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HELLENIC REPUBLIC
H.Q.A.
HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE
AND ACCREDITATION AGENCY

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

DEPARTMENT OF MARITIME STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF PIRAEUS



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External Evaluation Committee

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

- 1 **Dr. Demetri Kantarelis**, Professor of Economics, Department of Economics & Global Studies, Assumption College, **Coordinator**
- 2 **Dr. Savvas A. Katsikides**, Professor of Sociology, Jean Monnet Chair in European Economic Integration, Department of Social and Political Science, University of Cyprus
- 3 **Dr. Athanasios Krystallis Krontalis**, Professor of Marketing, Department of Business Administration, Aarhus University
- 4 **Dr. James E. Owers**, Professor of Finance Emeritus, J. Mack Robinson College of Business, Georgia State University
- 5 **Dr. Anastassios N. Perakis**, Associate Professor, Department of Naval Architecture & Marine Engineering, University of Michigan

Introduction

I. The External Evaluation Procedure

- As per guidelines provided by the Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency (HQA) the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) has to (a) verify the objectivity of information appearing in the Department's Internal Evaluation Report against the data provided, (b) assess and evaluate the results of the work done by the academic unit and to compare it with current, internationally accepted best practices, and (c) advise and suggest specific alternative practices and improvements.
- After a briefing at the HQA headquarters, the Committee visited, daily, the Department of Maritime Studies of the University of Piraeus from February 24 to 26, 2014; thereafter, it drafted the current External Evaluation Report on February 27 and 28, 2014.
- The Department (students at all levels, administrators and faculty) treated the Committee members with dignity, unprecedented generosity and openness and above all with eagerness to help in providing, by means of documentation and interviews, the needed information for the evaluation process. It was obvious, from the beginning, that the Department enjoys a healthy culture which greatly contributes to a productive and highly collegial atmosphere. Undoubtedly, the Dean of the division, the Chair of the Department and the Director of Graduate Studies deserve credit for establishing an exemplary academic structure.

II. The Internal Evaluation Procedure

- The Committee was handed the Department's Internal Evaluation Report written in Greek, a brief version of the same report in English, various documents supplied by the Department (vitae, descriptions of program, project titles, various statements), and various other documents supplied by the HQA. The fact that the long version of the Internal Evaluation Report was in Greek did not help much since our deliberations had to be in English, and one member of our committee, who is not of Greek origin, does not even speak Greek. Additionally, we found many discrepancies such as statements that were not supported by the data in the included tables.
- By and large, the supplied documentation was adequate enough to draw a decent picture of a Department, but visiting helped to remove some uncertainties and clear the picture a lot. The objectives of the Department are three:
 - (a) To offer courses that stress, primarily, theory (mostly descriptive and not quantitative) in maritime business and economics as they relate to transportation, harbors, finance and shipping logistics. Secondly, the curriculum offers theory courses in other fields such as oceanography, law, and the natural environment. Additionally, the Department encourages the acquisition of practical experience and requires, at minimum, internships.
 - (b) To encourage collaboration between students / faculty and local / international maritime institutions with the purpose to solve, via research and consultancy, problems associated with study-worthy maritime and shipping issues.

- (c) To promote and develop *international reach* by maintaining current contacts and building more bridges with the existing global maritime community in both academia and business.
- In general, it is a Department:
 - In high demand by undergraduate and graduate students,
 - With a large majority of qualified faculty,
 - With a faculty mostly at the professor level soon to retire,
 - With an anemic Ph.D. Program in which most set rules are not enforced,
 - And with somewhat inadequate physical and human capital which ineffectively services students, especially at the Ph.D. level, and most importantly the overstretched, with teaching duties, faculty.

A. Curriculum

APPROACH

- Goals and objectives for the Undergraduate program are well spelled out. The plans for achieving them include a program where all students take the same set of required courses.
- Goals and objectives for the Graduate program (M.Sc.) are well spelled out. The plans for achieving these goals are reflected in course offerings and the course evaluations.
- The goals and objectives for the Ph.D. program are less well spelled out. The Ph.D. program needs a review of its goals and objectives.
- The objectives were decided by the faculty. The objectives reflect the dual goals of university degree programs - education and the development of marketable skills - after consulting with other stakeholders such as employers.
- The curriculum for the undergraduate and masters programs (respectively) are consistent with the objectives of the Curriculum and the requirements of society. The curriculum for the Ph.D. program is less well defined and an area for attention.
- There is no periodic set schedule for review of the curriculum. The Department addresses the curriculum and course offerings from time to time. For example, the recent reduction in courses from 76 to 52 reflects ongoing review of the curriculum, and ensuring that it is consistent with resources for its delivery.

Undergraduate

- The Department's undergraduate curriculum aims to provide high quality studies in the field of "Maritime Studies". This term includes the ocean shipping industry, as well as other areas such as environmental, oceanography, etc. Its main aim is to prepare students for careers in the very successful Greek Shipping Industry, the biggest in the world. Secondary aims involve careers in other aspects of maritime studies, especially environmental issues related or unrelated to shipping.
- The curriculum is designed in a manner that supports the education of highly qualified graduates so they can pursue careers in the maritime field, or to continue their studies at a graduate level. To achieve its objective, the Department has developed and recently streamlined its undergraduate curriculum, incorporating the actual industry experience of its older and more recently hired faculty, as the basis of education offered.
- During our site visit we had extensive discussions with about half of the faculty members, groups of undergraduate, masters, and Ph.D. students, as well as a group of recently graduated alumni. The Chair of the Department, the Dean of the School and the Rector of the University shared the significance of the Department's objectives in supporting perhaps the most important and successful industry in Greece, the Shipping Industry, as well as other maritime issues, regarding pollution and environmental issues, many of them directly related to the shipping industry. The Department has incorporated in its Curriculum standards for offering quality higher education in the field of Maritime Studies comparable to those provided in top European and American Universities.

- The Curriculum is directly linked to the general objectives set by the Department. Based upon the information derived from both the Internal Evaluation Report and all the diverse interviews during our Site Visit, we have determined that the Department's Curriculum is realistic and effective in supporting the intended objectives.
- The last revision of the Undergraduate Curriculum was conducted in April 2013 as a result of the evaluation of the previous program and the comparison with programs offered by their peer academic departments overseas. The decision led to the drastic reduction of courses taught. According to the internal report, this aimed to meet specific needs of the Department (admissions and the reduction of the number of staff due to retirement), as well as market needs. This led to a significant reduction of the 78 courses previously offered (38 mandatory and 38 electives, plus two English courses) to 54 (52, plus the two English language courses). This decision will be open to evaluation in the years to come. The downside is that all 54 are required courses with zero electives.
- The first four semesters have solely compulsory courses (20) which are directed towards basic knowledge. In each of the next four semesters (5th-8th) and in each semester, there are courses offered in four specializations: Maritime Business Administration, Finance, Transportation and Environment. As stated in the internal report, in 91% of courses taught new teaching techniques are utilized (e-class, PowerPoint, Internet, etc.).
- Student progress and meeting of the course objectives is assessed by a wide variety of means, as shown in the internal report survey. Written final exams are popular, and even midterm exams in a few courses, essays, with or without presentations, as well as oral exams in a few courses. Many courses are of a descriptive instead of scholarly nature, as indicated by the textbooks shown to us, and perhaps the background of the incoming students, which is not particularly strong in Math and Science, necessitates the above content.
- The internal report takes issue with class attendance (which is not compulsory in the Undergraduate program), and the department is determined to increase it, without providing any means to do so in the internal report. In our discussions with students and faculty, we got some feedback that may, if used properly, increase attendance. Some students complained that some courses are a bit outdated ("old") and others required the addition or the re-offering of certain courses of practical importance such as chartering. This Committee would like to recommend that the Department periodically updates its curriculum (which may involve reduction in the number of offerings or replacing repetitive and overlapping courses) to better reflect modern knowledge trends and pragmatic maritime needs.
- The internship program for 8th semester undergraduates has been increasingly successful, resulting in a rising demand for new placements by students. A number of interns (around 10% of those that do their internship) are offered a permanent job. This figure has significantly increased to almost 30% during the academic year 2012-2013 since 30 out of 109 students had a job offer.

- Based on questionnaires given to students who completed their internship, the following issues were highlighted:
 - The need to extend the internship period
 - The reduction of the necessary documentation and bureaucracy to facilitate the process
 - The need to extend the internship program to more junior undergraduate students (now only 8th semester students are accepted)
- Graduation times is a big issue with most Departments in Greek universities (and overseas universities as well!). In the case of the University of Piraeus, students get a lot of financial support from the Greek Government (all pay no tuition, all get their textbooks free, plus several additional benefits), not only for the 4 years that are the minimum graduation time, but up to 6 full years from the commencement of their studies. After 6 years, most or all benefits cease. The average graduation time is 5.5 years, significantly above the 4.0 years they would have ideally graduated in.

Graduate

- The Graduate Program in Maritime Studies is a huge success in terms of enrollment, by far the biggest of any graduate program in the University of Piraeus, is equally successful in attaining its goals and objectives. It provides a cohesive Curriculum for an interdisciplinary graduate student body. It is a rich Curriculum designed to offer useful graduate education in the all-important (for Greece in particular) maritime studies field. The emphasis is to better prepare the graduate students for careers in industry, and much less so for a career in research (Ph.D. etc)
- The internship program of the graduate program in Shipping of the department is also highly successful. The duration of the internship is four (4) months and funding is provided from the Graduate Program. The funding covers salaries and insurance for the period of four months. Through the internship program in the academic year 2012-2013, 20 students were employed. It should be highlighted that unfortunately the 2 month duration period for the undergraduate program is specified by law. The extension to more junior undergraduate students also falls within the law restrictions, since the industrial placement is considered a course (which in the curriculum is placed in the 8th semester) and students acquire a grade, according to their performance during this internship.

Doctoral Program

- The doctoral program follows the standards applicable to all Greek universities. The candidates follow a minimum research period of three years, present the work progress every semester and at the end of their research support their thesis before a 7-member Committee.
- All Ph.D. candidates of the Department in 2012-2013, presented the progress of their doctoral research in special workshops with the participation of faculty members, doctoral students and graduate students.

- It is unfortunate that most doctoral students are not paid for their work from research, teaching (if teaching assistants) or other University funds, and this necessitates that almost all doctoral students are also working elsewhere, making it difficult to progress in their research and meet the PhD thesis requirements, due to limited availability of time and fragmented concentration. This has resulted in a Ph.D. program with 26 or so students, which would normally result in 5-6 Ph.D. graduations a year. Instead, the graduation rate is only 6 students in the last 6 years, or only one a year on average! In other words, students work on their Ph.D.s for much more than the usual 3-5 years, often for more than 7 years. By their own admission in the internal report, this has been a long lasting challenge to the Department, which is seeking methods to increase the quality (and should also increase the quantity, in terms of number of graduations) of Ph.D. student research performed at the Department.

IMPLEMENTATION

- The Department's overall goal appears to be implemented by the curriculum. The goals include both education and the development of marketable skills. The curriculum implements the goals for the undergraduate and graduate programs. The goals of the Ph.D. program are less clearly articulated, and a review of these is suggested. The structure of the curriculum is rational but not documented. Faculty members were able to articulate the structure of the curriculum verbally. The curriculum is coherent and functional. Efforts to keep it functional are reflected in the reduction in course offerings (from 78 to 54) to be aligned with the resources available to teach courses.
- It is difficult to determine whether the material for each course, and the time offered is sufficient in the absence of formal syllabi, let alone comprehensive folders for each course, with samples of all homework assignments, exams, etc. as required by US Accreditation agencies such as ABET. It is understood that formal syllabi are not typical for courses at Greek universities.
- The Department faces significant resource constraints. The recent reduction in the number of courses offered is a reflection of the constraints faced by the Department. This resulted in the elimination of elective courses.

Undergraduate

- The Department's goal has apparently been effectively implemented by the new, much shorter Curriculum. In our site visit, the discussion and the enthusiasm and motivation of the students confirms the success of the reforms introduced in the Department Curriculum. In the view of the EEC, it can be compared to any top American and European Curriculum in its specific fields of study. It provides practically useful education in the fields of study offered by the Department.
- One weakness is that it has no elective courses of general interest any more, but only required courses directly linked to the objectives of the Department. Still, the Curriculum displays a high degree of coherence. Many undergraduate and graduate courses are instructed by highly specialized faculty members. The educational material is usually of a descriptive nature, with some exceptions. When the courses become quantitative, students reported to us they had a hard time even with techniques considered elementary and simple in the fields of, say, Economics or Engineering.

- The Department meticulously follows a system of student evaluations, and the system that is in place for this feedback. Their evaluation numbers are in the 1-5 range, just as in many US universities. However, the evaluations we have been shown are apparently just the averages of a large number of questions, not the specific answers to a specific question such as “overall, this was an excellent course” or “overall, this was an excellent instructor”, as is the case in US and many EU Universities. Therefore it may be a bit unfair to conclude that the Dept. of Maritime Studies evaluations are much lower to the US or EU evaluation results, because they are not directly comparable. Of more interest is the range among the different courses/instructor evaluations, ranging from 3.01 to 3.96 only for undergraduate courses, and from 3.38 to 4.04 for graduate courses. We can recommend that those with the lowest average evaluations should think of why they were not higher, and implement improvements the next time they teach them.

Graduate

The Graduate Program’s Curriculum is quite coherent. It is relatively demanding but it is adjusted to the background and professional objectives of the graduate student body that enrolls each year. The students are exposed to industry professionals, a significant number of them visit international organizations (Especially those located in London, IMO, Lloyd’s, Baltic Exchange etc).

RESULTS

Undergraduate

- The Department is effective and successful in implementing its curriculum goals and objectives. The high quality of studies that it offers is acknowledged by the student community. The Department’s students are highly ranked in the entrance examinations, while the Department is the first choice for most of its students.
- The majority of its graduates have successfully entered the market after completing their studies. Greek Shipping and other companies employ large numbers of its graduates, making it a very desirable department among its peers at the U of Piraeus and other Greek Universities.
- The Department is conscious of its success and is determined to pursue this successful strategy further. The organization of a coherent, streamlined and effective Curriculum was its main priority the last few years. This has been necessitated by its significantly reduced faculty, which was no longer able to cope with teaching 76 different courses.
- In brief, the implementation is achieving the Department’s resource- limited goals and objectives.
- The resource constraints, especially in terms of new faculty hiring, are an ongoing challenge. The department is fully aware of the constraints it faces because of

resource limitations. The EEC concluded that the Department is doing a good job of achieving its goals and objectives in the context of severely constrained resources.

Graduate

- The Department at the graduate level presents a very effective implementation record.
- Its success is due to its ability to set goals that are well communicated to its prospective students.
- Its success in this front allows the Department in the next period to focus both on communicating its success and on further increasing its Ph.D. research profile.

Doctoral Program

The Department faculty that are active in research and have a strong track record of attracting major research funding, should allocate a major share of that funding to the support of their PhD students. For Ph.D. students whose faculty supervisors do not have adequate funding, appointments as teaching assistants or, in deserving cases of very strong students, scholarships from other revenue sources (gifts, graduate program funds) should be considered.

IMPROVEMENT

The Department is aware of both the strengths and the weaknesses of its Curriculum at all levels of study (undergraduate, graduate, doctoral) and its faculty have stated in their internal report that its priority in the coming years is to improve the situation in the Doctoral program.

- The Department is aware of its limited growth opportunity set at the present time. Indeed, the reduction in courses offered is part of the management of the unit in the face of declining resources, especially the hiring of new faculty. The curriculum could be improved by restoring some of the deleted courses if additional faculty could be hired. However, in the context of 1-for-5 rule, even with a number of faculty approaching retirement, additional resources are unlikely to be forthcoming.
- The Department is aware of potential improvements but does not plan to introduce them in the face of the financial crisis and its funding implications.
- The Department might well explore the possibilities for generating additional resources by developing Executive Education courses. These could be a combination of open-enrollment courses, and programs designed for specific companies. These would need to focus on the Department's main customers, (shipping economics and management orientation) to avoid competing with the EMBA program offered across campus.

B. Teaching

The Department follows international academic standards in its teaching, using media and teaching tools. It is noted that students are selected through a national entry system, over which the Department has no influence. This system is competitive and top down. The academic staff has experience in other academic institutions and assisted through teaching assistants, with a PhD, who are paid per hour.

The EEC had several meetings with students (undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral level) and had a feeling of their experience with their professors. Their participation in the different courses, seminars, etc. was overloaded with many courses and hours. The students have expressed their enthusiasm, their motivation for what they are doing and the overall social environment of their Department. The professors are supervising the BA, MSc and PhD theses as a part of their regular academic job. The overall teaching and learning environment gave them the opportunity to know better their professors and ask for supervision for their BA, MSc. etc. The use of technology is within international standards. The students confirmed of the accessibility of their professors and readiness to offer support, guidance and supervision.

The overall infrastructure and facilities are satisfactory according to Greek standards but the professors expressed their concern about additional spaces and labs they need. The Department will soon reach a situation where the space is insufficient. The idea of acquiring former Olympic premises which has been promised to the University should solve such problems. This, however, is not a case that the Department or University could solve, anyhow, but the State itself.

In order to cover the teaching needs, the EEC has been informed that the faculty work is under a heavier teaching load than mandated by law. The reduction of course hours is recommended and will alleviate some of the overloading problems dealing with many subjects etc. The committee feels that the overall effect will be to ease the overload and enhance the faculty ability to engage in research activities.

Information technologies are used widely and to supplement and promote teaching.

- Teaching methods are appropriate. There is a combination of lectures and case studies.
- Teaching staff/student ratio is in line with what would be expected, given the decline in staff from 22 to 18 in recent years. This has resulted in a student/faculty ratio of 108:1.
- Teacher/student collaboration: Undergraduate, limited; Master's more involvement; Ph.D. more involvement but there is considerable currently unrealized potential for collaboration with Ph.D. students as more become full time and have the opportunity to work with their advisors and the faculty
- Means and resources suffer from the general resource constraints.
- The use of information technologies is considerable. Contemporary IT is efficient for addressing some of the historically scarce resources (such as the library and data resources).
- The most common method used for assessing student learning and outcomes is a written exam. This is followed by course work essays. There is clearly a need for transparency and clearly delineated criteria when oral exams are used.

RESULTS

- The teaching evaluation materials provided indicate modest evaluations, most falling in the 3 range of a scale of 5. As indicated above, there is a need for reporting more precisely defined dimensions of the teaching evaluations and not averaging over all questions.
- Undergraduate students take on average 5.5 years to complete their degree. This is materially longer than the scheduled 4 years, but it is typical for the rate of progress in Greek Universities.
- No information was provided regarding the correlation between the time taken to graduation and the final degree grades.

The EEC was impressed by the number of students who want to have jobs in the shipping industry, and had the opportunity to speak to alumni students who worked already in the Maritime profession with great satisfaction.

IMPROVEMENT

- The Department is aware of the importance of good teaching experiences for students. These appear to be satisfactory for undergraduate and graduate students. However, there appears to be potential for a better outcome for Ph.D. students, and near-term changes in the Ph.D. program are suggested. This report contains other dimensions of the Ph.D. program to improve students and Departmental outcomes.
- The Department is planning to improve the Ph.D. program in the near future. The Undergraduate and graduate programs appear to be sound and ongoing development will focus on maintaining the current level of outcomes and making improvements over time.

IMPLEMENTATION

The EEC feels that the overall teaching methods and environment are producing a good product. The students are motivated and want to continue their postgraduate studies, preferably in the same institution. The scholarships offered by the Department (around 13%) to the M.Sc. students are relatively high, and much attention has been given to the briefing explaining how the fees are partially redistributed to the students. Also, educational trips and excursions are taking place e.g. New York, London to visit the Cass Business School, Lloyds Register of Shipping, the IMO, the Baltic Exchange, etc.

Concerning the teaching materials, many are regularly updated and offered to the students as books.

The EEC committee is convinced that the Department is trying to provide practical training (internships) for students, basically in the shipping and port industries.

Evaluation of teachers and courses, including content and reading material, is constantly carried out and provides useful feedback, in addition to the accessibility demonstrated by members of the Department for student visits and appointments.

- The Department's overall goal of high quality teaching is clearly taken seriously.
- The quality and adequacy of teaching materials and resources appear to be sufficient.
- Course materials appear to be brought up to date. Most faculty members are active professionals who are aware of recent developments in their respective fields.

- There is limited linking of research with teaching at the undergraduate program. This linkage increases in the masters program, but as is typical most linkage of research and teaching occurs within the Ph.D. program (cf. section C).
- Mobility of academic staffs and students appears to be satisfactory. For instance, faculty take both undergraduate and graduate groups to visit international centers of business such as London and New York City (NYC).
- The course evaluations evaluate both teaching and course content. The summary statistics provided were averages of all questions. What we suggest is that fewer questions be averaged, but these be more narrowly focused on the caliber of the teaching, and the course content.

RESULTS

- The efficacy of teaching is high. Faculty members take their teaching responsibilities very seriously. This is reflected in both the formal evaluations, and the positive comments of students that were shared with the EEC.
- The potential to improve the Ph.D. student experience has been noted elsewhere in the report.

IMPROVEMENT

- The Department monitors teaching and students performance
- The Department is encouraged to look for more options and possibilities to attract more funding for research, collaboration, teaching and networking—and to relate this to any strategic planning it may develop
- European programs are run and acquired by the faculty and a reasonable number of students is also employed
- The large number of courses required for the undergraduate degree and the heavy teaching load is a problem and a possible downsizing them is essential. The large number of courses required for the undergraduate degree and the heavy teaching load is a problem and a possible downsizing them is essential but obviously, there is a need for an amendment to the law, in order for this to occur. On the other hand, we were told by faculty of the department that the 8 hour load can be circumvented in practice by some faculty who teach two 4 hour classes as one, by combining the two sections in one. One fact that allows this to be feasible is that attendance in undergraduate classes is quite low, so even two sections may be able to comfortably fit in rooms scheduled for one section.

There is a very urgent need to obtain additional teaching faculty. The EEC suggests hiring non-Tenure track, teaching focused faculty (often referred to “Clinical faculty”). These could be paid with the tuition from the Masters Degree program and from offering executive non-degree programs. The EEC endorses initiatives in that direction.

C. Research

Overview of current situation

STRENGTHS

- High quality of some human resources in academic and business terms
 - Tight connections between the department of the Greek shipping industry in Piraeus and beyond
 - Established funding schemes that generate stable and high flows of revenue to the department
 - Well-known brand name within national and international research communities and shipping industry clusters

WEAKNESSES

- Limited efforts to coordinate, harmonize and systematize various existing research schemes and generate critical mass of research resources.
- Differentiated objectives exist which cannot link quantity to quality of the research output.
- Cases of individual research interests operate as barriers to maximize the potential research output in terms of quantity and quality.
- Causes of old-fashion research managerial behavior that create ‘insulated’, introvert research culture.
- Lack of new human capital with capabilities, inner motivation and tendency to change.
- Overwhelming bureaucracy and omnipresent dependence on state’s rules outside that oftentimes boycott all initiatives to change.
- Limited strong academic culture and research-centered mentality in what concerns the degree of strategic priority assigned to research overall.
- Some specific faculty inactive in both sponsored research and in publishing in refereed journals.
- Low overall average number of publications in peer reviewed journals.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Current reform process that functions as an opportunity window to introduce novel processes and mentalities
- Geographic and strategic proximity to the Greek shipping community
- Increased importance of Greece as a hub for goods, services and energy transportation
- Extrovert nature of international maritime industry and resulting attitude of the maritime research community

THREATS

- Low probability of removal of entry barriers for junior faculty in the short-medium-run endangers the Department with extinction
- High probability of removal of entry barriers to competing establishments from Greece or abroad (i.e., private colleges, foreign university branches) creates the danger that, currently, not fully exploited research funds are directed away from the department

APPROACH

- Department's policy and main objectives in research. The Department's research output is substantial in terms of quantity, and part of it reaches satisfactory quality standards. From an international standards perspective, current quality level leaves substantial room for improvement which calls for intensifying efforts. However, there is slow progression identifying a departmental research policy, and research objectives set collectively.
- In general, the way research is perceived and the overall structure of research as presented in the Department's Ph.D. program reflects an approach of low strategic priority assigned to research altogether. It is clear that individual faculty members are highly motivated and quite productive in their respective outputs within current resource and approach constraints, yet much depends on individual temperament, general financial circumstances and ad hoc fragmented attempts that do not allow for a critical mass of research output in quantity and (primarily) quality to accumulate. In this way, valuable resources are under-utilized or, when spent, do not generate the wished added value to the Department.
- Internal standards for assessing research. Due to limited coordination in research-related efforts and the apparently low strategic priority given to research, there is a pressing need for the introduction of research objectives that would require the revising of evaluation mechanisms for research output.
- Compiling a list of targeted outlets (journals published by reputable publishers, other than in-house) introducing publication requirements into the Ph.D. program (i.e. at least two papers per Ph.D.) meticulously insisting on the implementation of rules that are already in place about minimum duration of Ph.D. studies and – above all – the introduction of a well-funded full-time Ph.D. program are some more or less immediate actions that the department should seriously consider.
- This is particularly important in light of the intention of the Department to be outward-looking and reach the top-ranked maritime studies departments internationally in terms of academic reputation. The internal evaluation report indicates that the Department stands in 3rd place worldwide in publications in highly acknowledged maritime research journals, though the result is biased by the fact that faculty has been publishing in journals published in-house. For

example, a faculty member has published 14 papers in the journal “European Research Studies” which enlists him as Founder, Editor and Publisher.

- Citation references are a very good way of assessing quality, while impact factors, regularity of research visibility and the reputation of outlets also contribute to creating an overall picture of excellence. Finally, quality assessment criteria need to be introduced at the MSc program level as well; based on information provided by the department, the spread of research topics covered in MSc theses is impressive, while from the publication record of certain faculty there is some evidence of high-quality, publication-granting research, which however remains an exception.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Research promotion and support. There is evidence of some effort to internally promote and support research, basically in the form of scattered attempts to give financial incentives to existing Ph.D. researchers, the acknowledgement for the need to have a better-coordinated, more output-centered Ph.D. program in the first place, and the efforts to implement publication-granting quality research at the MSc level.
- However, as mentioned above, the Department suffers from strong weaknesses that are, to a large extent, irrelevant to the current financial shortages at the macro level and rather inherent to the Department’s nature (although external influences create an environment in which many members of staff are unwilling to invest time and effort, since other forces other than academic, also play a vital role).
- These weaknesses reflect lack of research objectives, coordination and overall mentality that would allow the serious promotion of research within and across the Department. Consequently, since the priority given to research is low, support to research is also very low or non-existing. A great deal of research project funds is spent on human resources outside the Department, while investing funds available from the MSc program tuitions in recruiting talented Ph.D. candidates does not seem to be a consideration of the Department’s management team.
- Under those circumstances, auxiliary research dissemination tools such as a departmental newsletter to keep Department members and postgraduate students informed of each other’s progress or dissemination of information about existing research funding opportunities seem a luxury in the short-term, albeit introduction of such tools must be considered in the medium to long-term.
- Quality and adequacy of research infrastructure. Staff spaces are modern, adequate, and well equipped and used. An important problem is the threat of access to international bibliographic data bases being interrupted, which is a fatal blow to any researcher. The library appears to be antiquated and inadequate in breadth of material both in terms of books and journals. Again, this is not the fault of the Department, and it is being affected by the general funding difficulties besetting Greek higher education.

- Having said this, it is fundamental to underline the difficulties to achieve any high quality standards the Department has/will set for itself without access to major library facilities. Perhaps digital formats provide one possible way forward but this can only be related to an overall strategic planning. In addition, there are no IT infrastructure or computer labs available for students at any level in the Department, which is however mainly due to lack of space in the building rented by the Department.
- On the other hand, there are serious distortions in relation to the type of physical laboratory facilities and equipment that are required by staff members with a background in natural sciences or engineering. It is interesting to highlight the existence among the faculty of natural scientists with lab facilities located hundreds of kilometers away from the Department. The distortion in this case comes from the complicated ownership status of the facilities (i.e. facilities owned by a different legal entity than the University of Piraeus), which constitutes a serious obstacle to the flow of research revenue that is generated by the use of those facilities. This revenue currently is a very small portion of what it could have been under more ‘regular’ conditions (e.g. existence of Department-owned natural science laboratories). However, one must acknowledge the fact that this type of distortions reflect the overall lack of clear strategic orientation of the Department all along its history, and do not constitute the result of faulty or harmful decisions taken by its current faculty members.
- Publications, projects and collaboration. As mentioned above, the variety and quantity of publications are adequate to satisfactory, the quality however remains questionable and certainly deserves improvement. Ethical issues might also arise by the fact that faculty members and Ph.D. students have the option to extensively publish in academic outlets run and coordinated within the Department, a tactic that is either inadequate or strictly forbidden in other academic institutions in both the EU and the US.
- In terms of projects, the Department overall demonstrates a very successful track record, with numerous projects undertaken the last 5 years and a total budget exceeding € 1.2 m. However, the vast majority of those projects are coordinated by only a few faculty members, and the allocation of funds is not clear in what concerns the return to the Department in terms of added value expressed through research infrastructure, human capital and mentality shifts generated.

RESULTS

- Successful implementation of research objectives. No research objectives are set by the Department, and this constitutes the major drawback for the quality improvement of the research outcome.
- Scientific publications, projects and collaboration. As noted above, funding and research output is satisfactory to high. In terms of overall publications, there is

clearly an upward trend in quantitative indicators both in absolute terms and in per person terms. Nevertheless, there is no way to assess the value of each type of publication, such as peer-refereed journal articles, books, edited volumes, book chapters, conference participation, and other research items.

- The Department is encouraged to develop such a list that differentiates between various outlets and the various tiers within each type of publication. Moreover, while publications in Greek outlets are both important and necessary, there is a need to more systematically encourage publications in major international outlets that will enhance and promote the visibility of the faculty's research agenda.
- The faculty is involved with international research programs, generating satisfactory revenue. As mentioned above, however, the vast majority of research projects are coordinated by only a few faculty members, and the allocation of funds is not clear in what concerns returns to the Department. Overall, the way project money funds are managed to the benefit of the Department is not clear, or at least remained far from comprehensive to the committee. Overall, systematic research collaboration does not exist across all levels of the Department's hierarchy and beyond.
- Furthermore, although there is evidence of participation in many international and national conferences, as well as involvement in editorial boards and leadership positions in professional associations, there is evidence that those attempts are not beneficial to the Department in its entirety, while it's clear that the most senior and long-standing faculty do not associate the advancement of their personal careers with the advancement of the Department.
- Finally, the necessary emphasis on training and assisting junior colleagues in realizing the value of their involvement in research related activities is completely missing, jeopardizing the mere survival of the Department in the medium-to-long term.
- Efficacy of research work, applied results, patents etc. The Department's recruitment policy is not fully transparent. The thematic areas of members recruited in the relatively recent years do not indicate any specific planned approach, either in terms of teaching or research. While some very good hires have been made, it is not possible to assess how influential they may be in changing the complexion or the overall direction and visibility of the Department.

IMPROVEMENT

- The Department has research-related strengths currently unexploited, the major ones being its human capital, its ties with the shipping world, and its steady flows of high revenue. Consequently, all efforts must be directed towards the better exploitation of those strengths, with the first step being the development of a plan at the Department level.

- However, there is no institutionalized process to develop such a plan, although a collective endeavor along these lines is more necessary today than ever before. This plan must point in particular to a number of ways to utilize currently generated funds from MSc program tuitions (i.e. about €1m. per year) and research projects to fund a modern, well-coordinated, and outward-looking Ph.D. program.
- In addition, a systematic and well-promoted effort must be made to generate additional funding from donations and sponsorships from the Greek shipping industry. It is absolutely fundamental for the long-term survival of the Department to establish such a program that will on top breed a new generation of junior faculty with the competencies and culture to become the leaders of tomorrow.
- In parallel to the above, the Department needs to develop a list of Tier 1 - Tier 2 publications (both in terms of journals and book publishers) that are typically considered the best outlets of maritime research. While there are no perfect ways of constructing such lists and while some individual faculty may disagree (i.e. presence or absence of a specific journal), the Department should undertake this task in order to set high standards that are clear, explicit, and achievable.
- This list should also explicitly mention the value of the various types of publication outlets and explicitly encourage, in line with international best practices, certain types over others, such as articles in refereed journals over book chapters or chapters in conference proceedings. In general, the existence of such a list will cultivate a culture of generating consensus and intellectual awareness among the faculty, setting higher standards and expectations for the younger faculty. A system of non-monetary (as well as monetary, wherever possible) incentives and rewards is also deemed necessary, as it also is common international practice. Finally, coordination in the type of research done between the MSc and the Ph.D. programs will generate economies of scale and allow the more holistic exploration of key research topics at far lesser cost.
- Finally, it is highlighted here that the interdisciplinarity, explicitly incorporated in the Department permits a wide range of interests and skills that magnify benefits to students and overall research output. Nevertheless, such conditions also necessitate careful nurture and evaluation to ensure research coherence and efficiency. Above all, the Department must re-define its mission and strategic objectives in light of the dynamic business and social environment it operates in, re-examine its target audiences in a priority order (i.e. students, shipping industry, academic communities, society, state) and re-design its research 'product' in a way that will allow it to deliver additional value to every audience targeted.

D. All Other Services

APPROACH

- The Department is happy with the quality of services provided by the four employees at the Registrar's Office (the Secretariat Office) and their only Administrative Assistant. According to Department members, the Registrar's Office is very helpful in offering automated and timely services to students as well as assisting the faculty on their various projects associated with surveys on grade distributions and other matters. Members of the Department praised their Administrative Assistant who has executive –type duties such as dealing with logistics associated with regular and irregular meetings, transcription of minutes during the meetings and other tasks ranging from assisting in organizing social events to typical office-type work.
- It was stressed that more help is needed at the Registrar's Office given (a) the increased number of entering undergraduate students and (b) the increased frequency of projects assigned by the Ministry. Additionally, Department Members indicated that they would benefit from an additional administrator, with excellent English and interpersonal skills who could serve as Grant Officer to help faculty and doctorate students in their pursuit of research finds.
- They find Library services somewhat adequate but they feel the need for more automation (on-line access), more subscriptions to periodicals that relate to the Department's teaching and research objectives in undergraduate / graduate levels, and more reference-type services.
- Department Members pointed out that the service provided by the information technology (computer support) office is inferior especially as it relates to class equipment connectivity and repair.
- The Department did not indicate that it has a policy on how to satisfy administrative procedures but a faculty member (the director of graduate studies) plans to recommend the establishing of paid work study programs available to graduate students to help on administrative-type tasks. All Faculty Members indicated that they increasingly rely on procedures processed electronically.
- The Department did not indicate that it has a policy to increase student presence on Campus but, many faculty members expressed the desire to see more students in class and that they are constantly revising incentive mechanisms for attendance.

IMPLEMENTATION

- The EEC feels that both the Registrar's Office (secretariat of the Department) and the Administrative Assistant office are headed by capable people and are well organized. The infrastructure for both offices, in light of more undergraduates being admitted and the plans of the faculty members to intensify efforts for research grants, calls for improvement.
- The Library services are helpful to students and faculty (no complaints whatsoever) but, faculty and graduate students complain that periodical subscriptions are limited,

that the automation level is very low and that the building itself is old-fashioned and not adequate for today's students and researchers.

- The Department is very active in organizing cultural events inclusive of annual field trips to various countries (USA, UK) and various parts of Greece (Andros island, Hydra island) as well as get together parties of alumni and current graduate students.
- Student counseling, health services, athletic or gym activities, do not exist.

RESULTS

- Given that the Department receives increasingly higher numbers of undergraduate entrants and that the faculty along with graduate students, plan to become more active research fund seekers, the current services are inadequate.
- The Department is in need of better computer support service, a new administrator to serve as Grant Officer, a computer lab with software in the fields of Statistics and Econometrics, and better library service.
- As a faculty member put it “There is lack of research infrastructure. The availability of data bases is of paramount importance”; and as the Department states in its internal evaluation report, the most important constraint in pursuing excellence in teaching and research is “The lack of sufficient resources - human and material.”
- Reverting to the use of the Greek language as the discussion progressed took place in order to facilitate accurate explanation to specific queries posed, especially since four of the five examiners understood Greek. The responsibilities (job description) of the Administrative Assistants are defined by the legal framework and the rules of procedure of the University of Piraeus. An expansion of the responsibilities of the Administrative Assistant role to include research assistance would be a welcome addition.
- The Department although aware of the deficiencies pointed-out above, is trying its best to manage as it tries to achieve its goals.
- Administrative Officers and members of the faculty repeatedly blamed lack of funding as the cause of all problems.

IMPROVEMENTS

- The Department hopes that with paid work-study programs it will overcome various administrative needs.
- A faculty member also hopes to establish, with donated funds, a new simulation lab to better achieve educational and research needs.
- The Department is connected to local maritime stakeholders and it continually tries to develop its network of affiliates.

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

- The Department is inhibited by many factors:
 - lack of State funding, especially for replacement of retiring faculty (the 1 in 5 rule);
 - lack of concerted effort to raise funds for Ph.D. students;
 - lack of support for human resources to service existing labs;
 - lack of needed new labs (e.g., simulator, computer lab for statistics and econometrics);
 - lack of adequate basic resources such as limited personnel in the Registrar's Office or the Department's Administrative Assistance Office;
 - lack of academic harmony in the Department. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the Department, the natural science and engineering faculty ought to be facilitated, and better integrated, in the pursuit of their objectives as instructors and researchers, along with proper lab facilities and more fully integrated (based on the maritime nature of the Department) with maritime business and economics;
 - lack of flexible institutional framework for the recruitment of new, and if possible, younger faculty members;
 - lack of satisfactory pay (low salaries may affect morale – although not a problem in this Department);
 - lack of transparent, non-conflicting governance directives from the University's controlling institutions;
 - lack of a greater degree of University (Department) autonomy.

- The impact of some of the above inhibiting factors may be minimized with better allocation of internal revenues (establishment of a competitive Ph.D. Program subject to offering annual stipends to exceptional students for the duration of their 3-year Ph.D. studies)

- Additionally, pursuing grant revenue for labs, additional personnel, and support of the Ph.D. program ought to continue with more creativity and vigor.

- Moreover, less unwise, inefficient and counterproductive directives from above can only help but, given the Greek realities of today, that is easier said than done.

- Finally, the Department, in accordance with its mission “aim at establishing the Department amongst the leading producers of maritime research in Europe and the world” has to correct its myopia problem: it has to become less Greek-centric and more European-centric (perhaps better for funding!) and envision itself as an entity that delivers to students, academicians and practitioners across the world the “global” nature of shipping and maritime endeavors (though the undergraduate curriculum is, to a large extent, oriented towards the global perspective, due to the efforts of many teaching staff. The Department recognizes that further effort must be made in making research more European and global-centric).

Short-term goals (plans and possible actions for improvement):

- Improve the Doctoral Program by instituting Ph.D. scholarships (stipends) and require that students follow the set rules regarding completion of degree and graduation
- Expand the internship and industrial placement programs
- Improve the English version of the webpage of the Department and utilize more social media applications
- Advertise more effectively regarding existing programs, positions and graduate students
- Continue supporting faculty for research and development subject to limited funding
- The faculty of the Department should aim for more value when it comes to research and publications, always submit manuscripts to double-blind refereed outlets and not in in-house journals despite their high impact factor
- Consider offering part-time jobs for students such as work-study for the Department; and tutoring services (offered by selected good senior students) to other students through an academic support coordinator (perhaps a faculty member)
- Hire employees to work in the existing laboratories
- Remove all obstacles to the very urgently needed hiring of non-tenure track lecturers and instructors to cover the departments real needs, which will become greater as more faculty retire and only one out of 5 retiring is replaced.

Medium-term goals (plans and possible actions for improvement):

- Implement a strategy on how to attract more funding from outside agencies, other than the Greek Government. Institute a Grant Officer (with excellent English and communications skills) to assist faculty and Ph.D. students as they pursue funding for research
- Introduce weekly seminars (open to the community) by local and international leaders (visiting academicians and practitioners), advanced students and faculty.
- Start new programs (lifelong education, attract graduates of industrial institutions in shipping, collaborate with other schools that relate to the Department's mission)
- Attract more foreign, English-speaking, students by offering whole programs in English; if the English program is more expensive, charge higher tuition.
- Hire more non-tenure track lecturers and instructors to cover the departments increased teaching needs, given mandatory faculty retirements and only one out of 5 retiring being replaced.

- Develop alliances with foreign universities and other entities (especially maritime organizations and institutions in Greece and elsewhere) that support the mission of the Department

Long-term goals (plan and possible actions for improvement):

- Subject the curriculum to innovation and quickly always adapt to new technologies
- Create a new simulation-type lab (hopefully with donated money) that can be used by all students for learning and applications
- Plan the expansion of the Department in other countries by utilizing additional resources
- Plan a new campus today – real estate is cheap!

F. Final Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC

The general impression of the EEC is quite positive. The Department is open, entrepreneurial, and academically rigorous. It certainly is the top Department of its kind in Greece. It has demonstrated the ability for constructive self-assessment and has introduced the most successful Masters program at the University of Piraeus, and, from the point of view of enrollment, perhaps all Greek Universities. They provide a valuable service to the Greek Shipping Industry, the largest and most successful in the world, while at the same time generating revenue for the Department that could be put to further good use (to finance research, support graduate students, etc.), beyond what it already supports (internships, scholarships, instructor salaries). The entrepreneurial spirit of many if its faculty, with emphasis on providing high value-added services and an eye toward open competition, are major assets and stand to be highly praised. We urge the Department to maintain and further strengthen its standards of excellence in all areas of its endeavors.

CONCLUSIONS

- Taking into consideration that this is a fairly young Department (established in 1990, we are told) it should be pointed out that it has made remarkable progress, despite considerable odds, especially in its initial phase, in consolidating and establishing itself as the leading department in the areas of Maritime Studies in the country. Now the challenge is to gain more international recognition. Several active faculty, senior and junior, are eminently capable of producing such recognition, if given the chance. It is on the right track and the prospects are good.
- The Department is ready and capable of changing and moving forward in the right direction. The majority of the faculty is senior, and 4 out of 5 will not be replaced, according to current law, which makes it absolutely imperative that everybody, from the Minister of Education to the Rector and the Administration, help the Department to hire, as soon as possible, the non-permanent but well qualified staff, as well as distinguished Visiting Professors of proven world-wide renown, to help them with the rapidly increasing teaching load.
- The EEC felt that the departmental culture is very good, and could further improve by increasing collaboration among colleagues, fields and disciplines.
- There is sensitivity on issues of quality assurance within the Department and the central administration of the University. This is reflected in the preparation of periodic internal evaluations and ongoing debates on ways and means of sustaining and improving quality in teaching, research and contribution to the society.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE DEPARTMENT

- Initiate a strategic plan, as outlined above, setting in motion a process that proceeds with transparency and involvement by everyone within the Department. The potential benefits are enormous as they will provide the opportunity for multiple voices to be heard, stakeholders to be created or strengthened, and an overall sense of collaboration and collegiality to be institutionalized.

- Continue to strengthen the curriculum and strategically develop innovative curricula that heighten visibility, attract students, and aggressively seek available non-permanent teaching resources to satisfy their increasing teaching needs as the faculty have to face mandatory retirement.
- Develop a departmental plan for encouraging and improving research, in terms of both quality and output, as measured in publications in refereed archival journals, and preferably the highest ranked, established international journals in their fields, following a transparent procedure with consultation of relevant faculty
- Invest heavier in expanding and consolidating the network of international collaborators of the Department in both academic and industry circles, and intensify and institutionalize efforts to make the Department more outwards looking in terms of under- and post-graduate students' mobility, faculty mobility and overall incorporation of the Department in international networks of academic and business excellence
- The EEC recommends that the Department, based on the experiences with the evaluation process, should continue to self evaluate as an integral part of its strategic planning, and making improvements in the future
- There is a non-responsive bureaucracy that controls academic affairs and decisions to which this department, like all other institutions, are subjected, that affect the real autonomy of the university
- Non replacement of retiring professors, (1 to 5) will put the department on a path to being wound down. This makes the hiring of non-tenure track faculty critical so that the Department can continue to meet the teaching mission, even in the context of fewer senior, tenured, faculty
- Implementation of strategic plans is useful if it combines the guidelines of law and enables operations in the Department

RECOMMENDATIONS TO HQA AND BEYOND

Poor funding, external environmental complications, and institutional sclerosis are to be mentioned as three prominent problems that are unfortunately beyond the control of individual departments yet they affect their operations in profound ways. The EEC emphasizes the need on the part of University administrators, national legislators, and the Ministry of Education to heed its (and other EEC's) advice and address the issues expeditiously to minimize the damage caused to departmental and individual performance. The EEC sees the new Rector of the University of Piraeus as a ray of hope that some of the above will be soon substantially improved. We interviewed the Rector on our first day of our visit and were very impressed with his dedication and his hard work (he also teaches 10 hours of classes weekly, unheard of for a Rector!)

In addition, the EEC notes the following:

- The evaluation process is beset with unjustifiable problems. The internal evaluation report was a 150 page document in Greek, followed by a 28 page English summary. Both had several factual errors. In addition, they should be both in English. Problems with the administrative staff's very limited knowledge of English continued in our interviews. The hiring of such staff was never under the control of the faculty, whom they are supposed to support.
- The fact remains the law and HQA's website clearly and explicitly state the IER is a prerequisite to activate the external assessment procedure. The two appeared to happen concurrently leading to frustration, confusion, and last minute preparations, placing an unacceptably high burden on members of the Department. The EEC urges HQA staff to seriously review the process and ensure it happens the way it is prescribed to give external evaluators enough preparation time to accomplish their task as rigorously as they should, and to avoid frustration and last-minute logistical complications on the part of hosting departments.
- A very strong conclusion and recommendation of this EEC to the HQA is that, in all future evaluations, they adopt rigorous standards and unified formats for the IER and the supporting material. Specifically, we request that the IER follows precisely the exact same template, down to the last sub-section, that we have followed in this report. In addition, we ask that the faculty vita (CVs) are all written in the exact same format, with a limit of say 2 pages each, and containing valuable information in summary form, such as the refereed journal output during the last 5 years (with full, complete references for each paper), precise amounts of sponsored research (only the share of the faculty in question), etc. HQA can see templates for Vitae from many international Accreditation organizations such as ABET (USA, engineering) and others.

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