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EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

DEPARTMENT of Political Science and History

Panteio University, Athens, Greece

February 2014

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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 three-person External Evaluation Committee (EEC) was invited to review the Department of Political Science and History of Panteio University, Athens, Greece. The site visit took place between 18th and 20th February, 2014. The Committee followed the arrangements made by the HQAA. All the meetings took place on campus. Almost all full-time faculty members were present in the plenary meetings. The Committee met with undergraduate and postgraduate students, academic and administrative staff members (the University Rector, the Faculty Dean, the Head of the Department, the Secretariat, the Erasmus coordinators and the library staff). The Committee visited the two research centers of the Department and discussed relevant research projects. We also visited the IT lab of the Department and interacted with undergraduate students.

The Committee was not able to observe any teaching due to the fact that this was an exams period. People at the University and the Department were accommodating, open and willing to assist the Committee and provide whatever information was requested of them.

The Committee reviewed the Internal Evaluation Report of 2013-14, as well as additional material provided by the Departmental Faculty. The Committee also received CVs and publication lists of faculty members, and examined the various appendices to the Report and other statistical data.

All the documentation the Committee received and inspected was thoroughly prepared, comprehensive and easy to follow. The documentation contained ample information, highly appropriate and useful for the evaluation. The data sources appeared legitimate and the information was properly obtained and recorded. In the Committee’s view, the Department has met the objectives of

the internal evaluation process. The data was consistent with the Department's academic goals and objectives in both its qualitative and quantitative form.

A. Curriculum

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

APPROACH

The Department has an undergraduate as well as an MA and PhD program of studies.

Undergraduate program

The undergraduate program includes both core and elective modules. It provides students with a wide range of options within and outside the Department and interdisciplinarity is its main feature. Staff and the overwhelming majority of students find this helpful and are happy with this program structure. The Committee finds this an appropriate and satisfactory arrangement.

MA program

The MA program consists of two directions: Modern/Contemporary History and Political Science. Within each of these two directions there are a number of pathways, though students are expected to develop their own individual program of studies in consultation with an academic advisor.

PhD Program

As in the MA the PhD program attracts a substantial number of applicants from other Greek and non-Greek universities, testifying to the reputation and strengths of the Department. Some of the PhD students have completed their MAs outside Greece, but the lack of funding is the main obstacle in the pursuit of their research. The Department has also attracted two research students from Turkey. Some graduate students have the opportunity to develop their research agendas in foreign universities. The External Evaluation Committee welcomes the option given to the students to write their PhD thesis in English.

IMPLEMENTATION

According to the Internal Evaluation Report, the History pathway is more comprehensive compared to the Political Science one. The latter presents some gaps in areas such as Public Administration, Social Policies and Public Choice Theory. The Internal Report also identifies problems of co-ordination

and lack of synergies between individual members of staff.

Class sizes are often beyond capacity and the availability of teaching and office space appears to be a major issue. The huge number of undergraduate students makes it very difficult for the faculty to provide proper guidance to the students for the selection of modules. This often leads to contradictory choices made by the students often impeding their progress.

A large percentage of students work during their studies and this presents problems of attendance, further delaying the completion of their studies. The large number of Erasmus agreements offers opportunities to students to study abroad.

RESULTS

The Committee is satisfied that the Department has been able to implement its predefined goals and objectives, despite the dearth of resources. Shortcomings in specific areas are largely the result of insufficient budget allocation of resources and the result of large number of students the Department is obliged to serve in its incoming cohort.

IMPROVEMENT

The program of studies was last reviewed in 2005, but a more frequent curriculum review would be helpful. The Internal Report recognizes that but points to the difficulties.

Though the interdisciplinary nature of the curriculum is one of the strengths of the Department, some students expressed the view that their degree needs a clearer focus by concentrating either on Political Science or History.

The Department values the practical training offered to the students and recognizes the need to expand in this area by involving more members of staff. The Department might consider linking the practical training with the preparation of a dissertation or a report by the student.

The Department acknowledges the problems (lack of coherence and breadth) associated with an individual MA program of studies. It also points out that the drop out rate is very high and the duration of the program might be too long.

B. Teaching

APPROACH

The Department's primary teaching method is based on the lecture format. The use of tutorials is severely limited due to the excessively large number of students and availability of classroom space.

Recently, the Department has introduced a limited number of modules in English, French and German.

Class attendance is not mandatory for all classes. Under the present circumstances every effort should be made to improve class attendance and accommodate working students by offering online modules.

As far as the Committee was able to determine, and based on the comments made by the students themselves, instructors overwhelmingly are responsive to student queries. They are accessible by email and in person and often spend considerable time advising students.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Department has attempted to overcome the lack of resources by developing and implementing use of electronic facilities (e.g. Πάνημος), although problems with the University's server often impede this process.

Library resources seem adequate, though the library budget has been severely reduced.

The quality of teaching seems quite strong and course material up to date. However, according to the Internal Report, students are reluctant to fill in teaching evaluation and feedback forms. The Committee strongly encouraged students to participate in the assessment of teaching and offer both quantitative and qualitative feedback/comments.

As far as the Committee was able to ascertain, faculty members utilize their research and publications to enrich their course materials. This is a good means of keeping up with the latest in research and to familiarize students with contemporary research practices. The alumni praised the utility of their education and considered it quite relevant and useful in their jobs. Some of

the Department's students are attending courses in European universities as exchange students and/or are pursuing graduate degrees.

The Committee's general impression of the students' evaluation of the teaching and the course content was extremely positive. Students remarked that they value highly the assistance and guidance offered by the faculty.

RESULTS

The Committee's appraisal of the efficacy of teaching is positive. However, the number of students participating in the exams and the success rate is rather low and disappointing, according to the figures supplied by the Internal Review document. The average degree grade ranges from 6,93 to 7,03. Data shows that 69% of the student population needs five years to complete their degree. Others require more time to complete their studies.

IMPROVEMENT

The Committee considers that, given the current circumstances, the Department does a good job and recently has made great improvements in the manner in which students register for courses. However, the major problem highlighted in the Internal Report and observed by the Committee during the visit is the inadequate infrastructure in terms of teaching space, powerpoint facilities and other electronic equipment.

The Committee recommends that module descriptions should include clear learning outcomes, weekly outlines and fuller and more comprehensive bibliography. The undergraduate dissertation/thesis (διπλωματική εργασία) is given too much weight and the credit value should be reconsidered. Perhaps it can be broken up to shorter assignments over the years.

Multiple and alternative examination methods should be considered in order to diversify the teaching system and allow a far more accurate and fair assessment of students' performance.

The Department is currently contemplating strategies that would allow it to maintain its current level of instruction in light of impending faculty retirements and budget cuts. That is, in the Committee's view, quite admirable.

C. Research

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

APPROACH

According to the Internal Report, the Department's research is conducted primarily through the two research centers: Center for Political Research (KIIE) and the Center for Modern History Research (KENI). The Committee visited both centers and interacted with research students and faculty staff. Both centers appear to be collaborating with European and Greek universities and other relevant institutions.

The Committee was not able to determine whether the Department has set internal standards for assessing research. However, the faculty maintains an ambitious research agenda, which compares favorably with those of their counterparts in major American and European universities.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Department promotes research primarily through the two research centers and encourages collaboration with a number of research institutions, including the European Social Survey (ESS) and the Council of European Social Science Data Archives (CESSDA). Despite inadequate resources, the faculty managed to publish rather extensively. For example, in 2012-13 the committee noticed the publication of 22 books/monographs, 33 articles in refereed journals, 9 in non-refereed journals, 37 contributions in edited volumes and 13 in conference proceedings. A good number of these publications appeared in foreign language outlets.

There is evidence provided by the Department that the research has been cited in journal articles. It is claimed in the Internal Report that between 2011-13 there appeared 3366 different type of citations involving faculty publications. Their individual records could earn the faculty members promotion and tenure in major research universities in Europe and North America.

The Committee commends the Department, and particularly KENI, for organizing an international conference in English on Revolutions in the Balkans.

The Department has applied successfully for research funding in Herakleitos, Thalys and other research programs in collaboration with other Greek and foreign educational institutions.

RESULTS

The Committee deems that the research objectives of individual faculty members have been admirably implemented as evidenced by the numerous publications and conference presentations, as well as the involvement in various research projects. Although teaching is research led, there is considerable evidence that research clearly enhances teaching.

Departmental research has been recognized by a number of awards and titles of recognition.

IMPROVEMENT

There is no institutional funding for research and there is no research administrative infrastructure per se. Faculty will benefit enormously by professional guidance on preparing applications for international research funding. The Committee recommends setting up a University Research office for this purpose.

The Committee has recommended various funding opportunities for research as well as publication outlets. Faculty and graduate students appeared very receptive to the recommendations. Furthermore, the Committee recommended that faculty make every effort to publish their research in foreign language peer-reviewed outlets, especially in English.

The Committee commends the faculty members for their outstanding research and publication records and encourages them to continue their excellent work.

D. All Other Services

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

APPROACH

In spite the shortage of administrative staff, the Department copes reasonably well and meets the basic needs of its students. The reactions of the various constituencies (students, faculty) are sufficiently positive to justify the confidence.

There are four individuals working in the Secretariat for the Department, while the office for the administrative support for students as well as the office for student counseling are severely understaffed. Given the heavy workload and the vast number of students, staffing in these two offices is inadequate to deal with the needs of this large academic community.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Committee noted that the central server of the University is not trusted by faculty members who tend to use their private e-mail addresses.

The library seems to offer adequate resources and students are happy with the library staff. However, the library budget has been severely reduced in the last four years and this will present major problems for teaching and research. As evidence of that is the fact that a good number of the nearly three dozen desktop computers are not functioning and are in need of replacement.

The library is successfully in using Greece's interlibrary loan system and other resources, and this helps alleviate some of the problems.

RESULTS

Given the chronic problem with an understaffed administration, the Department has attempted to simplify administrative procedures. Recently, it instituted a system of electronically processing registration. This practice has alleviated the situation. But because there is no means for electronic signature, students cannot obtain their certificates online.

It is clear that the administrative and other services are inadequate. To the extent they are functional it is mainly at the expense of the personnel who make personal sacrifices to make things work for the students. These sacrifices are typical of the sentiment of community-based support that permeates the entire University.

The library staff as well as the Head of Secretariat were singled out by students for their professionalism and efficiency.

IMPROVEMENT

The Department is aware of most of the above problems. It does not appear, however, capable to have the necessary resources for the necessary tasks. Some students have complained that they do not receive adequate and polite service by some members of the Secretariat and that the Registry should be open more hours. Teaching and exam timetables should be posted much earlier and a provisional exams timetable should be made available to students for consultation.

Collaboration with social, cultural and production organizations

As stated in the Internal Evaluation Report, the Department as a unit is rather detached from the larger non-academic community, though individual members of the Department are socially active and some have served in various positions outside the University.

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.

In its Internal Evaluation Report, the Department recognizes the need for strategic planning, which will include curriculum review, the replacement of retiring faculty, collection and processing of feedback data. This will allow the Department to enhance its standards and maintain its reputation. The Committee views this as a worthwhile undertaking and strongly recommends that the Department moves forward with it as quickly as possible.

F. Final Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC

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

The Department enjoys a strong reputation in the country and could be considered a leader in the fields of political science and modern history. Both the Department and its two research centers are under the direction of capable and trusted leaders. The faculty members appear to get along and the Departmental environment is amicable and student-friendly. Students feel well served and have a close rapport with the faculty. The research record is strong and the two research centers are well established and actively engaged. They significantly contribute to the enhancement of the disciplines and meet the needs of the students. The Committee believes that the Department can improve its standing and enhance its reputation by implementing the following recommendations:

- Restructuring of the curriculum. This should include consolidation of modules and development of new modules that would deal with other regions of the world, including Africa, Asia and the Americas.
- Offering more modules in English, including an extensive summer school program. This will allow the Department to attract students from other parts of the world and thus enhancing its connectedness as

well as provide new sources of funding.

- Consider the introduction of an interdisciplinary and inter-departmental MA in English which could involve other universities and research institutions in Greece and even beyond.
- Introduce team-taught and interdisciplinary modules.
- Identify mechanisms of encouraging students to participate in the evaluation of teaching and feedback process.
- Encourage students to use a range of bibliographic references in their essays and other assignments.
- Standardize the number of students attending the elective/optional modules. At present numbers are ranging from 20 to 200.
- Introduce a weekly or fortnightly Departmental research seminar where individual faculty members and research students present their research and receive constructive comments and feedback.
- Encourage faculty and research students to seek international research funding opportunities.
- Encourage faculty and research students to present papers at international conferences.
- Establish a staff-student committee which will meet at least once per semester to resolve student problems and consider their suggestions.
- Create the mechanisms and processes through which faculty and graduate students could seek funding from private Greek sources.
- Update regularly and improve the Departmental website (Greek and English versions).
- Establish a short and long-term strategic plan for funding, replacing retiring faculty and determining the future directions of the Department.

Despite difficult circumstances, faculty appears sensitive and willing to consider new approaches and eager to take steps to improve the Department's status. In conclusion, this is a strong Department and the Committee was pleased to evaluate a unit of this caliber.

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The Members of the Committee

Name and Surname	Signature
1. ___Constantine Danopoulos_____	
2. George	Kaloudis
3. ___Dimitris Tziovas_____	