



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 Project Management

TEI of LARISSA

June 22<sup>th</sup>, 2010

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### **External Evaluation Committee**

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the Department of Project Management of the Technological Educational Institute 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. Director of studies Nikos Macheridis (President)  
Lund University Sweden
2. Professor Nikolaos Tzokas  
University of East Anglia, Norwich Business School, UK
3. Professor Vangelis Th. Paschos  
LAMSADE, Universite Paris-Dauphine, France
4. Dr Dimitrios N. Koufopoulos  
Brunel University, Brunel Business School, UK

## ***Introduction***

### **The External Evaluation Procedure**

The EEC arrived in the evening of 31 May and met with Prof. Ioannis Kokkoras, President of TEI Larissa, Prof. Pantelis Ypsilantis, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Prof. Panagiotis Fitsilis, Head of the Department of Project Management. The committee also had a brief meeting with Profs. Kokkoras, Ypsilantis and Fitsilis before leaving the premises of the department.

The following day, the EEC met Prof. Panayiotis Fitsilis, Head of the Department of Project Management, faculty, OMEA, administrative and technical staff and a group of a large number of current students. Finally, the EEC met with five graduate students.

Meetings with staff, students and graduate students were useful and fruitful as many took an active part in the discussion and answered questions. It should be noted that the meetings with the administrative and technical staff took place without the presence of the head of the department and the meetings with students and graduates without the presence of academic staff.

The EEC visited various offices of the administration and faculty, classrooms, laboratories (where it had the opportunity to attend laboratory classes) and toured facilities such as library, registry, etc.

The EEC studied material placed at their disposal. Available to the committee were among others:

- ✓ The internal evaluation report dated June 2008 and June 2009
- ✓ Statistical data evaluation report
- ✓ First interim report of internal evaluation Larissa, Oct 2009
- ✓ Samples of final year projects/dissertations
- ✓ Study guide from the department.

The atmosphere during the visit was cordial and collegial, while remaining at a professional level. Staff was friendly and helped the committee's work by answering questions, engaging in dialogue and providing information and data, wherever possible.

The EEC wishes to express its gratitude both to the management and staff of the department and to H.Q.A.A. for organizing the visit.

### *Comments from the EEC on the external evaluation procedure*

The EEC is aware that perhaps some of the proposals/suggestions may not meet the existing institutional and legal framework in Greece.

## **A. Curriculum**

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

### **APPROACH**

The department of Project Management in the Technological and Educational Institute of Larissa offers a four years undergraduate program and two master programs in English in partnership with Staffordshire University. A third Master program in Greek is planned to start in 2010/2011 (is not commented in this report).

The undergraduate program includes modules of general content; other more specialist modules and modules specialized in project management (in total forty-six modules).

The UG program has been revised in 2008/2009. The selection of the Modules and the structure of the new program are based on the Project Management Handbook of Knowledge (Project Management Institute – PM).

The Master of Management program is one year in duration and the other, Master in Business Administration, is two years long. Both master programs commenced in 2004-2005. Both programs follow national and international standards.

The above mentioned Master programs are delivered in collaboration with Staffordshire University, UK. The original inputs to this collaboration was the opportunity to transfer knowledge and international best practice from a UK institution to the Department and jointly accelerate the emergence of the Project Management Profession in Greece.

The overall impression is that the scope, structure and content of the programs are consistent with the strategic objectives of the department, correspond to environmental and societal needs, and compare well with international standards and practices in the area.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

The EEC concluded that the department has the competence and the resources to implement its programs successfully. There are of course institutional, financial and legal restrictions that influence the actions and decision making in the department, which have been identified and taken into account.

The faculty of the department is well qualified with doctorates to teach all modules and to work towards meeting the goals and objectives of the programs.

There is a positive and dynamic culture in the department and a collegiate atmosphere which supports mutual respect, constructive work ethics and collaboration and exchange of ideas.

The structure of the programs is rational and with the necessary internal consistency. The Project Management Orientation that characterizes the department and the teaching programs is a comparative advantage that attracts students, recruits new faculty and staff and contributes to the research activities, thus continuously supporting the successful implementation of the programs.

The EEC observed some difficulties related to the Final Year Project/dissertations, despite the fact that the department has in place structured information and clear criteria which define what is expected from the students.

The recommendation from the ECC is to organize and structure dissertation work as a module e.g. with clear start date, dates for supervision, date for final presentation and defense of the dissertation etc. A formalized and structured process will contribute to making students aware of what is expected from them and focus their effort.

The implementation of the programs is supported by laboratories, computer software, ICT, library facilities, recently furnished study rooms etc. The present rate of students' attendance is high in laboratories (since this is compulsory) but quite low in classes that are theory based.

At the same time it is important to bear in mind that an essential ambition of the programs is to prepare students for future work and in doing so enhance considerably their employability and skills.

The EEC therefore wishes to make the following recommendation. The department should pay attention to a blended learning approach that engages as much as possible companies and organizations. This may take the form of site visits to companies, placements, internships, case studies, presentations from project managers, as well as a series of "Inside Project Management Practice" seminars which could invite prominent managers from the local, national or international arena to present the state-of-the-art in the field. Hopefully such blended learning and integration would attract students closer to the department and classroom especially when dealing with more theoretical oriented modules which are less attractive.

## **RESULTS**

The number of students graduating from the department in the two master programs compared to the number of students that start the master programs is satisfactory. This, however, does not apply to the undergraduate program.

The objectives of the programs are defined and the modules are evaluated every year.

The academic staff of the Department is well aware that the way to evaluate, the questions to be raised and the analysis must be developed in order to better understand the behavior of different stakeholders, and how well the objectives and the content in each program correspond with the needs of the society and the wider sociopolitical environment.

It is important to follow and pay attention to the students during their studies and after they have completed their degree i.e. how many students attend the courses and classes in the normal duration of their studies, why they may have stop studying or intercalating, how many get a degree and find work in a related to their degree jobs, the opinion of the employers who hire graduates from the department, how well the project management approach is suitable to develop knowledge and skills corresponding to societal and environmental needs etc.

## **IMPROVEMENT**

The department works continuously to evaluate the quality of courses and programs. The EEC has the following recommendations.

To base the undergraduate program on the Project Management Book of Knowledge

means a rational structure of the program and consistency between courses included in the program. The structure and the content of master programs are based on transferring experiences from the partnership with Staffordshire University.

In order to improve the content and learning outcomes of the programs the EEC recommends new modules in business ethics and corporate social responsibility, a new module in multi-project management and management of project portfolios, as well as a module on environmental issues. In general, in order to meet the needs and the requirements of the society the department should integrate aspects related to gender and diversity management in the existing curriculum. Alternatively, a module in contemporary issues in Project Management would allow the department to bring in latest thinking in the field and link it to current economic, social and geopolitical developments.

The department pays attention and devotes resources in quality assurance and self evaluation. A more institutionalized approach aiming at the revision of the different programs every three years will be contributing positively to the improvement of the quality of the programs.

## B. Teaching

### APPROACH:

Modern, quite up to date teaching methods are followed – supported by quite impressive rooms and lecture theatres-including e-learning (e-class system). It seems that both the academic staff and the students use increasingly this technology.

Students have the opportunity to apply and use in a lab environment special software packages which enhance students' experience and provide real opportunities for practical benefits to students.

The student staff ratio (SSR) *seems to* be relatively high (see the Internal Review, June 2008 paragraph 4.7, pp. 37). Nevertheless in recent years, student numbers have been dramatically reduced.

The **Table** summarises the Annual Intake/Enrolments and the Graduates (UG) per year:

	Intake-Enrolments	Graduates	Graduation Rate	Average Graduation Grade
2000-2001	missing	.	49.7 %	
2001-2002	missing	.	53.3%	
2002-2003	231	.	82.2%	
2003-2004	229	.		
2004-2005	246	32		6.98
2005-2006	227	98		6.68
2006-2007	107	96		6.56
2007-2008	111	75		6.31
2008-2009	69	123		6.31
2009-2010	68	91		6.30

There seems to be a good collaboration/rapport between active students and faculty; evidenced, among others, by the students' acceptance and assistance to the evaluation procedure for modules which has been implemented for the third consecutive year. In addition, based on EEC interviews conducted with five graduates from the years 2004, and 2009 it was found that they had maintained strong and ongoing relationships with the department and its faculty.

The existing infrastructure in terms of buildings, rooms, computing and network facilities /equipment is very good and well used.

The teaching *assessment* approach seems to be the standard one which presumably is used by the sector across the country. It could be improved considerably by implementing a number of procedural steps.

- ✓ Introducing compulsory Assignments in the majority of the modules (including presentations).
- ✓ Adopting an assessment strategy that perceives assessment as part of the learning experience.
- ✓ Enhancing the feedback provided to students from their assignments.
- ✓ Rethinking the whole issue of the Final project and the 6 months compulsory Work Placement, thus providing clear links and a degree of integration between the two.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

The level and quality of teaching and teaching preparation is good. The level of textbooks and on-line help is good (satisfactory e-library and e-journal subscription and excellent new library facilities for the whole TEI).

The course content although recently updated - the Whole Course and Module guide has been re-written and rationalised- needs up to date references from major academic journals; not simply bibliography.

There is a clear link between research and teaching, since the majority of the faculty is involved in research activities. Once more, we note that the Final Year Project should be redesigned and improved.

Faculty and Student mobility to other institutions is relatively limited (Internal Evaluation Report, 2008; pp. 42-43). They both should be encouraged and expanded.

Student employment seems to be working well. However, it is recommended that closer relationship with the graduates/alumni who can act as ambassadors for the department should be formally developed.

The students regularly –twice per year-evaluate the academic staff and the modules /courses through a formal procedure. The department has taken bold pioneering steps in capturing students' views and opinions. Nevertheless, we note that the outcome/findings are not used to further enhance the departments' performance since there is no formal procedure to discuss and reflect on these results and in doing so develop ways to integrate the voice of the students to the curriculum development.

## **RESULTS**

The large number of dropouts, the prolonged duration of studies-eight years plus one- and the large number of students registered in the first five years, has been creating difficult conditions for the academic staff.

The EEC has also noted that grades appear to be leaning towards medium or low levels and the percentage of students scoring about or above 8.5/10 is zero percent. In addition, the average graduating grade is constantly declining (although this can be explained by the increasing number of Graduates (See above Table).

The length of studies beyond 6 years is not justified; the usual excuse of 'working students' was not well documented.

The department is fully aware of their strengths and weaknesses in terms of their teaching and learning competencies; the faculty members are concerned and interested in their teaching approach and they constantly seek opportunities for improvement.

## **IMPROVEMENTS**

The department would like to see teaching load reduced; at least, as a first step. The department and the EEC is concerned with the fact that from the 2010-11 students with 10 or below grade on the overall exam will be given the opportunity to enrol and study.

Huge opportunities exist in improving the *Supervision of the Final Project* and their *Work Placement*, which should be pursued.

More Specifically the EEC recommends:

- ✓ Consider redesigning the Study Guide so that a clear link between the Final Project and Work Placement will be established.
- ✓ Further compliance to a standardised structure for the Final Projects; considering - a bold move- to recruit a specialist that for some years would undertake the supervision of the students so that the quality of the dissertations/projects will be improved.
- ✓ It may be advisable for the Project/Dissertation to follow the Work Placement; this way the opportunities for students to carry out a project which will be based on their Work Placement will be greater.
- ✓ A record of formal and compulsory meetings throughout the completion of the Project should be kept.

Other Recommendations regarding Teaching:

- ✓ The low attendance in certain modules by students is a concern that may also contribute to the slow and low graduation rates. Thus, in the 16 modules that the assessment is based only on Exams and as such minimum attendance is not required, the EEC would encourage the department to reflect and consider ways that this can be changed (i.e mid-term exams, assignments, formative assessment and so on).
- ✓ Introduce a yearly formal procedure for updating the Module Outlines/Descriptions for all modules. Currently, this rests on the goodwill of the academic staff.
- ✓ The Department should consider ways to assist the weaker students when they enrol. The faculty and the EEC felt that the acceptance of students scoring less than 10 as an entry requirements is a negative and highly dangerous development (to be re-introduced in 2010-2011 academic year).
- ✓ The high ratio of Ad-hoc non permanent –Part-Time staff; over 30 – is not a healthy feature and cannot fulfil the long term objectives of the Department. Nevertheless, it should be noted that all Part-Time faculty were committed and well aware of the process and the ongoing developments in the department.
- ✓ The EEC has also identified a number of benefits that have been realised through the alliance and the formal ties developed by the Department and the Staffordshire University. The EEC strongly recommends that processes and procedures which have been introduced and implemented in the Post Graduate Programs to be migrated to the UG program.

*For example:*

- ✓ A committee that will formally review all students' performance every year per cohort. More importantly the committee should monitor the performance of the Final Year students and reflect on the grades for each individual student across modules.
  
- ✓ Committees (i.e 1st- 2nd-3rd-4th year) that will review, moderate and suggest improvements on all pieces of assessment and their corresponding model answers, should be institutionalised and operate as soon as possible.

### **C. Research**

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

#### **APPROACH**

There is a basic contradiction between institutional and legal frameworks for research in TEI. Following the former, research is not mandatory for TEI's staff and in this sense it is not constitutive part of department's policy and goals. Consequently, there do not exist infrastructures or doctoral programs nor research oriented postgraduate programs. On the other hand, the legal framework considers research as a basic element for hiring and promotion of TEI's academic staff. This contradiction appears very clearly in the PMG of TEI of Larisa. In other words research in this department rests on the patriotism of its faculty. This means, in particular, that there is no sufficient funding for participations in conferences; research travels stays, researchers invitations, etc.

The basic problem for the department is that there is neither organized nor systematic (institutional, national or local) funding for research, nor real research oriented postgraduate studies. The two postgraduate programs, which are jointly delivered with Staffordshire University are considered as the stepping stone of the department's postgraduate policy, yet they are business rather than research-oriented. Furthermore, research is not one of the main strengths of Staffordshire University. Further, according to current Greek legislation, TEIs cannot offer PhD degrees. Implicitly, this makes impossible a viable PhD program in the short term. However, the envisaged collaboration with Staffordshire as an attempt to be involved in PhD supervision extends at a departmental level the individual experiences of staff and may be proved useful, in the future. Finally, even if the department plans the recruitment of one or two PhD students, it is not clear how and where these students will be found, or how they will be funded.

Also, the department has not federative research structures; i.e either as Research Commission/council and/or a research seminar series.

On the positive side, the relatively small size of the department (about 12 permanent academics) helps for a clear and coherent research profile which supports the teaching profile of the department. It mainly carries over project and risk management competence.

Also, the fact that TEI's academic library is part of the national consortium for access to several digital libraries largely facilitates electronic access to a good number of scientific supports (scientific journals or conference proceedings).

#### **IMPLEMENTATION**

*Scientific publications*

The vast majority (10 out of 12, i.e., 83.33%) of the permanent academic staff is active in research. Most of their publications are results of internal collaborations (between members of the department). This shows that there exist both good ambiance between academics in the department, as well as thematic coherence in the department's research topics and interests.

Since 2004, 158 scientific papers have been published, while the number of publications for the period 2007-2009 is 36 and for the academic year 2008-2009 32. It appears that the Project Management department is the most research active among the four departments of the faculty of Administration and Economics in both number of scientific papers and percentage of research active permanent members.

More precisely, for the period September 1<sup>st</sup> 2008 to August 31<sup>st</sup> 2009, the department's scientific production includes:

- 15 scientific journals,
- 17 refereed conference proceedings,
- 6 books (in Greek);

From the first category, 9 out of 15 papers were published (or accepted) in international scientific journals with pivoting ones:

- European Journal of Operations Research (Elsevier),
- International Journal of Project Management (Elsevier),
- International Journal of Project Organization and Management (Interscience).

The remaining 6 out of 15 journals are Greek scientific or professional journals with unknown (or non existed) ranking/status.

From the second category (conference proceedings), 11 out 17 papers were presented in international conferences with a fair acceptance rate, while 3 or 4 were presented in a reputable Greek Operations Research conference.

As it has already been noticed above, most of the publications are outcomes of internal collaborations. It should be very beneficial for research if the members of the department cultivate external collaborations, i.e. with researchers from other TEIs, Greek and other Universities.

#### *Research projects*

The department regularly participates to several (applied) research projects. The more recent (completed) include the following:

- ΕΥΠΟΛΥΣ – Programme Risk Management – ΑΡΧΙΜΗΔΗΣ
- MISSION – SPM –Software Project Management Modelling – ΑΡΧΙΜΗΔΗΣ
- Flexible forms of employment in Thessaly – ΑΡΧΙΜΗΔΗΣ
- ePROCSEE – Electronic Public Procurement In Europe – eTEN

Furthermore, for the academic year 2009-2010, 10 new research proposal applications were submitted by members of the department:

- 6 proposals in the framework of APXIMHΔΗΣ call and
- 4 proposals in the framework of ΘΑΛΗΣ call in collaboration with the National Technical University of Athens, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and the Aegean University.

#### *Organization of scientific events*

The department has organized a number of national and international scientific events, mainly for the period from 2003 to 2006. The most important events were:

- The 16<sup>th</sup> conference of HELORS (2003),
- The 1<sup>st</sup> Pan-Hellenic conference for Project Management (2006),
- The 64<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Multi-Criteria decision Aiding group (2006),
- The special conference of HELORS on multi-criteria analysis (2006).

This activity, very important for the scientific visibility of the department's research must be continued and intensified.

#### *Research Laboratory*

In 2009, the department proposed the creation of a new research laboratory focusing on "Project Management Systems". The establishment of the research laboratory was approved by TEI Larissa management board and currently the department is waiting for the Ministerial approval.

## **RESULTS**

The EEC considers that given the inherent legal and institutional difficulties and obstacles, the available infrastructures and the research goals of the department, research outcome and production are satisfactory.

In the following table a summary of the scientific activity of the department since 2004 is presented.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Books</b>	<b>Refereed scientific journals</b>	<b>Refereed conference proceedings</b>	<b>Book chapters</b>
<b>2004</b>		2	10	1
<b>2005</b>	2	5	21	2
<b>2006</b>	4	9	31	1
<b>2007</b>		6	12	6
<b>2008</b>	3	13	17	1
<b>2009</b>	5	6	14	4
<b>Total</b>	16	54	109	15

The recognition of the research conducted in the department is further certified by citations of the published papers. The global recognition of research (expressed by citations, journals' editorial boards and conference committees memberships) as it can be seen in the following table can, to the opinion of the committee, be considered fairly satisfactory.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Citations</b>	<b>Conference committees</b>	<b>Editorial boards</b>
<b>2009</b>	45	5	3
<b>2008</b>	45	8	4
<b>2007</b>	20	5	2
<b>2006</b>	18	9	1
<b>2005</b>	8	3	1
<b>Total</b>	136	30	11

Another element of the good scientific visibility of the department is the number of recent participations in joint research programs mainly within the APXIMHΔHΣ and ΘΑΛΗΣ calls.

Scientific activity with publications in journals and conference proceedings should be continued and intensified. Furthermore, better scientific journals should be targeted. This is recognized by the whole of the department's academic staff.

## **IMPROVEMENT**

It is widely recognised within the department's academic staff that research effort, along with the directions discussed during the evaluation meeting and mentioned above must be continued and intensified.

The EEC thinks that the main issue that has to be urgently considered is permanence of research through the recruitment of good postgraduate and PhD students in the future. This does not seem to be possible from the actual state of postgraduate programs in the department. A possible way to remedy this is recruitment via the projects within ΘΑΛΗΣ call (if they are accepted for funding). Also, the department must develop collaborations and participation in research oriented postgraduate programs.

The department's research expertise seems to be largely unknown at the regional level. Local enterprises and industries seem to consider the department as a potential consultant rather than as a potential applied pool of researchers for joint

production of new knowledge. It is up to department's staff to reverse this image by communicating its research skills and expertise. This is important for both research funding of the department and societal and economic development of the region of Thessaly.

As mentioned above, publications in journals and conference proceedings should be continued and intensified. Furthermore, scientific journals of higher esteem should be targeted. Also, the department within the limits of its financial resources must increase and encourage participation of its members in scientific conferences as well as short period research stays abroad.

A research seminar must be created with broad invitations of researchers from other academic institutions. This could help exchange of ideas and development of new ones. It could also further motivate the department's faculty in their research.

Finally a Scientific/Research Council should be created in the department, for defining research priorities, structuring research activities and, more generally, leading research effort.

## **D. All Other Services**

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

### **APPROACH**

During the visit we had the opportunity to meet people from the following services:

1. the secretariat of the department
2. the careers and placements office (central to TEI)
3. the library (central to TEI)
4. the restaurant and cafeteria.

Furthermore we witnessed the use of the e-class IT platform used by faculty, staff and students.

The secretariat of the department consists of three (3) full time staff and is supported by a student through her practical part of her studies. An additional four (4) members of staff are seconded to the department (one responsible for the finances of the PGT programmes, one supporting legal services and responsible for internal quality assessment, one for IT and network development and the fourth person for general secretarial duties).

The secretariat provides full administrative support to the department and is responsible for dealing with all administration related student issues from the point of their arrival to the department to their graduation and beyond.

Overall there is a clear approach of the department to provide a coherent and well organised portfolio of services to the students and its faculty. Administrative procedures are to a large extent organised electronically; however paper copies of administrative materials were witnessed too.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

To begin with, the department enjoys a significant reputation within the overall institution and beyond. As a result of this reputation there is evidence of significant investment to support its activities. Above and beyond anything else the department has recently moved to a new building within the TEI campus with well organised teaching facilities and administrative spaces.

The new building has been received very well by faculty, staff and students and it is obvious that it makes an important contribution to the overall research and teaching excellence culture of the department as well as to the collegiate approach to decision making and the student support.

The EEC was impressed by the use of the e-class system and the quantity and quality of information provided therein. All module materials were uploaded there and students had direct access to databases such as EMERALD and SCIENCEDIRECT databases.

In terms of a physical library facility the department was served by the TEI central library which has just moved to a new purpose build structure near to the department's building. Once again the facility was impressive with clear space for

students to concentrate onto their study. Nevertheless the building felt rather small for the size of the TEI and there is no doubt that by attracting mores students to its premises the need for a larger facility will emerge again in the near future. The expected procurement of teleconference equipment would provide an additional dimension of enhanced library services to faculty and students.

Restaurant and cafeteria were of relatively good quality and this was expected to improve yet again with the completion of a new cafeteria space.

The careers and placements office was not dedicated to the department but served the whole of TEI. To our surprise there were only two (2) members of staff and we were made aware of lack of adequate funding to support these full time posts, despite some optimism that the situation will be resolved and they will continue to support students.

Despite the very small number of staff in this important office for a Technological Educational Institution we were impressed by the level of commitment, enthusiasm and effectiveness of staff. A dedicated website (<http://www.career.teilar.gr/>) which has been developed with a clear orientation and focus to the needs of students, alongside the number and up-to-date information related to events and opportunities for recruitment and business engagement provide clear evidence of the quality of work in this area. It is important to note here that students receive support to develop the presentation and outline of their CV as well as enhance their skills for interviews and presentations.

Finally the secretariat is housed in a rather small office where the lack of space to allow meaningful contact with faculty and students was evident. Nevertheless all full time administrative staff was well experienced with procedures, and appeared to have a very good rapport with both faculty and students.

Overall, we witnessed, albeit limited, dedicated space well organised with computers for practical applications in the building of the department.

## **RESULTS**

Overall the administrative infrastructure and support received from other services seem to be high on the agenda of the department.

Nevertheless, problems of space in some cases and a clear lack of staff to progress the development and diffusion of associated services is an issue that requires urgent attention.

## **IMPROVEMENTS**

As mentioned earlier there was some optimism in the department that conditions will continue to improve. However, it was not clear to the EEC on what basis and in particular what type of funding could provide additional resource for this. It became obvious that faculty and management perceived the quality of the department and the uniqueness and flagship nature of its programmes as a clear incentive to continue with improvements and allocation of resources.

The EEC also appreciated the commitment of the TEI's President to divert resources to enhance the continuous development and improvement of services. Nevertheless

one needs to bear in mind that the “practice orientation” that differentiates TEI from other Institutions is dependant upon how successfully support services, such as careers services, manage to provide clear platforms of engagement of students with business and other organizations and vice versa. Therefore the critical nature of these services for the overall operation and fulfillment of strategic and policy objectives of the department direct to the need for considerable further investment.

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

Since 2008, the PM department is member of PMUNI. PMUNI is an international network of universities, universities of applied science, education and research institutions as well as process and project-oriented companies with the overall objective to promote professional education and research in process and project management. Other members of PMUNI network are: ESC Lille, BI Norwegian School of Management, Corvinus University of Budapest, University of Limerick, University of Southern Denmark, etc.

The uniqueness of the departments’ subject area has created important opportunities for active collaboration and engagement with other organisations locally, nationally and internationally.

For example the department participates in a number of social and business networks and maintains collaborative educational arrangements with a number of institutions abroad.

These include:

- Czech Republic – University of Hradec Králové
- Finland – Pirkanmaa University of Applied Sciences
- Cyprus – Higher Technical Institute in Nicosia
- Germany – Fachhochschule Karlsruhe
- France – IUT Université de Nancy 2
- Bulgaria – University of National & World Economy
- Poland – Polish Open University
- UK – Staffordshire University

Obviously the international reputation of some of these institutions is relatively low and the department’s management needs to raise their aspirations for such collaborations. Nevertheless, the collaboration with Staffordshire University in the provision of PGT studies is an excellent opportunity for appreciation of different practices and their adoption and diffusion within the department and other programmes.

Of great importance here is the engagement of the department with the local business and public services community, thus allowing their students to find relevant placement for their practical assignments.

Collaborations with ICT and software companies such as SAP Hellas, Microsoft Hellas and Primavera allow their students to develop important knowledge and skill

that contribute towards their employability prospects.

However it should be mentioned here that the full significance of such collaboration and the goodwill and reputation that the department enjoys has not been appreciated or utilised fully as yet.

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

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

In order to evaluate the department's strategic planning one should consider first its mission statement and strategic objectives.

Based on the self-assessment document the department is focused on a specific academic domain which they call "project management in Greece". They see their contribution to this domain through (p.55 of self-assessment document):

1. Provision of high quality teaching that reflects the needs of the economy and production (sic).
2. Development of research in the knowledge domains (sic) of project management.
3. Establishing and enhancing the profession of project manager.

There is clarity in this mission and objectives in that the department has a clear teaching and research orientation, whilst acknowledging the important role they play for the profession and its development. Furthermore, it seems that the department realises the interplay of these three elements and their importance within the overall framework of academic strategy and strategic development.

The department appeared to have a clear intention to enhance its research performance and capitalise on existing successes of its faculty. Recruitment and promotion strategy has a clear link with this desire.

Similarly, there is a clear intention to contribute towards the profession and in doing so the department plays an important role in the development of key activities towards this objective e.g. participation in the PMI Greek Chapter and international PMI chapters, organising relevant conferences and workshops, promoting the profession among Greek firms and the public sector as well as assisting the development and diffusion of relevant certifications and national standards for project management.

Finally as regards the teaching strategy for the department it is important to mention the forthcoming PGT programme in project management which is expected to further enhance the quality of the graduates and professionals in this domain.

Nevertheless one needs to perceive these strategies within the wider context of the sector and the observations made by the EEC. In particular there has been a constant and significant decrease of applicants to this department since its inception which is accompanied with the admission of candidates with low academic credentials; a rather low attendance and graduation rate; a relative confusion amongst existing students as regards the meaning and potential of a project manager as a professional unit and finally an adverse economic environment in Greece.

These present challenges and opportunities for the department which however do not appear to have received considerable strategic recognition and thinking from the department.

More specifically, the challenging economic environment in Greece creates, among other things, important demands for cost containment, and above all the need for more effective management of human capital within contemporary organisations.

Further, from the discussion on the previous sections, it is apparent that the department during the last years focused on the development of the new infrastructures, the restructuring of the UG programme and the development of new PG programmes.

In one sentence it creates a significant demand for “well qualified and experienced project managers”. This requires clear attention to the interaction of the degree with contemporary trends in the industry and the profession as well as a clear strategy for engagement of the department and its students and faculty with the industry. However, we could not detect any clear action towards these directions as the modules within the UG and PGT programmes appeared to have a rather “academic/knowledge domain focus” and, to a large extent, were driven by theory rather than acknowledged needs for skills development within particular sectors as regards the application of project management. Moreover the so coveted for TEI relationships with firms and practical training within firms appeared to have been neglected from the strategic imperatives of the department and as was mentioned earlier in threat of serious problems owing to lack of adequate funding for resources in the careers services area.

Bearing in mind the above, it is important to acknowledge that the department has spent considerable time and effort to reflect upon its achievement and the strategic directions it followed the positive and negative elements of their case as well as the areas that require attention (p.63 to 72 of the self-assessment document).

However, the EEC has noted that:

1. In outlining the strategic objectives, there is no consideration of short, medium and long-term objectives. Similarly we could not detect an importance and risk register alongside timing of these objectives, and a clear allocation of duties to various bodies of the department alongside expected outcomes and time horizons.
2. In developing their strategy it appears that the department is following a rather ‘product or production oriented’ approach i.e. students with a better knowledge of the academic domain called project management will increase their chances of employment. However, this approach appears to be in contradiction with contemporary developments in international educational environments where a more ‘market and student centric oriented’ approach is recommended i.e. knowledge is co-created through the interplay of faculty, industry professional and students; and it is the unique competencies that are developed in these interrelationships that increase students’ chances of employment.
3. Finally, whereas the department has clear strategic advantages owing to its uniqueness amongst other TEIs, it is nevertheless not the only one in Greece

and it faces considerable competition from HEIs. There is a clear need for management to revisit the principles that provide differentiation advantage of this department and more importantly diffuse these principles amongst those that really matter for the fulfilment of what may be included within an excellence model of quality in education i.e. value for money, comparative performance ratios and league tables position (which has been correctly identified as the anathema for most educators, but without doubt necessary for navigating successfully through the rough seas of contemporary economies).

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

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

As a relatively new department the DPM has had a remarkable trajectory and 10 years after its launch it appears to be in a prime position to address forthcoming challenges.

Key achievements include:

1. An overall culture and climate which has a forward looking orientation, espouses change and continuous learning.
2. A clear understanding of positioning in the Greek educational sector.
3. A high esprit de corps amongst faculty and staff. Faculty and staff are well socialised in the DPM and understand well the overall direction of the department as well as their own role and expected contribution.
4. Clear administrative structures, supported by committees that look after critical areas of the DPM's operation.
5. Important leadership throughout its lifetime, which is supported by capable faculty and staff.
6. Participation in joint PGT programmes with the University of Staffordshire.
7. Finally, a purpose built building that provides a significant infrastructure for the continuous development of the department.

Key challenges the department is facing are as follows:

Internal challenges

1. Current high student staff ratio.
2. Low quality intake which is expected to become even lower in the near future.
3. Very low attendance of lectures.
4. Very small number of successful graduates.
5. A substantial increase for formalisation of procedures as they emerge from quality assurance initiatives.

External challenges:

1. Low level of external qualification recognition owing to the lack of a directly associated profession.
2. Competition from HEIs with programmes that substitute the need for a TEI graduate of Project Management.
3. Significant competition for resources within the TEI Larissa.

Opportunities for the department are as follows:

1. An increased need for project management skills by organisations owing to problems appearing in various economies worldwide.
2. Transfer of learning from the PGT programmes to the UG programme.
3. Opportunity to enhance the quality of intake and the employability of graduates by means of the significant goodwill and word of mouth communication from alumni.

Bearing in mind the quality assessment documented in the previous pages, alongside the above mentioned achievements, challenges and opportunities the EEC would like to recommend the following as a matter of priority.

1. As regards the overall strategy of the DPM.
  - 1.1. The department needs a better articulation of its strategy so that it becomes compatible with its overall mission, aims and objectives.
  - 1.2. A strategy of external strategic alliances with other educational establishment of similar interests and orientation would allow them to increase their visibility and impact towards the academic development of the field and ensuing profession.
  - 1.3. Creation of a strategic advisory board, with the inclusion of employers and key stakeholders.
  - 1.4. Finally, we recommend that the department adopts a “student centric approach” and in collaboration with local authorities and organisations enhance employability of its graduates.
2. As regards teaching and curriculum development
  - 2.1. Regular formal evaluation of the curriculum (i.e. every three years), by employing a process where faculty, current students, employers and alumni engage in constructive dialogue.
  - 2.2. Development and implementation of formal procedures and guidelines to assist the operation of the various teaching related committees of the department.
  - 2.3. Immediate development of an “Inside Project Management” seminar series, ideally through active engagement of the department’s students in its organisation and implementation.
  - 2.4. Formal boards of examiners to assess and appreciate performance of each student throughout the year; followed by feedback to students thus helping them to understand their weaknesses and ways to improve their performance.
  - 2.5. Transfer best practice from PGT programmes to the UG provision.
  - 2.6. Explore ways to link the final project/dissertation to the compulsory work placement.

2.7. Consider formative as well as summative forms of assessment, and approach assessment as part of the overall students' learning experience.

2.8. Enhance student feedback both in terms of quantity and quality.

3. As regards research.

3.1. Consider the establishment of a Research Committee which will aim at establishing clear priorities for future research, allocating the required resources and developing partnerships with other academic establishments.

3.2. Introduce Personal Annual Research Plans, to guide research activity and monitor performance throughout the year.

3.3. Set up a Research Seminar Series, supported by internal and external contributors.

3.4. Maintain and increase the current level of the departments' participation in local, national and international research projects.

3. Create Knowledge Transfer Partnerships with local organizations.

4. As regards other services.

4.1. Request and support the further development of the careers office.

4.2. Set up and fully engage the Alumni network

4.3. Collaborate with other relevant bodies towards the certification of the Project Management profession in Greece

As regards the implementation of the above recommendations the EEC had no doubt whatsoever that additional resource in terms of faculty and administrative staff is required. To this end, the EEC fully supports the expansion plans of the department with the additional recommendation for the careers office, which is viewed as a critical area for development.

To conclude, the EEC found the visit very interesting and productive. There is no doubt that this is a department with great potential in terms of its contribution to the local, regional and national economic development agenda. The uniqueness of its subject area, its capable faculty and staff alongside their enviable position within TEI of Larissa provide a prime platform for ongoing development and future success. We hope that our recommendations provide useful steps towards this trajectory and vision.