the average length of studies** and the percentage of on-time completion of studies between academic units. **The delay in completing their studies** by a relatively large percentage of students or **abandonment** of studies by students who only ostensibly register with an academic unit.

D. INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Incomplete organisational infrastructure:** this burdens the daily operations of the institutions and, consequently, their development efforts.
- **Inadequate and outdated building infrastructure or only partial use** of the teaching areas per week in some institutions (primarily universities).
- Often **outdated or inadequate laboratory equipment.**

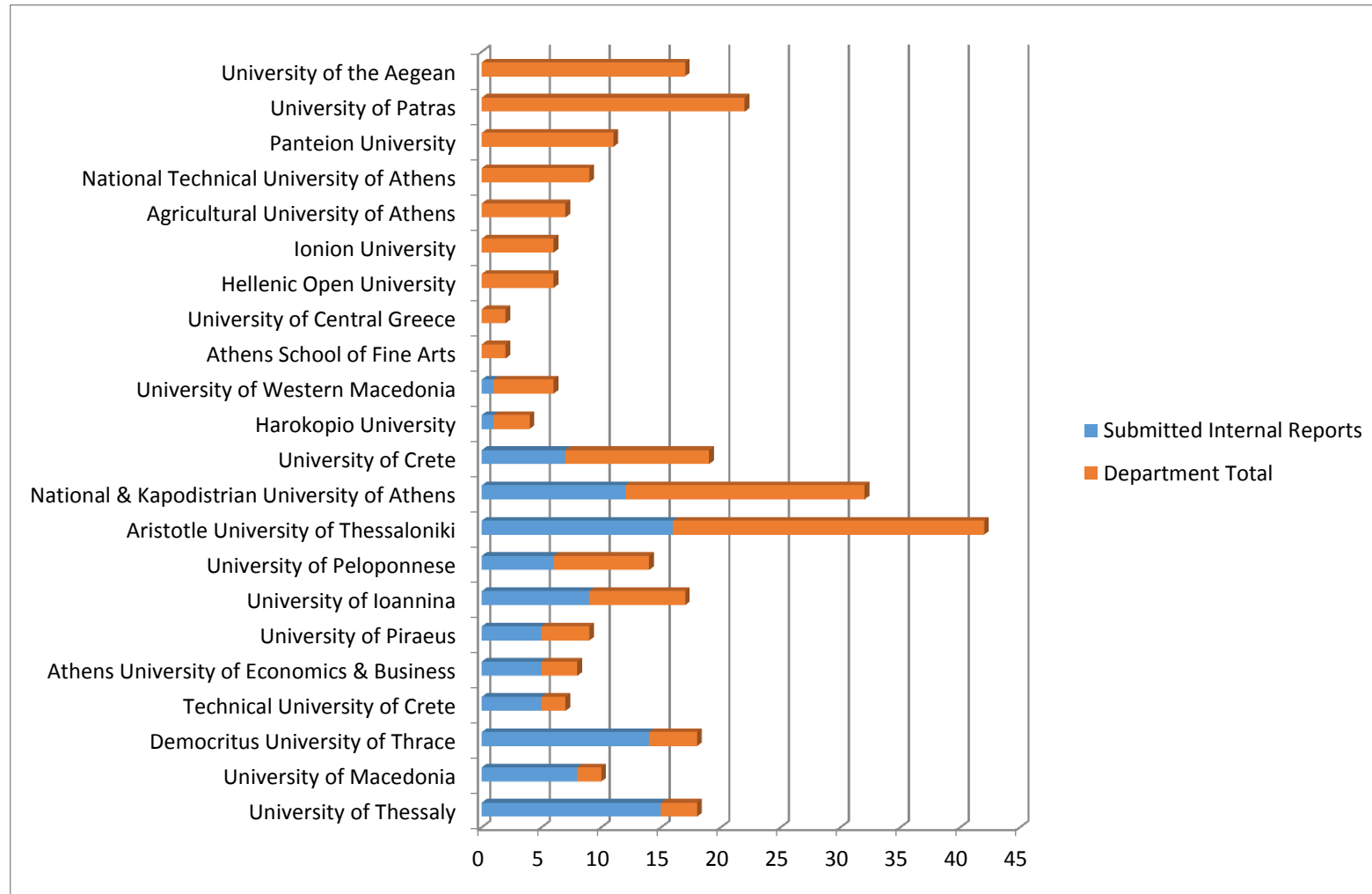
E. STAFF

- The cases of "**internal reproduction**" among the teaching and administrative staff are well known.
- **Need to recruit permanent staff** for both theoretical and laboratory courses, to ensure continuity and consistency of teaching.
- **Excessive non-university employment of the teaching and research staff** in some academic units: this creates problems for their functioning.
- Significant **omissions in the staffing** of administrative and technical services to support the educational and research activities. A great difference in the ratios of the administrative staff to students is observed between HEIs.
- **Bureaucratic and lengthy procedures for recruiting teaching** and research staff, with negative consequences in attracting quality candidates.
- Cases of academic units with a **particularly small (even just one) number of regular staff and a large number of contract teaching staff.** This problem is acute in many TEI academic units and creates significant operational problems in the education of the students.

PART FOUR

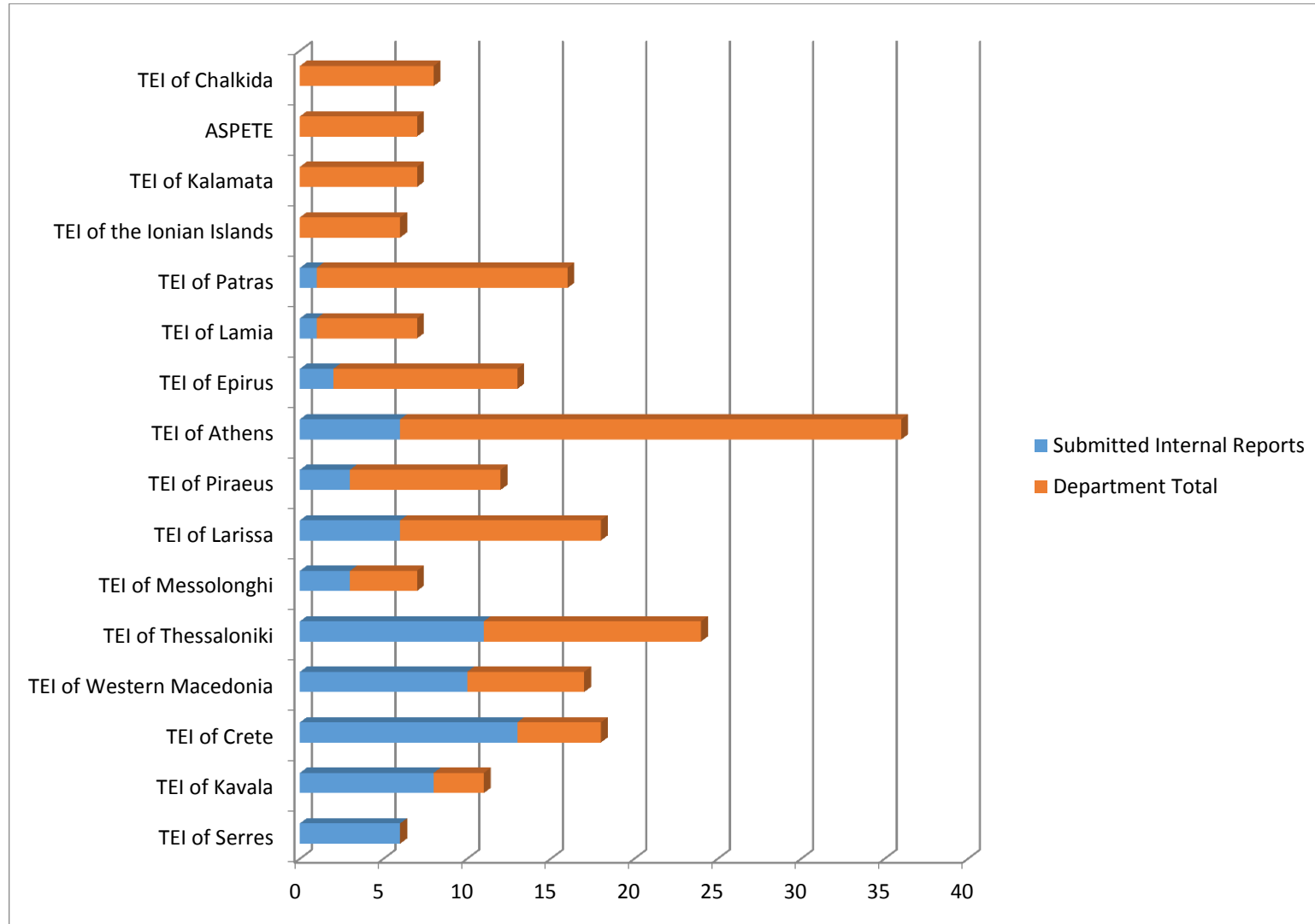
TABLES

Distribution of Internal Evaluation Reports per Institution * - UNIVERSITIES



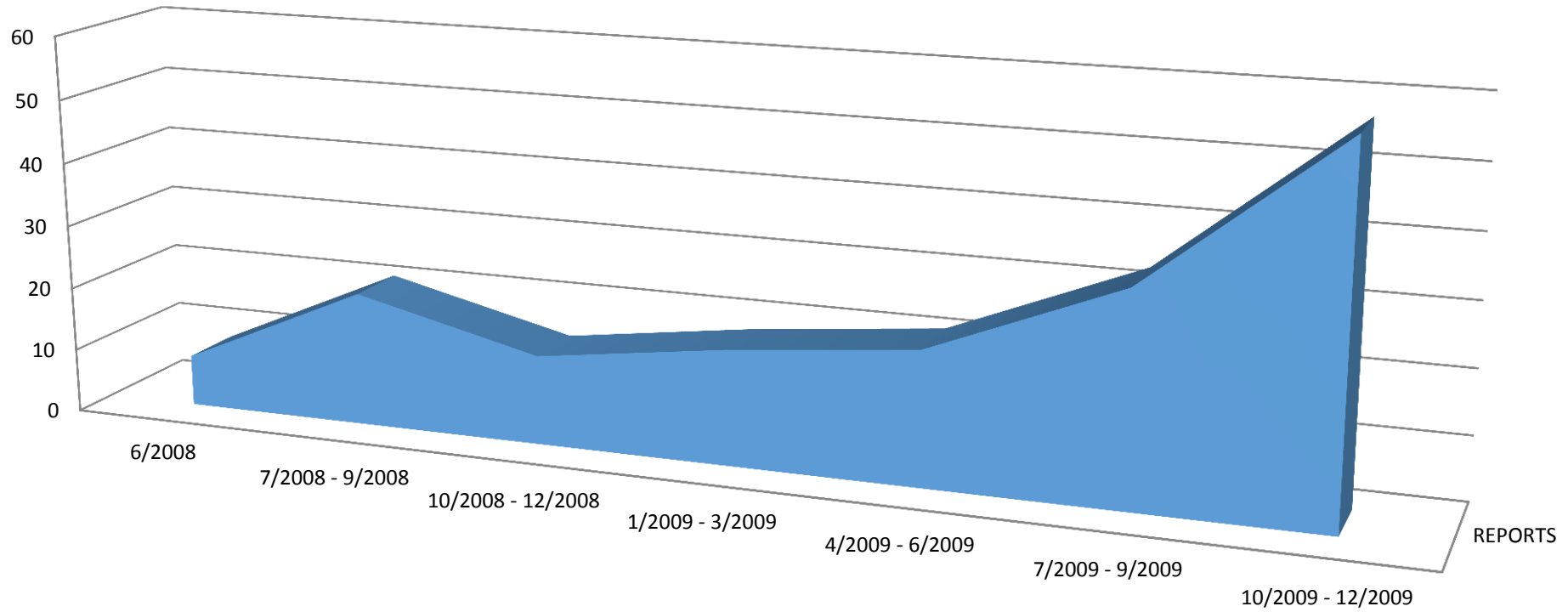
*Data: December 2009

Distribution of Internal Evaluation Reports per Institution* - TEI



***Data: December 2009**

SUBMISSION OF INTERNAL EVALUATION REPORTS JUNE 2008 - DECEMBER 2009



	6/2008	7/2008 - 9/2008	10/2008 - 12/2008	1/2009 - 3/2009	4/2009 - 6/2009	7/2009 - 9/2009	10/2009 - 12/2009
■ REPORTS	8	21	14	18	21	33	57

**Annual Internal Evaluations per academic discipline
June 2008 – December 2009**

