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HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE AND
ACCREDITATION AGENCY

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

DEPARTMENT of Interior Architecture, Decoration and Product Design

TEI of Athens



European Union
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OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME
EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING
investing in knowledge society
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Introduction

I. The External Evaluation Procedure

The evaluation report is based on:

- The internal evaluation report of the Department of Interior Architecture, Decoration and Product Design (henceforth The Department) of TEI Athens (henceforth the Institution) and other documents submitted by the Department either as appendices to the report or upon request by the External Evaluation Committee (henceforth the Committee).
- A site visit to the premises of the Department on February 24, 25 and 26, 2014. In addition to the classrooms, workshops, laboratories and offices of the Department, the Committee also visited the library, restaurant, conference centre and public spaces of the Institution.
- All three sections of the Department (interior design, decoration, product design) gave presentations of each module they teach and discussed its goals, structure and performance with the Committee.
- In addition to practically all staff the Committee had the opportunity to meet students and alumni of the Department and talk to them confidentially.

II. The Internal Evaluation Procedure

- The documentation initially provided by the Department (internal report and appendices) gave a critical overview that lacked specific information at points. Upon request by the Committee the Department was able to produce this information, including the syllabus and staff CVs, at very short notice.
- The Committee is glad to report that the Department received them collegially and amicably, allowing for in-depth, constructive discussions. The atmosphere throughout the evaluation has been thoroughly positive.
- The total documentation received is sufficient for the work of the committee; however, it is advisable that the HQA would provide more structured templates that ensure that facts and figures are fully registered and connected to goals, structure and performance in a transparent and succinct manner, which should moreover be uniform for all schools and departments.

A. Curriculum

APPROACH

What are the goals and objectives of the Curriculum? What is the plan for achieving them?

- According to the internal evaluation report of the Department, the main goal of the curriculum is to provide students with the theoretical and practical knowledge of all aspects of interior design, product design and applied arts, on a specialized level. However, the coherence of the curriculum is marred by the way various modules have been developed: they are either inherited from earlier versions of the curriculum or derive from the particular interests and expertise of the staff.

- The current curriculum was introduced in 2011-12, five years after the renaming of the Department as Department of Interior Architecture, Decoration and Product Design. Although the contents were selected in such a way as to reflect the new title of the Department, this is not recognizable in some of the modules.
- According to the internal evaluation report of the Department, there is no specific plan for achieving the goals of the curriculum. This reflects certain characteristics at the national and institutional level, which may cause inefficiency and inflexibility. Nevertheless, the Department appears to make serious efforts to improve and modernize the curriculum and to integrate the three academic sections.

How were the objectives decided? Which factors were taken into account? Were they set against appropriate standards? Did the unit consult other stakeholders?

- It is difficult to discern between the aims and objectives of the curriculum. This is partly due to constraints that are beyond the control of the Department. The intention was to produce a curriculum with clear and unique identity enhanced with contemporary ideas and developments from interior architecture and design. The fact that the core of the curriculum relied on pre-existing modules made it difficult to establish a renewed identity. The use of appropriate standards is not clearly evidenced. The curriculum progression from one level to the next is not apparent. There are no other stakeholders involved in the process and the internal evaluation report ascribes this to the rigidity of the institutional framework.

Is the curriculum consistent with the objectives of the Curriculum [sic] and the requirements of the society?

- The objectives seem rather general and there is lack of overview concerning relationships and interaction between the various elements within the curriculum. Some overlapping suggests lack of cooperation between the three sections (see comments under *Teaching* in this report).

How was the curriculum decided? Were all constituents of the Department, including students and other stakeholders, consulted?

- The curriculum was developed by a committee nominated by the General Meeting of the Institution. The committee had five members: two academic representatives from the Department, two academic members from other faculties and one legal advisor from the Institute. Students had the right to participate but not to vote. No student representatives were present at committee meetings, although students were duly informed on the results. Draft proposals of the committee were fed back to the General Meeting for comments and suggestions.

Has the unit set a procedure for the revision of the curriculum?

- There are no specific procedures for the revision of the Curriculum. At the end of each semester, Module Evaluation Records are submitted by academic staff. Additionally, one section of the Student Module Evaluation Questionnaire covers curriculum-related issues. The questionnaire is anonymous and submitted electronically every semester. Both evaluations lead to minor revisions mainly on types of assignments and teaching style. Major revisions cannot be introduced before the end of a four-year period. Interestingly, although institutional regulations stipulate biennial revision cycles, the Department has decided to extend that period to four years in the first instance so as to ensure a full circle of operation and hence more extensive evaluation of the new curriculum.

IMPLEMENTATION

How effectively is the Department's goal implemented by the curriculum?

The curriculum appears to reflect problematic aspects caused by the Department's history of institutional changes and adaptation of goals. The Department has in principle endeavoured to find and cater for an educational and professional niche; it has set its goals and attempted to structure its curriculum accordingly. However, the implementation of goals in the curriculum appears to be caught in an outdated academic approach intertwined with a rigid work ethic:

- The distinction between theory and studio components of subjects taught is outdated – a remnant of the previous curriculum structure, which is still in place despite the introduction of a synthetic approach (project-based modules).
- The separation into three thematic sections appears to reflect the rigidity of the work ethic. Although the Department claims that modules are equally distributed among the three sections, one cannot fail to observe an uneven quality and intensity between subjects taught. The explanations offered by the Department relate the uneven distribution of staff recently retired in the three sections, as well as to didactic principles (including a wider body of knowledge and methodological plurality at undergraduate level). The end result is that in content and structure the orientation towards interior architecture seems to prevail. Nevertheless, this orientation remains tentative (see more below).

The problem that arises is thus more complex; it is not just the question of how the goals of the Department are implemented in the curriculum, it also relates the current economic and social crisis in Greece. It is necessary to reconsider the goals and design the curriculum accordingly to implement them.

How does the curriculum compare with appropriate, universally accepted standards for the specific area of study?

- The curriculum needs to expand to include current issues within the subject areas. As noted above, the subjects of the three sections should be more closely correlated and integrated. The content and structure of theory and history subjects should focus more clearly on the specializations of the Department (rather than providing a general architectural outline) and should be invigorated by current discourses that support experimentation and provide links to research. Leaving aside a few exceptions, the overall direction of the curriculum remains caught into the reproduction of consolidated knowledge and this is definitely a drawback for its future development.
- Modernization of the curriculum cannot be dissociated from the lack of resources, mainly technical / technological equipment, as well as the limited number and bad timing of modules on new technologies, media and representation techniques.

Is the structure of the curriculum rational and clearly articulated?

There is a clear paradox in the structure of the curriculum, manifested by separation and overlapping as follows:

1. A rigid separation into three sections (see above) and limited integration (usually informal), even when it appears appropriate. The curriculum seems to follow three areas of study as separate streams; it literally obeys and reflects the naming of the department. This would make sense if the Department were to provide specialized knowledge in each area; however, this is not the case or even the intention of the Department. This may indicate lack of common direction and vision.

2. A recurring overlapping of modules occurs within each section, with no evident attempt or intention to connect and recombine the modules. In contrast, differences are overstretched, even though the claims cannot be supported. It seems that claims of differences and the unwillingness to discuss a recombination aim at keeping modules separate – i.e. as they stand.

Is the curriculum coherent and functional?

The issues discussed above reduce the coherence and functionality of the curriculum. The theory/history and studio/workshops separation does not work well and following attempts to combine the two (synthetic modules, module assignments), further changes are necessary. A possible clustering of all theory/history modules across sections and their close interrelation with studio/workshops could improve matters. Similarly, media modules (including digital design and video) could be combined and offered early in the curriculum.

Is the material for each module appropriate and the time offered sufficient?

For the reasons discussed above the curriculum is overloaded. It becomes difficult for students to complete within four years 40 separate required modules plus the final lecture, the thesis and the placement. Each semester includes several, often demanding studio or workshop modules. Especially the time allocated in the final year (thesis and placement) is not sufficient. More time for these two tasks can be created if modules in previous years are recombined and effectively embedded in the curriculum structure.

Does the Department have the necessary resources and appropriately qualified and trained staff to implement the curriculum?

- *Material resources:* Equipment is outdated and lacking in most respects. However, the staff makes the most of existing material resources and even contributes with their own material and other resources. This also applies to students, who bring their own laptops and take private IT training outside the Institution. On a different note, staff and students are not always aware of the potential of digital material resources (e-journals, e-books) available through the existing academic libraries network.
- *Human resources:* The current economic conditions have created a major problem in relation to hiring new staff. This makes transparency, objectivity and selectivity in the criteria and processes for hiring staff even more important – something that recent procedures promise to deliver. Human resource policy seems problematic also in supporting existing staff to update their knowledge (staff development). The lack of continuing research, as far as the staff is concerned, is a serious drawback and is reflected in the reproduction of a ‘consolidated knowledge only’ approach in the curriculum.

RESULTS

How well is the implementation achieving the Department’s predefined goals and objectives?

As already discussed above, the curriculum reflects a confusion of predefined goals and objectives. This can be used as an opportunity to redefine the goals and objectives, and design the curriculum accordingly so as to reinforce the direction towards the niche area the Department caters for.

If not, why is it so? How is this problem dealt with?

- The content of modules should expand to fully reflect the state of the art in the respective fields.

- The subjects taught do not always succeed in integrating or connecting the broadening field of the subject area into the taught subjects. The product design modules should also address a broader conceptualisation of the interior as a continuous unfolding surface which one navigates in a dynamic way rather than adhere to Euclidean geometry and the metrical understanding of space (dimensions). The interior architecture modules are generic and similar to modules in schools of architecture. Textile design and plastic arts modules also need revitalization. Computing modules should also pay more attention to emerging technologies such as Building Information Modelling (BIM) and simulations of acoustics, interior climate etc.
- There is a lot of overlapping between modules, which could instead be recombined and enriched.

Does the Department understand why and how it achieved or failed to achieve these results?

The Department has made several positive steps that have improved results but it seems mostly unaware of problematic areas of the curriculum in the above aspects. The reasons for this might be the following:

- There seems to be lack of overview of the way the curriculum is implemented; a fair share of staff appear to work rather isolated in their own subject area.
- Personal academic interest of the staff seems to dominate implementation in each module. In many cases this reduces continuity when a member of the staff retires and the post is not filled due to the prevailing economic situation.
- The inflexibility of institutional regulations produces a rather rigid operational framework difficult to be challenged and reconsidered as needed.
- Collaboration among staff (permanent and non-permanent) and the good relationship between staff and students needs to expand to evaluating the curriculum and its implementation in order to work on failing aspects or enhance positive outcomes.

IMPROVEMENT

Does the Department know how the Curriculum should be improved?

- Members of the staff (both in permanent and non-permanent positions) seem willing to consider and discuss the problematic areas of the curriculum in order to achieve the goals and the objectives.
- The personal dynamics are an obstacle in designing and implementing changes. It seems that a lot of discussion and negotiation between staff members will be needed to bring about changes. There are plenty of good intentions, which need to be streamlined to become productive.

Which improvements does the Department plan to introduce?

- The synthetic approach to design has already been introduced by the Department and it has to be further applied and enhanced (as discussed above).
- The theory/workshop separation problem was dealt with interim assignments in the theory modules but the problem must be approached in an integrated manner. The coupling of theory and workshop modules proposed by the Department is a direct short-term solution but a long-term one should involve clustering of theory/history modules and close interrelation with studio work.

- In addition to suggestions for improvements already discussed, the major problem that needs to be addressed and dealt with is the conservative approach of the curriculum; it does not foster or nourish the inventive potential of staff and students. The content of many modules is based on established knowledge in an outdated, restrictive approach.
- The changing conditions of the economy and society may require flexibility in adaptation to changing needs. Nevertheless, flexibility and adaptation are not a goal for an academic Institution; especially under the current circumstances, education should enhance the students' ability to understand the present and to envision and design the future. There is plenty of work for the design of our world at various levels from interiors to objects and beyond. The curriculum should provide state-of-the art knowledge in theory, history and practice, and combine it with experimentation.

B. Teaching

APPROACH:

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

Teaching methods used:

- The main overall goal of the Department is to produce skilled and knowledgeable contemporary interior designers and product designers. This is attempted through a curriculum focused on applied arts and workshops. The Department follows a wide variety of teaching methods, which are directly related to the structure of the modules delivered. In the early years there is a clear distinction between theoretical and practical modules. Delivery of theoretical modules is through lectures in class, using PowerPoint presentations, lecture notes, e-learning facilities and specific books distributed free of charge through the Eudoxos system. Delivery of practical modules primarily happens in the studios and workshops with technical demonstrations and key tasks assigned to students. Distribution of lecture notes as well as books through the Eudoxos system also applies to these modules. Synthetic modules in later semesters (from the 3rd semester onwards) follow a mixed approach to teaching, combining a series of lectures and student presentations through group projects.

Teaching staff/ student ratio:

- Overall, the staff-to-students ratio for theoretical modules is 1/100 (realistically 1/200) and for the workshops and studios 1/25, realistically however the ratio tends towards 1/40, becoming even lower in some cases, for example product design. The above statistics exceed the legal maximum of 1/20.
- The Department has an average of about 100 students per year. From these about 85 are direct entrants into the first year with the rest transferred due to family or other reasons from other departments or institutions. The bulk of transfers has recently been from TEI Serron (for reasons of closure), a flow that suddenly increased the teaching burden.
- Full-time permanent staff is currently 18 in total. There is a large number of hourly contracted staff members, 24 in total. The existing social and economic conditions in Greece mean that it is not always possible to replace retiring staff. It appears that currently the ratio between new staff hired to staff just retired is 0/9.

Teacher/student collaboration:

- Teaching relies heavily on personal contact and the fact that staff members are approachable and apparently always available to students. This builds a close-knit community of staff and students. However, in the case of hourly paid staff, huge investment of time and effort are put into building relationships with the students without any guarantee that these will continue due to the precariousness of the current economic situation and climate.
- Final year (thesis) students have commented very positively on the personal supervision and guidance from their dissertation supervisor. It is noteworthy that the thesis combines a project and a theoretic research component. This is a very cumbersome and difficult task to be seen through, particularly from the perspective of the supervisor who needs to be fully aware of the limitations and strengths of students in both subjects, as well as be able to motivate and guide them through this arduous procedure.
- Teaching is often supported by extracurricular activities, such as site visits to buildings, museum, theatres and other sites of interest, which have been integrated within the modules. Lecturers take the extra time and effort needed to activate a bureaucratic mechanism for organising such activities with large numbers of students.
- A particularly interesting collaboration occurs within the digital design module in the 7th semester, where students work very closely with two lecturers and exhibit their final projects in the public space of the Central Fruit Market in Kypseli. This has led to very positive results and students gain confidence by showing their work and discussing it in a public forum.
- Often however excessive amounts of teaching are spent outside of the prescribed teaching hours. Whilst this is in principle an informal way of achieving a high level of interaction, it can be to the disadvantage of some students who may be unable to attract enough of the lecturers' attention. There is no formal route of organising individual tutorials, other than informally approaching a lecturer outside of contact time.

Adequacy of means and resources:

- Resources are very limited, however staff overcompensates by extending teaching hours and as well as extending their own personal resources for the use of students.
- For some specific applications, for example, silkscreen printing in textiles and product design modules, use is made of specialist facilities of another Department (Graphic Design), who complain that they are not adequately trained to handle the equipment.

Use of information technologies:

- Lectures make use of PowerPoint presentations and there is evidence of extensive use of e-learning facilities. However, the lack of adequate teaching facilities, including computer rooms, has an impact on the delivery.
- Due to human resource limitations students have few opportunities to use the few available and largely outdated computing facilities outside teaching hours.
- Library facilities are adequate and in good order, including access to e-journals.

Examination system:

- The examination system overall follows designated procedures. Assessment criteria and deadlines are communicated clearly in written format, on lecture material and also via the Departmental website and e-class.

- Theoretical modules are assessed via final written exams. Some theory modules also include individual or group projects and interim products that encourage active participation. Studio/workshop modules are assessed through presentations of individual or group projects and on some occasions manufactured final products. Here too interim presentations support guidance and evaluation.

IMPLEMENTATION

Quality and evaluation of teaching procedures, teaching materials and resources, mobility.

Quality of teaching procedures:

- The ratio between full-time permanent staff and hourly contracted staff is disproportionate. A major problem is that the Department is hugely understaffed, mainly due to the retirement of staff that is not replaced whilst student numbers are increasing.
- All staff generally works overtime, class schedules and teaching hours are not kept in order to facilitate the large number of students in a demanding teaching system. Hourly contracted staff is indirectly obliged to work a large amount of hours, especially in the workshop/studio sessions, without being paid overtime.
- However, the excessive amounts of teaching do not necessarily give a more in-depth approach to the knowledge base. There should be more room for experimentation and independent thinking, especially in the final years of the course.

Quality and adequacy of teaching materials and resources:

- Teaching rooms and facilities are inadequate to sustain the current level of students. Mainly in the workshops and studios there is not enough space or even chairs for all students to be seated.
- There is considerable lack of access to IT facilities, with only two teaching rooms equipped with largely outdated computers. There is no open access IT suite for general use by the students.
- Staff offices are not enough to accommodate individual/pastoral support out of teaching hours.
- Lecture material and books are provided, as is also teaching material through the Department website and e-class. Not all material is available electronically and in some cases excessive amounts of theoretical material are distributed.

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

- There is a need for teaching material to follow recent developments in interior and product design. This is partly an outcome of the transition from a teaching methodology that is primarily paper-based to more electronic means of education and research.
- Students should be encouraged to seek alternative methods of research outside of the given distributed notes/books. There is no evidence of how this is achieved.
- Whilst the bibliography within lecture notes appears to be adequate, the structure and method of distributing the material is fragmentary and incoherent. Central coordination of the lecture notes could lead to less repetition. All lecture notes pertaining to, for example, theory modules could be distributed in a reader format in the beginning of each year. Emphasis on the historical separation of schools of design and architecture should be less exhaustive to allow room for contemporary developments.

- The Department needs a holistic approach to integrating software deployment across the early years rather than fragmenting delivery in two or three modules only. Students are introduced to relevant general software in the second semester, however these are not continued in the following semesters. There are elements of Photoshop and DIALux at later stages as part of other modules but not enough opportunities to learn and use effectively modern software.
- Further links with organisations and private institutions needs to be evidenced within taught modules.

Linking of research with teaching:

- A large number of staff has already obtained their PhD from recognized institutes in Greece or abroad. There is however a considerable lack of ongoing relevant research through common research programmes (see *C. Research*) and this contributes to the incoherent teaching material mentioned above.
- There is an apparent failure to keep up with recent trends or engage with global/local developments. Some lecturers have a track record of participation in international conferences or symposia, however this appears fragmentary and intermittent.

Mobility of academic staff and students

- Mobility is encouraged through the Erasmus programme which has been quite successful and popular both with students and staff. All students who have had the opportunity to spend a semester abroad have commented positively on the impact it has had on their personal development. Exchange students also managed to find work placements abroad and gained valuable work experience that was later integral to their CV and careers.
- It is however noteworthy that staff seem to be restricted in terms of mobility, with the same staff members participating repeatedly in the scheme.

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

- After speaking with representatives from both current students and alumni, response to the course appears overall positive. Alumni emphasized the uniqueness of the course, as opposed to an architecture degree course, which many of them took after graduation from the Department. Students felt they had gained an important advantage through studio/workshop modules that allowed creative interaction with materials and forms.
- All students noted the importance of the ratio of staff to students, which at the moment does not facilitate the number of active students.
- The transition to the new curriculum changed the overall nature of the course. According to some current students and alumni, having significantly reduced the number of modules meant that some basic modules, e.g. on model making, were omitted from the new curriculum structure. The lecturer who taught this specific module retired and as a consequence this particular area of expertise may have disappeared, although the Department claims that the subject has been integrated in other modules – a pragmatic reaction but not necessarily optimal in terms of learning performance.
- Another issue that was particularly noted by current students (especially thesis ones) concerns conservative teaching approaches. This is perhaps due to a historical separation of traditional workshop/studio modules and theoretical components. Workshop/studio sessions may appear prescriptive without the opportunity to choose a case study other

than the one designated by the lecturer. This could be an area for improvement, which is already initiated by the Department's new synthetic modules (see *B. Curriculum*).

- Course content: each module is well adjusted and planned as an individual component, however overall the course structure is incoherent. Whilst many teaching hours are spent, the existence of transferable skills from one module to the next is not evidenced.
- Software sessions should follow a clear and logical integration alongside the conceptual and design syllabus and should be introduced from the first semesters onwards, possibly as part of other modules. Software training needs to be up to date with industry demands. This however presupposes designated facilities and funding from the state and Institute towards keeping hardware and software up-to-date and operational.

RESULTS

Efficacy of teaching, understanding of positive or negative results.

Efficacy of teaching.

- Students have commented positively on the commitment and willingness of their teachers to overcome the problems associated with resources and materials. Lecturers often remain long hours beyond their teaching schedules in order to assist all students.
- However, the excessive amounts of teaching hours could be significantly reduced with a clearer structure. Overlaps and repetition were particularly noted between modules such as textile design (4th, 5th, 6th semester), structural materials (1st and 2nd semester) but in other modules as well, e.g. architecture of exterior/interiors (6th semester), decoration/product design (4th, 5th, 6th semester).
- The interrelationships and outcomes of each module are not always clear. The overall three orientations of the course (even if primarily methodological, as the Department claims) do not seem equally encouraged, with most students opting for interior design. The foundation modules that are followed by all students are a positive factor in this respect, however there should be a clearer direction especially within the final years of the course.
- Criteria for assessment and exams are clear, especially in the written exams. However, according to the samples viewed, the knowledge attained through the written exams does not seem to lead to a further integration of theory with practice. In a few cases there is evidence of studio experimentation, exploration or individual conceptual development. There should be further encouragement for experimentation and this can become part of the assessment criteria. For example, students noted that in many cases there are no defined criteria for assessing their own ideas or conceptual development, as this is left to the discretion of the lecturer.

Discrepancies in the success/failure percentage between modules and how they are justified.

- Although the assessment criteria and exam criteria are clear, there appears to be a grey area when it comes to the delivery and teaching of particular modules. There is little evidence to explain why some subject areas are over-emphasised; this can be attributed to a historically inherited structure where the lecturer becomes engrained within a module. When a lecturer within a specialist area retires, he/she is not always replaced.
- There is no system of ascertaining advancement from one level to the next, for example, no separate assessment criteria for each year that provide for a progression of knowledge

sets, from more general/foundation thinking in the first years to integration and synthesis of the knowledge base in later years. Even though group work and synthetic modules seem to replace the distinct theory/studio modules in later years, it is unclear how the difference in knowledge levels is ascertained.

- In common with other institutions in Greece, there is a problem with the structure of the final year: students are asked to produce both a distinct thesis/dissertation (project-based) and also complete work experience. The time is limited and perhaps more time should be allocated to work experience or the structure should be different.

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

- Technically for the year 2012-13 the Department has a total of 766 registered students. From these, a large proportion is reportedly non-active. Consequently, the official numbers do not provide an accurate picture of the actual number of active students.
- Following discussions with the Department, a more accurate chart was provided, which suggests that the average duration of study for active students is in fact near the nominal 4 years, and not the 7½ years in the internal evaluation reports of December 2012 and December 2013 (a distortion caused by non-active students). There is also a significant decrease in the number of graduates completing the course in longer than 4 years, especially after the academic year 2007-08 (i.e. arguably as a consequence of the credit crunch and the subsequent deterioration of the Greek economy).

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

- The Department is aware of the number of non-active enrolled students and how this affects their statistical response. They are positive that proposed new national legislation will resolve the problem.

IMPROVEMENT

Proposed methods for improvement.

Does the Department propose methods and ways for improvement?

- The Department underwent a significant change and transition of the curriculum in 2010-11. This led to a significant reduction of taught modules and an increase in integration.
- The Department also moved to a synthetic method of teaching, aiming to integrate theoretical with practical modules. This could be a direction to be considered for other modules too, which can be co-taught and shared between theoretical and technical staff.
- Despite the problems caused by the insufficient infrastructure and lack of teaching rooms and facilities, staff remains engaged in their work and often interested in new ideas and technologies.

What initiatives does it take in this direction?

- Possibilities for sharing staff with other departments, already in practice to a limited extent, have also been discussed and considered.
- Lecturers demonstrated an awareness and willingness to adapt to new flexible teaching structures and are open to discussing a different teaching methodology.

C. Research

APPROACH

Research policy and main objectives.

- As the internal report of the Department acknowledges, research is currently an individual matter for academic staff members. There are no common research programmes or discernible common themes.
- As usually in a Department that includes fine artists, exhibitions and prizes are considered under research. These too are individual activities but more widespread among academic staff members.

IMPLEMENTATION

Research promotion and assessment, quality of support and infrastructure.

- Research activities depend on individual efforts and ambitions, and therefore vary from researcher to researcher. The number of active researchers is low, which is again acknowledged in the internal report of the Department.
- While the Department appears to stress the importance of research, encouragement is not complemented by organized support and infrastructure beyond the teaching facilities (which nevertheless do not offer sufficient scope for research, even for thesis students). Quite crucial is the role played by the State, which expects staff to engage in research but does not provide the resources, financial and other, for it.

RESULTS

Research projects and collaborations, scientific publications and applied results.

- The number of publications is sufficient for the number of researchers involved but not enough to establish a research line within the Department.
- The bulk of publications is in conference proceedings, followed by group exhibitions and journal papers. This suggests contacts with other researchers and Institutions, which is also apparent in the Erasmus exchange activities of the Department, but the resulting potential is currently not evident in the overall research.

IMPROVEMENT

Proposed initiatives aiming at improvement.

- The Department is keen to develop research across the spectrum of its sections and specializations, largely based on the abstract potential of each specialization. This is, however, a generic statement and not a strategic plan. Wide research is not feasible with the current capacity of the Department and certainly not advisable concerning the identity of the Department and long-term research development.

D. All Other Services

APPROACH

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

- The Department finds that two administrative secretaries are not enough to satisfy the needs of teaching staff and students, in spite of their professionalism and commitment.

Requests to hire more people in the administrative department are handled centrally by the administration of the Institution.

- A generic list of consumables prepared by the Ministry of Education is used by all departments to order what they need each year, a process seen as time consuming and one that does not cater to the peculiarities of each department.
- Most procedures are undertaken and administered centrally on the Institution level. Such a setup tends to underplay the differences and peculiarities of each department.

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

- The Department expressed its wish for more independence from the central Institution administration but the system does not seem to view such prospects positively.
- Student registration and certificates are already processed electronically while the effort is to similarly simplify the rest of the procedures, most of which already have ISO certification.

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

- The Department feels that students already spend a considerable amount of time on campus. Apart from the studios, workshops and computer clusters, other popular spaces are the main central space, the restaurant and the courtyard adjacent to the Department.

IMPLEMENTATION

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

- As mentioned above, the implementation of any plans to improve the Department's infrastructure is, according to the Department itself, the responsibility of the central Institution administration. The Department feels that such a setup does not leave any room for action on the departmental level.

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 spaces allocated for workshops (textile, ceramic, furniture), design studios as well as lecture rooms for large audiences are not adequate, a situation which may be hazardous to the health and safety of both students and staff (fumes, chemicals, noise).
- There is a pleasant atmosphere in the library. Still, opening hours on weekdays are limited and it is closed over weekends. More computer terminals are needed while the ordering of books and the subscription to journals related to the specific field of study need to be resumed.
- There is free Internet access everywhere on the premises while students have access to the Department's administrative and academic services outside the premises as well.
- There are student counselling, social and legal services as well as a medical unit at the Institution level.
- There is an athletic centre, conference hall, a dancing Club and Choir, as well as a Film and Theatre Club.
- The elected student representatives apparently play an important role in mediating between students and administration on both departmental and central Institution level.

RESULTS

Are administrative and other services adequate and functional?

How does the Department view the particular results.

- The administrative and other services seem to basically be functional with room for improvement. Still, both the Department's administrative and academic staff feel they have inadequate power regarding administrative issues which are dealt with by the central Institution administration.

IMPROVEMENTS

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

Initiatives undertaken in this direction.

- Department away days for discussing student issues take place regularly.
- An office on the Institution level encourages graduates to be innovative in engaging with industry or compete for EU funds.

Collaboration with social, cultural and production organizations

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

- With initiatives taken by the staff, students have the chance to regularly enter public competitions, participate in exhibitions and shows or visit theatre productions.
- Attempts to invite firms to talk to the students about their product have been met with resistance by some student bodies for ideological or political reasons.

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

Short-, medium- and long-term goals and plans of action proposed by the Department.

- Awareness of the particular characteristics of the Department should be increased at all levels (state, Institution, Department). The current diluted vision obscures particular merits and possibilities. By aligning these possibilities with the current social and economic conditions the Department could develop the confidence to define its own identity and meet existing and emerging needs and requirements.
- The state and Institution should provide certainty and stability concerning the number of students and teachers, the quality and capacity of facilities and infrastructure so that the framework of the Department becomes consistent and feasible. The responsibility to conduct research and develop a research tradition in the Department should be facilitated through sufficient funding for e.g. conference participation.
- The Institution should take over and efficiently centralize administrative tasks so as to release local support staff for departmental needs. Research could be supported by offices that assist researchers in developing grant proposals.
- The Institution and the Department should act in unison to finalize the new internal regulation in the shortest possible time.
- The Institution and the Department should develop a secure policy concerning human resources, in particular the replacement of retiring academic staff and attracting new staff with the appropriate qualifications and specializations.

- The Department needs to transform its ambitions and intentions into a comprehensive and coherent strategic plan with clear long, medium and short goals and actions. This plan should include feasibility analyses, cost estimates and a time schedule. It should also identify opportunities for improvement in the current situation, despite possibly adverse conditions.
- Within this plan the Department should make use of every opportunity to further organically integrate the curriculum and bring it up to date.
- The envisaged post-graduate programme should be an integral part of this plan; it should not be abstract or opportunistic but sharply focused and correlated with the Department's human resources and capacities.
- Similarly, the strategic plan should enable research to move from a wide spectrum of probabilities to a consolidated, focused programme with clear goals and priorities.

F. Final Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC on:

The development and present situation of the Department, good practices and weaknesses identified through the External Evaluation process, recommendations for improvement.

The Department has a good record in education, as reflected by the performance and appreciation of alumni and students. Following institutional changes to the character and mission of the Institution, as well as in relation to recent dramatic changes in society and economy, the main challenge of the Department is to expand and improve beyond its track record. The strategic plan of the Department (as suggested in *E. Strategic Planning ...*) is a first step in raising awareness and making decisions concerning a number of issues:

- **Identity:** the Department needs to develop further its identity by consolidating its capabilities and ambitions, and directing them toward new opportunities in the emerging social and economic conditions. The strategic plan should encapsulate this in a mission statement.
- **Curriculum:** the content of the curriculum should be updated to cover current and emerging topics specifically related to the identity of the Department and its educational mission; the structure of the curriculum should be further simplified and geared towards efficiency, transparency and experimentation. An unambiguous choice should be made concerning integration (which the Department has already initiated) and specialization.
- **Teaching:** however laudable in terms of dedication to duty, it is questionable whether the current tendency of supervising students far beyond the allocated contact hours is a sustainable approach; teaching methods must be modernized and aligned with the unfortunately diminishing human resources of educational institutions; more computing facilities are required to improve efficiency, including advanced systems for BIM, digital video, interactive systems and mobile information processing.
- **Research:** the transition from individual research to structured programmes, focused on the identity of the Department is a clear priority and must be actively supported by the Institution in human resource management but also through advanced research facilities (which can be shared with advanced modules).
- **Human resources:** the Institution must provide a stable basis for the Department to develop a long-term staffing approach that agrees with the teaching and research constraints of the strategic plan. Mobility is an essential part of this approach, so current activities in the Erasmus programme should be encouraged, widened and expanded.

- **Evidencing: promoting products of the Department and encouraging collaboration with external organizations is essential for developing and testing the new identity, attracting funding and fulfilling the scientific and social mission of the Department.**

External Evaluation Committee

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the Department of the University/Technical Institution of consisted of the following five (5) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by the HQAA in accordance with Law 3374/2005 :

1. _____ (President)
(Title) (Name and Surname)

(Institution of origin)

2. _____
(Title) (Name and Surname)

(Institution of origin)

3. _____
(Title) (Name and Surname)

(Institution of origin)

4. _____
(Title) (Name and Surname)

(Institution of origin)

5. _____
(Title) (Name and Surname)

(Institution of origin)