



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ

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ΑΝΩΤΑΤΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ

HELLENIC REPUBLIC

**H.Q.A.A.**

HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY  
FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

## **EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT**

DEPARTMENT: Library Science and Information Systems

TEI Athinas

November 2011

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### **External Evaluation Committee**

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the Department of Library Science and Information Systems of the Technical Educational Institution of Athens consisted of the following four (4) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by the HQAA in accordance with Law 3374/2005:

1. Dr. Sirje Virkus, Institute of Information Studies, Tallinn University, Estonia (Coordinator)
2. Professor Ernest Abadal, Facultat de Biblioteconomia i Documentació, University of Barcelona, Spain
3. Professor Richard Hartley, Department of Information and Communications, Manchester Metropolitan University, U.K.
4. Professor L.-F. Ramos Simón, Department of Biblioteconomy and Documentation, University of Madrid, Spain.

## ***Introduction***

### I. The External Evaluation Procedure

The EEC visited the Department of Library Sciences and Information Systems of TEI Athinas from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> November. During these three days the External Committee had the opportunity to evaluate directly the current situation of the Department and its relationship with TEI Athinas. The EEC met with the TEI authorities, the Department's academic staff, support staff and students. The EEC analysed reports, documents and several data and visited the facilities of the Department and the general facilities of TEI Athinas.

With respect to the authorities, we were received by the Head of Department and the Dean of the Faculty of Management and Economics and also we exchanged some words with the Rector and Vice Rectors of TEI Athinas. It has to be said that the Head of the Department and the Dean accompanied us the whole time and had a proactive attitude providing us the contacts, interviews and all the information we needed.

Concerning the academic staff, the EEC had several meetings devoted to general explanations about the internal evaluation report, teaching methods, procedures for managing the work experience and students' theses. In addition the Department's research activities and involvement with ERASMUS were explained. During the 3 days of visits, the EEC had regular contact with most members of the permanent staff and during that time we also met several members of the contract academic staff.

The EEC met with the administrative support staff who explained their student management system (administrative procedures for student registrations, control of their academic records, the process for obtaining a transport card and so on).

The EEC held two meetings with students: one of them with a group of seven current female undergraduates and the second with one female former student of the postgraduate course. Both meetings were undertaken with no member of TEI academic staff present and provided an opportunity for the EEC to gain information from a different perspective about the Department and its provision for students.

In addition to the internal evaluation report, the EEC analysed numerous other sources of evidence including:

- e-class platform (Moodle)
- Samples of e-class courses
- Samples of quiz exercises in e-class
- Samples of theses
- Guidelines for preparing theses
- Samples of Work experience reports
- Guidelines for managing working experience period
- Samples of teaching evaluations
- Course teaching materials
- Samples of textbooks
- Updated figures and data about the Department
- Department's webpage

Regarding the facilities of TEI, the EEC visited the Library, the health care centre, gymnasium (fitness centre), catering facilities and the administrative centre. Within the

Department, the EEC visited classrooms and also different labs and observed the range of hardware and software available to support teaching and learning. The EEC was able to attend some lectures and a practical class.

The visit was professional and friendly at the same time. All the participants were very collaborative, and they expressed their points of view openly. The EEC wishes to highlight the special attention it received from the Head of Department who provided us with all the information and facilities we needed and adjusted the original schedule to enable the team to follow up discussions and points as it wished.

## II. The Internal Evaluation Procedure

The internal report is excellent. It is very detailed and offers a comprehensive view of the Department in 2010. It indicated the perceived strengths of the Department and indicated short and medium term plans. The plan contained appropriate evidential data to support statements. Some of the data in the report was updated during our visit.

The internal evaluation process was a good and successful opportunity for the Department to analyze in a systematic way their strengths and weaknesses in teaching, research and general management. The EEC considers that they took this process very seriously and saw it as an opportunity to improve their work and to establish a strategic plan for future. Perhaps the participation of the students in the process was not as active as might have been hoped but they were given the opportunity of involvement.

## **A. Curriculum**

### **APPROACH**

#### **Undergraduate Programme**

The Department's stated objectives can be summarized as providing students with an appropriate mixture of theoretical and practical knowledge such that they can function effectively in a wide range of information organizations including but not limited to libraries, museums and archives.

The curriculum as presented to the EEC through the Internal Evaluation Report, the Study Guide and further illustrated through examples of student theses and assessed course work and classroom visits, shows an interesting balance between the traditional and the modern. There is an impressive concentration on information technology.

The curriculum was extensively revised in 2008 for implementation in 2009. The major curriculum revision was based upon evidence from a number of sources namely

- Information collected via questionnaire and interview with those information organizations which have provided work experience to the Department's students.
- A review of current practice in LIS education in Europe and North America.
- Academic staff experience.
- Student needs.

Based upon these sources the curriculum was revised within the necessary legislative framework. In discussions with permanent staff, the EEC noted that the revised curriculum is subjected to constant monitoring and minor amendments in the light of experience in its delivery. However the EEC was not made aware of any formal processes for annual review and revision of the curriculum.

#### **Postgraduate Programme**

At present TEIs are not able to offer independent postgraduate programmes. However between 2003 and 2008, the Department did offer a postgraduate programme in collaboration with the Department of Archives and Library Science of the Ionian University. The programme, which was taught jointly by the two institutions, ceased in 2008 when funding for the initiative ended.

It is difficult for the EEC to judge the quality of a programme which no longer operates and arguably it is of little relevance to do so. Nevertheless on the basis of the information presented in the Internal Evaluation Report, discussions with the staff of the Department and meeting a former graduate of the programme, who is now productively employed, it seems that the programme has had a positive impact. Certainly there was evidence of demand for the programme. The experience of operating the programme in collaboration with Ionian University has enabled the staff of the Department to gain useful experience of teaching at this level.

One interesting and pleasing feature of the programme whilst it was in existence was the use of continuous assessment through a variety of assignments rather than examinations. This approach both offers greater variety of assessment and ensures that students engage with the programme throughout its operation rather than "cramming" at the end of the programme.

### **Graduate Programme**

The Department does not run a Graduate Programme though the EEC was informed that there is anecdotal evidence of demand for such a programme.

In addition the EEC noted that some members of the Department are involved in supervision of doctoral candidates in other institutions. This is seen as a positive move which will provide useful experience for the Department should it be able to offer a doctoral programme in future years.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

The undergraduate curriculum as detailed in the Study Guide contains an appropriate combination of theoretical and practical knowledge to enable it to meet the goals of the Department. It contains an interesting mix of traditional LIS topics with modern information technology based approaches. It appears to provide the students with a strong set of skills in areas of IT relevant to LIS practice.

Collectively, the EEC has experience of curricula in many European and North American countries. The EEC believes that the curriculum compares favourably with similar curricula in other European countries.

Discussions with staff, examples of student work and evidence in the classroom, suggest that the material is taught at an appropriate depth for an undergraduate programme.

According to the documentation provided, the permanent staff of the Department is well qualified. It seems also that the contract staff is well qualified and the EEC observed an impressively rigorous process by which the Department selects its contract staff.

It appears to the EEC that the Department achieves an impressive level of education with restricted resources. The limited number of Faculty places a heavy reliance on contract staff. Whilst we do not wish to criticize contract staff, and the ones whom we met were obviously well qualified, enthusiastic and competent, such heavy reliance on them inevitably creates uncertainties and may generate lack of continuity in delivery and inhibit curriculum development. The EEC asserts that there is an urgent need to speedily fill current staffing vacancies and to increase the number of permanent staff and reduce the reliance on contract staff at the earliest opportunity.

Elsewhere in this report, the EEC comments very positively on the constructive use of both Moodle and the Department's web pages to enhance the learning experience of the students. The EEC notes that this impressive level of support for learning is achieved with minimal technical staff and believes that the need to address this shortage is even greater than the need for more permanent academic staff.

### **RESULTS**

It is the view of the EEC that the curriculum of the undergraduate programme is well attuned to meeting the objectives of the Department, so we can report that in our collective judgement the Department is meeting its goals very well. Nevertheless no Department is perfect! The EEC observed an enthusiasm for and willingness to engage in continuous improvement. This appeared to be undertaken in an informal manner and the Department may wish to consider whether it might be more effectively achieved through a more formal approach.

**IMPROVEMENT**

The EEC did not receive a statement about a process of continuous improvement but that is what we observed! The curriculum appears to be operating effectively and whilst it is subjected to minor modifications, the Department's immediate concerns are more with improving resources, expanding the use of the e-class to support learning, maintaining contacts with relevant information organizations and enhancing both its international and research profiles. All of these activities can be expected to have a positive if indirect influence on the taught programme.

The EEC noted the very strong view of academic staff and students that the name of the Department should be changed to more accurately reflect the content of the programme and urges TEI Athinas to support a change to a title of department which more accurately reflects the activities of the Department.

## ***B. Teaching***

### **APPROACH**

The Department's pedagogic policy combines theoretically focused lectures with applied labs. The teaching methods used combine traditional lectures and labs with ICT-based teaching and learning methods supported by e-class. The Department's instructional activities are largely supported by feedback obtained from students and staff, and the strategy is characterized by involvement of students and staff towards continuous improvement. The comments provided by students on instructional methods and teaching quality were positive. The procedures to employ the most experienced and qualified staff were identified. However, student attendance at the non-compulsory lectures is not very high.

The staff student ratio is 1/72 for Faculty; if the contract academic staff is included, it is 1/45. This creates significant problems in the provision of effective students support and in the management of other educational processes. Therefore, the academic staff workload is very high and their burden is further increased by the necessity to undertake numerous administrative functions as there is insufficient secretarial support. In order for the Department to function more effectively, further staffing is required; both academic staff and laboratory and support staff. In addition, improved staffing levels are necessary in order to enable future programme developments.

Despite the heavy workloads of academic staff, students praised the accessibility of teaching and support staff and the student-friendly atmosphere, providing evidence of positive staff-student collaboration.

Well-equipped laboratories provide good support for learning and teaching. Information and communication technologies are introduced extensively in all aspects of teaching and learning. The teaching and learning process is supported through the e-class platform. The Department has an excellent web portal that facilitates management and enhances communications. The Department regularly updates its website thus promoting its image with both prospective students and information organisations which might offer work experience and/or future employment to graduates.

Adequate materials to support learning are provided both in print-based and electronic format. For example, students are given copies of the PowerPoint slides of the lecture and lecture notes and the materials could be downloaded from e-class.

There is a central library within the TEI, which on brief inspection appeared well organized, giving access both to printed and electronic resources.

Staff and students of the Department are concerned about the examination system. This is a view with which the EEC strongly concurs. Since 2008 state regulations have become more flexible and alternative assessment methods are being developed. The final grade is based on performance in a range of assessments including courses work and final examinations in most of the courses.

The EEC did not detect any student concerns regarding the fairness and accuracy of the grading.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

The quality of teaching procedures conforms to standards and good practice in European universities. Teaching efficiency and effectiveness is maximized by combining a range of teaching methods (lectures, laboratory exercises, group and individual assignments) with the

extensive use of ICTs and a variety of assessment methods.

The quality and adequacy of teaching materials and resources is acceptable. The course material is well organized and available to students. The materials used in courses are selected from the best international textbooks and books in Greek. The course textbooks and other materials are supplemented with instructor's PowerPoint slides, lecture notes, and other support materials.

Both the Department's website and e-class, are used to support teaching and learning. The scale of support offered is impressive, for example with video recordings of lectures and the use of self-assessment quizzes in e-class.

The mobility of academic staff and students is quite limited often for financial rather than academic reasons. A few students and staff members have participated in the Erasmus programme. Whilst we observed some enthusiasm amongst both students and staff to increase these exchanges, it is likely that the current Europe-wide financial crisis will inhibit mobility in the near future.

The Department has recently introduced a comprehensive student evaluation system to improve the instructional practice. The quality of teaching is considered to be high as evidenced by the results in the student questionnaires and their comments to the EEC.

### **RESULTS**

The interviewed students made positive comments regarding the efficacy of teaching. The students can easily approach members of staff for academic support.

The EEC did not detect any differences in the grade scores between courses.

The quantitative data indicated that 55% of students registered on courses participated in the exams, with an 80% success rate. The average final mark has been 7.4 since 2004. Approximately 25% of students graduate within the standard period of 4 years. At least 50% of students graduate in 6 years, while around 25% leave the program or transfer. The Department is aware of the problem and is anxious to improve it.

### **IMPROVEMENT**

The Department continuously develops the learning experience, for example, through minor syllabus changes, adoption of new textbooks and learning resources, extending the use of e-class so that it supports all the courses and could be turned into a distance learning programme; developing both an academic advisor system and a visiting lecturer programme.

## **C. Research**

### **APPROACH**

The Department has a strong desire to develop its research profile. However this desire and the capacity (as opposed to capability) for research are inhibited by the excessive teaching and administrative workload and the lack of a graduate programme. Within its limitations, the Department seeks to develop its research profile and has identified a series of actions to enable its research to be developed.

Whilst the Department has planned some actions to improve its research (especially the creation of a research laboratory), they are not included in a comprehensive plan which outlines the priority research lines (separated from development, consultancy or innovation in education), establishes research groups and defines clearly indicators to measure the progress of research. The EEC did not observe evidence of an infrastructure at institutional or departmental level to develop such a framework.

The Department wants to create masters and PhD programs which support and provide human resources for research activity but at present Greek legislation prevents such developments.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

The Department does not have an infrastructure to promote and support research; for example with the drafting of proposals and management of research funds. The EEC did not observe such an infrastructure at institutional level. Therefore research is managed and developed on an individual basis and where appropriate through collaborations with academics and researchers in other institutions.

As noted earlier, the Departmental infrastructure (labs, equipments, etc.) for teaching is quite good. This infrastructure can be used for some research activities. The existence of this potential for use in research should not be overlooked.

The academic staff is well aware of the importance of publishing in international and peer-reviewed journals and of participating in research projects but are equally cognisant of the constraints in which they operate.

### **RESULTS**

The Department has an acceptable number of scientific publications, especially in monographs, book chapters and conference proceedings. The number of papers in academic journals is limited, especially in peer-reviewed international journals. Publications have covered a wide range of topics and whilst this demonstrates a commitment to research it does not demonstrate a policy of promoting research in specific areas, which might lead to the formation of research groups and specialisms.

External funding for academic projects is impressive, although the list provided by the Department includes projects of service development (improvement of digital services of TEI Athinas Library), consultancy and also innovation in education projects. Strictly speaking, there are few external funding research projects in the Department.

It would be very useful for the Department to make a detailed analysis of its research topics, scientific collaborations, cooperation with external departments, international impact and

the distribution of research activity between the members of the Department. Such an analysis would enable the Department to determine where best to target its limited research efforts.

Another issue is research dissemination. The visibility and impact of the publications is low (few of them are in open access repositories, some do not appear on the Departmental webpage, etc.). Probably with more active open access dissemination, the same research outputs could obtain greater visibility and impact.

The Department has taken impressive initiatives in the creation of an electronic journal and the running of an international conference.

#### **IMPROVEMENT**

The Department has focused its immediate future actions on the creation of a technologically oriented research laboratory and also collaborating with other departments. The EEC thinks that both measures can be useful specially the second one which will permit the recruitment of the best postgraduate students to undertake research tasks.

As noted earlier, it would help the Department to develop a comprehensive plan which defines the Department's agreed research priorities, creates formal structures of research (particularly permanent research groups), establishes indicators to analyse the progress of the research in the Department, creates a research committee to monitor research performance.

## ***D. All Other Services***

### **APPROACH**

The EEC noted the presence of an impressive health centre, a gymnasium and subsidized catering services as well as centralized copying services and apparently a good central library. However the absence of a centrally-operated virtual learning environment, the lack of which necessitates the use of scarce departmental resources to maintain such a system.

The EEC was impressed by the fact that most of the Department's administration is undertaken electronically and noted that there are also substantial paper-based archives.

The Department is concerned by the slow completion speed of students. It is hoped that the recent changes to the legislative framework for higher education will work with the more flexible assessment arrangements to improve engagement with the programme and completion.

### **IMPLEMENTATION AND RESULTS**

In general, the Department enjoys excellent collaboration in all contexts of services and in support of classroom teaching. The secretarial and technical staff indicated that their heavy workload means that on occasions they must be helped by the professors (updating software, testing hardware, managing the Erasmus program, managing the work experience programme). The electronic student record system, which is accessible to academic, administrative staff and students is especially useful. The secretarial staff also provide informal assistance to students outside its office hours, especially during peak periods and in certain cases to students with disabilities.

The shortage of classrooms and laboratory space and office space for contract staff who are required to "hot desk" together with the lack of administrative and technical staff, inhibits departmental initiatives.

It appears to the EEC that there is a very well organized library although there might be a shortage of multiple copies of some important books. A new national service (Eudoxus) has been introduced to distribute the free textbooks for the various classes. However, some comments in the Internal Evaluation Report have pointed out that the overall organization and operation of the library is in need of significant improvement hence the major digital library initiative.

The transparency and effectiveness of financial resources management are considered very satisfactory, the main part of the funds allocated are destined for supplies and laboratory equipment according to need.

### **IMPROVEMENTS**

The Department has recognized numerous means of improving services notably

- Increase the technical support staff and the administrative staff.
- Increase the space allocated to the Department such that contract academic staff can have desks and there is space for a meeting room.
- Implement the research project in order to evaluate and develop the TEI library services in the framework of the Department's research activities.

### **Collaboration with social, cultural and production organizations**

The Department has extensive contact with a wide range of social, cultural and information organisations because of the student work experience programme. The contacts are carefully documented and regularly maintained.

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

The Department has developed a range of short, medium and long term actions.

Despite the lack of formal strategic plan, the outlines and the perspectives of the Department are well described in the Conclusion of the Internal Evaluation Report in a useful SWOT analysis. There is particular emphasis on the Strengths and Weaknesses, factors that relate to internal aspects of the Department, both aspects are linked with the Plan for Improvements.

The main observed Strengths are perceived to be the reform of the curriculum, improvement of teaching, connection with the job market, positive staff student collaboration, high quality ICT infrastructure, participation in the ERASMUS programme and the presence of TEI in the capital and major city of the country.

The main Weaknesses are related with the following matters: the limited number of Faculty members, lack of specialized technical staff, overworked administrative staff and some contract academic staff, lack of space, lack of coordination of research work, due to the institutional operating framework of Technological Educational Institutes.

Whilst the EEC observed that the Department has developed a range of pragmatic actions for improvement, it did not see a single coherent strategic plan including targets, implementation plans and performance indicators. The EEC suggests that the Department may wish to consider developing such a document which covers all aspects of its activities: teaching, research, external collaboration and national and international visibility.

## ***F. Final Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC***

**The development of the Department to this date and its present situation, including explicit comments on good practices and weaknesses identified through the External Evaluation process and recommendations for improvement.**

The EEC recognises that the Library Science and Information Systems Department of TEI-Athinas is an enthusiastic and highly motivated Department with well-qualified and student-friendly staff. The EEC was impressed by the quality of teaching and supervision and student-teacher relations. The EEC believes that the department's students graduate with a level of knowledge and skills comparable to that in other European countries. The Department staff provided a detailed, thorough and self-critical Internal Evaluation Report and the EEC visit was efficiently organized.

The comments presented here are intended to further development of the Department.

### **Good practice**

- The current curriculum achieves the Department's goals and set objectives.
- The Department has made steady progress in improving its curriculum during the last five years.
- The academic staff is very dedicated and its high-level teaching and supervision is evidenced by the results in the student questionnaires and supported by the EEC's discussions with the students.
- According to the documentation provided and procedures presented, the permanent staff as well as the contract staff of the Department is well qualified.
- The Department has developed an excellent web portal for teaching, learning and student support.
- The use of the e-class, developed by the Department, is a good tool to facilitate effective teaching and learning.
- There is close interaction of faculty and students as evidenced by interviews of the EEC with the students.
- The Department has a very good team spirit amongst academic, administrative and technical staff.

### **Weaknesses**

- Due to the excessively centralised system in Greece, many of the Department's weaknesses are out of its control.
- The graduation rate is moderate. A completion rate of 50% in six years for a four year programme leaves considerable scope for improvement.
- Despite the best efforts of the academic staff, the poor staff/student ratio limits the amount of personal tuition and support that students can receive.
- The Department has a small, hard working administrative and technical support

team (3 persons), the limited size of which constrains the level of support available to staff and students that is not sufficient to support teaching and learning.

- The student and academic staff mobility (through ERASMUS and conference participation) is relatively modest and the impact of the economic crisis is likely to make the situation worse.
- Current levels of publishing in highly-ranked international journals are modest and again are probably limited by high workloads.

### **The Department's readiness and capability to change/improve**

The Department has shown enthusiasm and dedication to the continuous improvement of the quality of teaching, supervision, assessment and student support. The academic staff demonstrated readiness and willingness to learn, share experiences and innovate their teaching and learning approaches. The EEC believes that the curriculum compares favourably with similar curricula in other European countries.

The EEC encourages the Department to consider how it might divert some of its energy and enthusiasm into research without compromising the quality of the students' learning experience.

### **The Department's quality assurance**

The Department has made excellent efforts in collecting, analyzing and presenting relevant data to assess course content, student workload, teaching, assessment and student support to improve the quality of learning and teaching during recent years. The EEC encourages the Department to continue this practice in a systematic manner to enable continuous improvement of its educational programs and process.

### **Conclusions and suggestions**

The EEC is very impressed with the achievements of the Department in a resource-constrained environment and congratulates the Department on its achievements and offers the following suggestions for further improvements

1. Develop a single coherent strategic plan covering curriculum development, student experience, research and external relations, which is regularly updated and sets targets, performance indicators and allocates resources to achieve the targets.
2. Increase the numbers of academic, administrative and technical staff.
3. Change the Department's name so that it more accurately reflects the Department's teaching, research and consultancy activities.
4. Continue the process of continuous monitoring and improvement of the curriculum.
5. Consider the development of Masters and Doctoral Programmes if necessary in collaboration with other institutions but if possible independently.
6. Continue the process of supporting learning with e-class such that it could be developed in a distance learning programme.
7. Create formal structures for research, particularly permanent research groups based upon research strengths and develop specific research performance indicators in order that research performance can be regularly monitored.

## The Members of the Committee

Name and Surname	Signature
1. _____	
2. _____	
3. _____	
4. _____	
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