



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ  
**Α.ΔΙ.Π.**  
ΑΡΧΗ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ  
ΑΝΩΤΑΤΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ

HELLENIC REPUBLIC  
**H.Q.A.A.**  
HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY  
FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

## **EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT**

Department of Biosystems Engineering  
TEI Larissa

December 2010

### External Evaluation Committee

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the Department of Biosystems Engineering of the Technical Institution of Larissa consisted of the following four (4) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by the HQAA in accordance with Law 3374/2005 :

1. Professor Georgios H. Vatistas, (Co-ordinator)  
Concordia University, Montreal, Canada
2. Professor Pavlos G. Maropoulos  
University of Bath, Bath, UK
3. Professor emeritus George Yadigaroglu  
ETH Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland
4. Professor Dionysis D Bochtis  
Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark

***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***

The Committee for External Evaluation (hereafter the Committee) visited the Department of Biosystems Engineering at TEI Larissa (hereafter the Department) during the period 29th November 2010 – 1st December 2010. The team arrived in the evening of the 29th and had a brief introductory meeting with Professors: I. Kokkoras President of TEI, D. Pateras, Head of the School of Agricultural Technology, T. Lellis, Head of the Department and C. Papaioannou, Division Head of Agricultural Engineering. In the morning of November 30, the Committee met the faculty and heard several presentations followed by a Campus visit. This included research and instructional laboratories, as well as lecture theaters and the TEI library. In the morning of December 30th the Committee met with the Technical Support staff and the personnel of the Secretariat of the Department. Then the Committee members had a valuable meeting with a fairly large group (around 15) of motivated students. Finally, the Committee met with the academics to brief them about its preliminary findings.

The Committee considered several documents provided by the Department. In addition to the two Internal Evaluation Reports, this included the Departmental Study Guide, and the recent curriculum vitae of the permanent and temporary academics.

The visit took place in an atmosphere that combined high level of professionalism with a cordial and collegial atmosphere. The Committee members are unanimous in wishing to express in writing their gratitude and appreciation to all the staff of the Department for their excellent hospitality and help with all aspect of the evaluation visit and to HQAA for the detailed arrangements for the visit.

Given the necessary travel time from Athens to Larissa, the Committee was scheduled to spend only one and a half days visiting the TEI in Larissa. Due to this time limitation, the Committee concentrated its review on major issues: the new curriculum, the strategic orientation of the Department and the difficulties mentioned in the Internal Evaluation reports.

The Department belongs to the TEI Larissa that was created in 1974 and has evolved from its former KATE and then KATEE status to a TEI by law in 1983. In 2001, by law, the TEI were incorporated in the higher education institutions and are now considered as being equivalent to Universities, their differences being that TEI are focused on applied teaching and research.

In this process, the Department has changed its initial, clearly defined role and focus (as an agricultural college with well defined area of applications) and made commendable efforts to adapt to its new challenges. Today, the Department finds itself in search of a new identity and its mission is becoming quite difficult as a consequence of legacy systems and organisation (existing limited infrastructure and human resources appointed for non-research activities), involvement of Ministries via strict regulations into its affairs, with minimal control over admissions of students and an overall low-level of preparation of new students.

Following international trends, the name of the Department was recently changed from

“Department of Agricultural Machinery and Irrigation” to “Department of Biosystems Engineering” and the curriculum was adjusted to some extent to reflect the reality of the new identity.

According to the 2009-2010 Internal Evaluation Report of the Department, the specialisation that is offered has a dual purpose: a) the mechanisation of agriculture, and b) the land improvement and irrigation activities. The “bio-systems” aspects present in the new title of the Department are only partially covered with new courses, in spite of the recent curriculum changes aiming to this direction.

As an overall recommendation, the Department should continue its soul-searching effort, in order to find a clear new identity, mission, and operational niches compatible with: the national regulatory framework, the capabilities and technical competencies of its staff, the needs of the agriculture and food industries, learning from the experiences of its former graduates, the opinions of industry and related socio-economic stakeholders. The Committee considers this to be a difficult task, but even partial success in this direction would be most welcome.

This report is structured according to the template headings required by ADIP. In each section there is analysis of the current situation and recommendations by the Committee.

## ***A. Curriculum***

Following the European and International trends within the Agricultural Engineering studies, the name of the Department has recently been changed from “Department of Agricultural Machinery and Irrigation” to “Biosystems Engineering” and the curriculum was adapted to some extent to reflect this new identity. According to these trends, the traditional field of Agricultural Engineering is evolving into the Biosystems Engineering field, a science-based engineering discipline that integrates engineering science with applied biological, environmental and agricultural sciences.

The current curriculum of the Department has been in effect as of September of the current year. It is a modification of the previous curriculum that was related to the Department of Agricultural Machinery and Irrigation. Accordingly, the objectives of the new curriculum are to implement engineering and biological sciences on the manufacturing and management (selection and use) of agricultural machinery, and on the establishment and management of irrigation systems, targeted at crop and animal production systems. Through the provided education and applied research, it aims to train graduates who will be able to join the relevant industries.

The curriculum, in general, does not entirely meet the criteria for its admission to the generally accepted Biosystems Engineering educational programme, as these are articulated by the relevant associations and official thematic networks. Nevertheless, it is very important to note that the programme changes necessary to meet the mentioned criteria and requirements have been highly limited by the inflexibility of the state educational system in terms of the tightly regulated study programmes, i.e., the exact stipulation of the number of

courses, as well as certain personnel and budget related limitations.

Furthermore, the curriculum covers a wide area with a limited number of courses (as directed by general regulations regarding TEI curricula) treating in some depth a limited number of specific areas. The content of the courses are rather diverse (as required by the multiple-discipline nature of the Biosystems Engineering field) and not necessarily clearly interconnected, perhaps reflecting the interests of individual faculty members and historic choices and needs.

To this end, the following are recommended:

**Recommendation A1:** Add basic science courses in order to cope with the science-based character of the biosystems engineering discipline (e.g., courses such as physics, chemistry, and computer science which appear to be missing- while mathematics and economics exist in the current programme). The Committee does understand that the content of these courses has to face the unevenness of the educational level of the incoming students originated from different educational Lyceum directions, or even from different Lyceum types. In order to address the last, the introduction of remedial courses (potentially offered by other departments of the institution) is recommended.

**Recommendation A2:** Minimisation of thematic overlaps in courses is highly recommended (e.g., some fundamentals of fluid dynamics are covered in more than one course instead of being presented in an introductory “hydraulics” course).

**Recommendation A3:** The curriculum needs to have an appropriate coverage of fundamental engineering topics including mechanics and materials, thermodynamics and fluids, and engineering design.

**Recommendation A4:** Introduce more options (currently only two are offered) providing a sufficient freedom of choice to the students (e.g., bioenergy, systems management, food processing, farm buildings, ICT, and the like) This will widen the breath of the overall academic mission.

**Recommendation A5:** Courses addressing the systems aspects should be added (e.g., systems analysis, life cycle analysis).

**Recommendation A6:** It is very important to reconfigure the whole educational programme in a “horizontal structure”, i.e., provide courses that underpin the fundamental knowledge to support the “vertical specialisations” in agricultural machinery, irrigation and bio-systems. This will reduce the overlaps and will create the required space for the introduction of basic-research and report writing skills and fundamental science and engineering courses, while at the same time it will improve the systems approach of the entire discipline.

## ***B1. Teaching – undergraduate level***

It should be noted that the curriculum as well as the means and resources available for teaching depend in the country in general, and for the TEI Larissa in particular, on regulations dictated by the competent Ministries and, consequently, the TEI and the Department may not have sufficient autonomy to optimise their approach. In this light, and given the limited number of permanent faculty, following a general practice “imposed” to all TEI, the Department is covering the necessary teaching hours by calling outside lecturers on a part-time basis; they are appointed on a yearly basis (why not for a longer period, at least after they have proved their qualifications in the first year of appointment!). The Committee discovered that the management of this process creates a large administrative load (call for proposals, evaluation of the candidates, acquisition of the funds, dealing with appeals, etc.).

The ratio of permanent academics to temporary lecturers is high at 1:4 when counting heads, while it is about 1:1.7 when counting teaching hours. Permanent academics noted that some of the contract lecturers were not sufficiently present on campus, while contract lecturers mentioned that they had difficulties in fully integrating themselves in the life of the Department and in research activities.

The Department offers an undergraduate curriculum of eight semesters consisting of 40 courses that include the final Diploma project. The curriculum was previously offered starting in both the Fall and Spring semesters in parallel sessions. This practice was changed recently and the curriculum is now offered only starting with the Fall semester; this should reduce the course load of the Faculty as a whole. While keeping the individual semester loads constant it offers the opportunity to the permanent academics of taking responsibility over additional courses presently delivered by temporary lecturers. The financial expenditure and administrative load created by the external lecturers will also be reduced. However, the Committee noted that in certain cases, temporary lecturers had excellent qualifications and very relevant skills that certainly enrich the taught material in the Department and hence involving contract lecturers should be selectively maintained.

On one hand, students complained about certain teaching approaches from some academic staff, the quality of some teaching rooms and laboratories, some antiquated equipment, and no access to *available* modern equipment. Students also noted that some academic staff and temporary lecturers were dealing very well with their teaching duties. Hence, the Department would need to manage the issue of uneven teaching quality, while on the other hand poor secondary-school preparation of the entering student body makes effective teaching more difficult.

With respect to the teacher/student collaboration, the use of information technologies, and the examination system the Committee notes, respectively:

- a) The Internal Evaluation Report states that the contacts of the academics with the students are sporadic (e.g., no systematic posting of contact hours) and that the

students do not take full advantage of the opportunity to meet the academic members.

b) The TEI offers sufficient IT means in the buildings, the library, etc. The Department uses IT to communicate information to the students, etc.

c) The examination system is based on a reasonable mix of oral and written evaluations, semester projects, observations during the laboratory sessions and final examinations.

As noted in the Introduction, due to time limitations, a detailed assessment of the teaching activities was not undertaken. Some samples of academic materials shown to the Committee were rather old-fashioned. Students noted that they were not always given access to all available teaching material and that the reference text books proposed were occasionally difficult to follow or were not in line with the material taught in class; consequently, they often had to rely on their own notes.

The Committee noted that there are in most cases no links between research and teaching as the research activities of the Department are limited and/or not linked to the teaching areas. The students have, however, the means of accessing the bibliography by electronic means during their project work.

Although the Internal Evaluation Report lists rather numerous contacts and exchanges with National and foreign institutions that have been developed in the last decades, from the presentations made in Larissa the Committee learned that only a limited number of students (4) have recently participated in the European, ERASMUS exchange program. For those whose level of English-language skills was sufficient, the exchange was a success. The Committee wishes to encourage the Department to also consider academic staff mobility via ERASMUS or similar programs.

A systematic evaluation of the courses is conducted via a Questionnaire filled by the students that includes 37 questions covering the range of issues. There is variability of the scores in the Questionnaire across issues and from course to course.

The Committee welcomes the fact that this system has been recently computerized, saving tedious processing time. The average grades to the various questions are computed and provided, according to the Internal Evaluation Report, to the Head of the Department who distributes them to the member of staff concerned. Department-average values are made available to the members of staff.

Although it is difficult to get an exact picture from the numbers displayed in the Internal Evaluation Report (due to time delays between entrance and graduation), the Committee learned that the success rate of the students in passing examinations is low.

The ratio between entering students per year (that varied between 270 and 300 in 2004-2005 and dropped to 35-50 later) and the number of degrees awarded (around 30 per year) is clearly low.

About half of the entering student body (registered students) does not show up in classes

(inactive students). Most of the students take significantly longer times to graduate than the minimum required. However, there are no obstacles to well-motivated students with clear academic goals to finish on time.

The average grade of graduating students has remained around 6.2/10 during the last seven years.

Sadly, the students noted that they were “trying to get the base grade” rather than excel in their work. Very few students graduate with a grade above 7.

Such behaviour is endemic in Greece and its reasons in Larissa are most likely similar to the reasons elsewhere: motivation or lack of clear motivation, gaps in preparation by the secondary education, etc.

**Recommendation B1:** Considering the change in course offerings from twice a year to only once a year, the permanent academics could take the responsibility of delivering additional courses. The Committee believes that wherever possible, the permanent academics should primarily cover the basic courses, leaving some of the advanced and specialist courses to the temporary lecturers.

**Recommendation B2:** As the secondary-school orientations of entering students cover the full range available in Greece, and their degree of preparation for further studies (as reflected in their grades in the Pan-Hellenic examinations) can be low (below the passing level of 10/20), the Department needs to consider offering preparatory, catch-up, remedial classes, as a means of bringing all the students to a minimum level required before they undertake the core courses.

**Recommendation B3:** The department should seriously consider longer-term appointments of the temporary contract lectures possibly after a trial period.

**Recommendation B4:** The academics should make every effort to improve communication with students.

**Recommendation B5:** The course evaluations should be exploited to improve the teaching process (e.g. by identifying good practices used by the highly-graded academics).

**Recommendation B6:** The Committee recommends that a much wider dissemination of the course evaluations be undertaken. It also suggests including in the graphical representations the number of questionnaires used and the standard deviations of the grades.

## ***B2. Teaching – graduate level***

The Department has successfully participated in the collaborative organization of two graduate (Master's) programs with the University of Bari and the University of Thessaly, respectively.

The Committee was pleased to find out that the Department Faculty taught the Bari program courses during its first semester in the TEI of Larissa. The second semester courses were conducted and taught by the Faculty in Bari.

The interest in these two graduate program (number of applicants) and the number of students entering and graduating is satisfactory (around 20-40).

## ***C. Research***

The comments that follow are made having as a benchmark a research-intensive institution, as we understand the aspiration of the Department as seeking to become a research-active environment. It is to be understood, however, that until now TEI has a strong and successful technological (applied) character. The research activities, as compared to the acceptable international standards, are mainly undertaken by some academics, either on a voluntary basis or as a means to advance through the academic ranks.

Compared to international standards, the Committee finds that the overall research activities of basic and applied research need considerable improvement. However, there are exceptions, as there exist some pockets of excellence with high potential that may lead to significant contributions to targeted science and technology fields in the near to medium term future.

Overall, we find that the Department is not ready at this moment in time to develop graduate programmes at the Masters and/or doctoral level by itself. The Committee welcomes the existing collaborations with other Universities in terms of postgraduate course provision as they will enhance the relevant knowledge and experience of the Department.

In terms of research, the Department's present approach is *ad hoc* as there are no detailed plans of how to enhance the research component in the near future. If the Department wishes to successfully undergo, in the near future, a transition from an applied teaching-focused institution to a research-active institution, it will require the strong presence of research and postgraduate programmes. The development of "centres of excellence" in well-focused areas that will drive research activity within the department will be pivotal in this process. It is also important to actively attract external financial support from the European Union, as well as from National and industrial funds.

The Committee is favourably impressed by the recent funding success regarding the major grant LIFE09 EU project (around 2,5 M€, entitled: Adapt agricultural production to climate change and limited water supply). The Committee considers that this Grant may be a catalyst triggering further research activities within the department.

In general, the average publication output of tenured faculty members is low. This points to the need to adhere to established research criteria in academic staff progression and future recruitment. The time is opportune, since there are several faculty members who will soon retire. The Department should consider hiring new academics with strong research potential and also encouraging research active temporary lecturers to engage with its research programmes.

**Recommendation C1:** The Department should explicitly layout their long-term research objectives in a document, in which all faculty members should commit.

**Recommendation C2:** Include in the revised departmental planning additional steps towards the achievement of overall objectives such as:

- a. Define explicit criteria for future faculty recruitment that will ensure that the incoming faculty is research-active. A Ph.D. degree should be required from all new faculty members.
- b. Introduce explicit statements about the areas in which the Department aspires to excel.

**Recommendation C3:** The Committee urges researchers to publish their contributions in learned journals (peer-reviewed) that are included in Thomson's citation index (or equivalent) and are of high international reputation and quality, as measured by appropriate metrics.

**Recommendation C4:** The Department should take advantage of impending retirements of its Faculty to make the appointments that are needed for its new role and mission.

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

The Department has adequate services for its staff and students. Some parts of the infrastructure and laboratories are less than ideal for their current use. For instance, we heard from students that in some cases there was no heating during lectures or laboratories. The new building and the enhancement of the IT equipment should improve the services provided.

The Department has a very lean administrative structure that consists of only two members of staff. However, a considerable administrative load is carried by the academic and technical staff as a result of the requirement to serve on the various committees for purchasing, etc., within the Department. The Committee did not notice any policies regarding the simplification of the administrative load of the staff associated with these committees.

The Department is increasingly adopting electronic means in dealing with communication and dissemination of information to staff and students. The Committee is fully supportive of this course of action and would like to see such initiatives maintained and enhanced.

The Department Secretariat has two members. A Secretary that deals with all committee work within the Department. Another member of staff is dealing with all academic matters, such as student registry, course registrations, and managing the on-line availability of marks when they are entered into the system by the academics. This is a very lean structure when considering the fact that there are more than 20 academics in the Department and around 1,000 registered students.

The Department is supported by one IT officer and the Committee understands that new IT equipment is on order. It will be desirable to increase the number of PCs available for student use within the Department, perhaps when the new building is complete.

The Committee visited the Library and was very impressed by the quality of the building and the completeness of the infrastructure and the associated services. This is an excellent facility and should be used as a benchmark for the new Departmental building.

The internal evaluation report identifies that student support is not fully developed and it would be important to consider how a range of student services (i.e., counselling, academic support and advice to maintain an appropriate balance between study and work), can be introduced in the Department in collaboration with the appropriate central services of the School and TEI.

The Department has already identified, in the internal evaluation report, the importance of completing the new building that will provide much needed office and laboratory space. The Department also identified a number of improvements regarding the provision of advice and support to students.

The Committee agrees with the overall issues identified.

Regarding the ways of dealing with supporting and advising students, it may be worth considering that some of these tasks could be delivered by specialist administrative staff rather than relying on academic members of staff.

**Recommendation D1:** The Department needs to identify additional and better ways of supporting its students. This should include methods for supporting students who under-achieve in their studies, provide advice to students when they are under work and study pressures, offer guidance to students regarding careers and choice of optional courses, and introducing new students to the course.

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

Collaboration with social, cultural and production organisations is mainly developed with the initiative of members of academic staff and the Department is viewing such activities in a positive manner.

The Department has organised two information dissemination events since 2004.

**Recommendation D2:** The Committee considers that building strong links with such organisations at local and National levels is a very important aspect in terms of enhancing the public understanding of what the Department does and promoting its interfaces with industry. This is vitally important both in terms of developing research programmes and also supporting the life-long learning aspirations of past graduates in new technologies and methods.

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

The Department has an annual planning cycle that is conditioned by the allocated funding and the Committee considers that there is also a need for establishing a long-term strategic plan.

The Department in its internal evaluation has identified a number of inhibiting factors regarding the operation of an effective strategic planning. This includes changes of policy at National level, complex relationships between Universities and TEI and a claimed lack of planning at School and Institute levels. The claimed lack of planning issue at TEI and School levels is a serious concern as it is an essential requirement for the successful operation of the TEI and its Departments. The Committee considers that this is an issue that requires further clarification from the Department and TEI in general. Notwithstanding this claim, the Department lists five future actions/goals as elements of its long term strategy including:

- (i) The modernisation and enhancement of the curriculum.
- (ii) The improvement of its infrastructure and buildings.
- (iii) The development of research and scholarly co-operations with other institutes in Greece and abroad.
- (iv) The organisation of postgraduate studies.
- (v) Programmes for life-long learning.

Having reviewed the operation of the Department, it is clear that the curriculum needs extensive re-work as it has gaps in key subjects required for the justification of the title of “engineering” and it needs re-organisation and refocusing to properly reflect the new emphasis on “bio-systems”. More details regarding the re-organisation of the curriculum are outlined in Section A.

The improvement of the infrastructure and buildings is a major and pressing need for the Department, and the Committee notes the progression of the building schedule and this is very welcome.

The aspiration to establish research and scholarly co-operation with other Institutes is very valid and should be supported. However, this long term goal requires the development of a

coherent research plan that should include methods for developing promising research topics and supporting individual researchers.

The organisation of postgraduate studies is an aspiration that needs to be supported by the State and the TEI. In the view of the Committee, the Department and Institute do not appear to have the overall organisational readiness and infrastructure required for the effective delivery and support of postgraduate studies. In that respect, it is essential that the Department learns from the experiences and practice of partner organisations prior to seeking to establish its own postgraduate studies.

The plan to support life-long learning is very appropriate for the current economic climate and deserves the full support of the School and TEI.

The staffing issues mentioned in the internal evaluation report are recognised as being very important for the future development of the Department. In particular, we are fully in agreement with the requirement for the TEI to provide opportunities for the re-training and skills development of teaching staff. The Committee considers that this is essential on two grounds; firstly to support the new core programme of bio-systems engineering and secondly to develop and support research programmes.

The requested increase of the number of permanent academic staff from 22 to 47 appears to be unrealistic as it is not supported by an analysis of the current and future workloads to support the degree programme and develop research and it also lacks financial justification. The number of staff would need to relate to the average number of students attending courses and eventually graduating and with an average graduation number of around 30 students per annum; it may be difficult to justify the large expansion of the present number of permanent staff.

In summary, the Committee has the following recommendations.

**Recommendation E1:** To carry out a thorough planning of the curriculum to truly reflect the core aims and objectives of the new programme in bio-systems engineering and at the same time maintain the core competences in agricultural machinery and irrigation. The curriculum needs to have a specific coverage of fundamental basic-science and engineering topics as described in Section B (Curriculum).

**Recommendation E2:** To develop a research strategy that will include specific methods and procedures for the identification, fostering and development of research topics within the Department and the support and encouragement of academic staff to get engaged in research programmes and to develop their skills. Provisions must be made to incorporate non-permanent members of staff in research programmes, as this will increase the coherence of the Department.

**Recommendation E3:** To develop preparatory mechanisms and infrastructure, such as a Graduate School and courses and experimental facilities required to support courses at postgraduate level, that will, in the long-term, allow the organisation and delivery of postgraduate programmes by the Department.

**Recommendation E4:** To actively develop Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

courses that will support the life-long training and educational requirements of a wide range of graduates from the TEI and other Institutions in the area of Thessaly.

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

The most important conclusions reached by the Committee are assembled here. The detailed recommendations in each area that can be found at the end of the corresponding Sections, numbered accordingly, are not repeated here.

### **General**

In the process of becoming a TEI Department with the main characteristics of a university, the Department has changed its initial, clearly defined role and focus (as an agricultural college with well defined area of applications) and made commendable efforts to adapt to its new challenges. Today, the Department finds itself in search of a new identity and its mission is becoming quite difficult as a consequence of legacy systems and organisation, involvement of the Ministries via strict regulation into its affairs, with minimal control over admissions of students and an overall low-level of preparation of new students.

As an overall recommendation, the Department should continue its soul-searching effort, in order to find a clear new identity, mission, and operational niches compatible with: the national regulatory framework, the capabilities and technical competencies of its staff, the needs of the agriculture and food industries, learning from the experiences of its former graduates, the opinions of industry and related socio-economic stakeholders. The Committee considers this to be a difficult task, but even partial success in this direction would be most welcome.

### **Curriculum**

The “bio-systems” aspects present in the new title of the Department are only partially covered with new courses, in spite of the recent curriculum changes aiming to this direction. The curriculum, in general, does not entirely meet the requirements of a Biosystems Engineering programme, as these are articulated by the relevant associations and official thematic networks. Nevertheless, it is very important to note that the programme changes necessary to meet the mentioned criteria and requirements have been highly limited by the inflexibility of the state educational system already mentioned.

The ratio of permanent academics to temporary lecturers is high at 1:4 when counting heads, while it is about 1:1.7 when counting teaching hours. Indeed, the Department is covering the necessary teaching hours by calling outside lecturers on a yearly, part-time basis. The Committee discovered that the management of this process creates a large administrative load.

The curriculum was previously offered starting in both the Fall and Spring semesters in parallel sessions, while it is now offered only starting with the Fall semester; this should

reduce the course load of the Faculty as a whole. While keeping the individual semester loads constant, it offers the opportunity to the permanent academics of taking responsibility over additional courses presently delivered by temporary lecturers.

### **Teaching**

The Department would need to manage the issue of uneven teaching quality, while on the other hand poor secondary-school preparation of the entering student body makes effective teaching more difficult.

Although, a detailed assessment of the teaching activities was not undertaken, some limitations regarding academic materials, links between research and teaching, the dissemination of results of evaluation of the courses, as well as cases of excellent efforts were noted.

The success rate of the students and their average grades are rather low.

The interest in the two graduate programmes organized with other institutions and the number of students entering and graduating is satisfactory.

### **Research**

If the Department wishes to successfully undergo, in the near future, a transition from an applied teaching-focused institution to a research-active institution, it will require the strong presence of research and postgraduate programmes. Presently, the research activities are mainly undertaken by some academics, either on a voluntary basis or as a means to advance through the academic ranks and the overall research activities of basic and applied research need considerable improvement. The development of “centres of excellence” in well-focused areas that will drive research activity within the department will be pivotal in this process. The average publication output of tenured faculty members also needs improvement.

### **Other Services**

Generally, the Department has adequate services for its staff and students and a very lean administrative structure.

### **Planning**

The Department in its internal evaluation has already identified a number of inhibiting factors regarding the operation of an effective strategic planning.

The plan to support life-long learning is very appropriate for the current economic climate and deserves the full support of the School and TEI.

The requested doubling of the number of permanent academic staff is difficult to justify.

## The Members of the Committee

Name and Surname	Signature
1.	_____
2.	_____
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