Accreditation Report

for the Undergraduate Study Programme of:

Pre-school Education Sciences and Educational Design

Institution: University of the Aegean

Date: 13 November, 2021

Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the Undergraduate Study Programme of **Pre-school Education Sciences and Educational Design** of the **University of the Aegean** for the purposes of granting accreditation

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART A: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE REVIEW

I.   The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

The Panel responsible for the Accreditation Review of the Undergraduate Study Programme of **Pre-school Education Sciences and Educational Design** of the **University of the Aegean** comprised the following four (4) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

1. **Professor Emerita Mary Ioannidou-Koutselini** (Chair)
   University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus

2. **Prof. Emeritus Athanasios Gagatsis**
   University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus

3. **Prof. Panayota Gounari**
   University of Massachusetts Boston, Boston, United States of America

4. **Prof. Emerita Eleni Katsarou**
    University of Illinois Chicago, Chicago, United States of America

II.   Review Procedure and Documentation

The accreditation of the Pre-school Education Sciences and Educational Design Undergraduate Programme (TEPAES) at the University of the Aegean (UoA) was conducted fully in a remote mode, using the Zoom teleconferencing, due to travel restrictions associated with the global COVID-19 pandemic. The Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE) provided the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel (EEAP) members with accreditation materials ahead of the review process that included: the Department's Accreditation Proposal, a Quality Assurance Policy document for the Undergraduate Programme, the Undergraduate Student Guide (in Greek), policy and programme bylaws, course outlines and descriptions, Quality Goal Setting, and Quality Data for the period 2015-2019, as well as a wealth of supporting material and appendices, including presentations with detailed data, student and faculty demographics, sample student evaluations, a list of faculty publications etc. The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel further examined the Department's website (both Greek and English versions) that contained a wealth of information about the curriculum, coursework, enrollment, faculty profiles, announcements, a video with facilities, classrooms and buildings, and a substantial amount of useful content and links for students, faculty and visitors. The EEAP was also provided with HAHE's accreditation guidelines and was invited to attend an orientation session before the accreditation visit.

The virtual accreditation visit extended over two days, starting on Tuesday, November 8th. On that first day, we met with the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs & Student Welfare and Head of MODIP, Prof. Elena Theodoropoulou, and with Prof. Nikos Andreadakis, Department Head of Pre-school Education Sciences and Educational Design for an introductory session and an overview of Quality Assurance processes at the University of the Aegean. Following this session, we met with OMEA (Profs. Fesakis, Gouvias & Stamatis) and MODIP (Profs. Theodoropoulou, Xydeas, Vaitis & Tragou) representatives to discuss compliance with the Quality Standards for Accreditation. We then, met with faculty members from a variety of ranks (Full, Associate Assistant and EDIP), followed by a meeting with group of current students who were at different points in their degrees. Our second day of the virtual visit started with an online tour of the facilities, during which we watched a pre-recorded video and had the opportunity to meet with the Head Secretary of the Department's and other administrative and support staff. Later that same day, we met with a group of Programme alumni and a group of social partners. The second day of the virtual visit ended with a meeting with the Vice Rector of Academic Affairs, the Department Head and OMEA and an informal presentation of the EEAP's initial findings to Department and University leadership, as well as OMEA and MODIP representatives. THE EEAP was impressed by the Department's organization and appreciated the virtual hospitality. The Department of Pre-school Education Sciences and Educational Design welcomed us with collegiality and openness and faculty, staff and students were all eager to answer our questions. Their presentations were informative and detailed, highlighting the University's and Department's commitment to quality improvement in teaching, research, and community outreach.

From our interactions and conversations with representatives of the Department, leadership, faculty members and administrative staff, current students and alumni, as well as community partners, we recognized that the Department is committed to quality assurance and is working in collaboration with MODIP towards more compliance to the HAHE quality standards.

III. Study Programme Profile

The Department of Pre-school Education Sciences and Educational Design (TEPAES) was founded in 1984 and started accepting students in 1987, as a four-year, degree-awarding institution. The Department was established with a twofold mission a) training and preparing scholars and professional educators/primary school teachers who could successfully integrate in the Greek, European and international job market and work in a wide array of positions in pre-school education, teacher training, administration and curricular design and b) promoting science and research in education and curriculum planning and design through basic and applied research. In order to meet its mission, the Department is structured around five conceptual research fields: pedagogy and teaching, psychology and special education, language and culture, didactics of sciences and digital technologies and sociology of education and gender studies. The undergraduate curriculum is informed by four quality principles: a) excellence (defined as constant improvement of current practices); b) collaboration; c) pedagogical innovation; and d) democratic participation. In addressing these aims, TEPAES has designed and developed a curriculum that extends over eight semesters (or four years) and is made up 240 ECTS or 34 courses. Of those 240 ECTS/39 courses, students have 25 required courses, 2 or 4 required concentration courses, 4 research courses, and one special course, plus a 3-phase Field Experience (5 courses).

The Department comprises five divisions: The Division of Pedagogical Studies and General Didactics, the Division of Psychology and Special Education, the Division of Literature, Language and Culture, the Division of Sociology, Economics and Educational Policy and Gender Studies, and the Division of Science Education and Information and Communication Technologies. The Department also houses seven Laboratories: *Learning Technology and Educational Engineering*, *Research on Practical Philosophy (L.R.P.Ph.)*, Social and Educational Research, *Children's Book, Discourse and Theatre Game*, *Educational & Psychological Research and their Applications*, *Applied Research for Environmental Education*, *Laboratory of Experimental Psychology, Psychometric Research and Clinical Applications*.

The Department employs seventeen faculty members, six EDIP (Lab Teaching staff) members, and two EEP (Special Research Staff) members; and one head administrator, and two full-time administrative staff members. In 2020 the Department had 192 active students. There are approximately 200-250 new incoming students every year. 90% of them transfers to other departments and ends up not enrolling in TEPAES. The student/faculty was reported as 42, 4:1 on the total number of active students. Students earn their degrees in four years. Department alumni show high employability with four out five working in a field relevant to their studies.

The Department's facilities, including faculty and staff offices and classrooms are mostly housed in the College of the Humanities building complex in two separate buildings.

The Department aims at designing and delivering excellent education programmes, adhering to an orientation and policies that support continuous improvement and try to meet the educational and societal needs at hand.

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

Principle 1: Academic Unit Policy for Quality Assurance

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD APPLY A QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY AS PART OF THEIR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT. THIS POLICY SHOULD EXPAND AND BE AIMED (WITH THE COLLABORATION OF EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS) AT ALL INSTITUTION'S AREAS OF ACTIVITY, AND PARTICULARLY AT THE FULFILMENT OF QUALITY REQUIREMENTS OF UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES. THIS POLICY SHOULD BE PUBLISHED AND IMPLEMENTED BY ALL STAKEHOLDERS.

The quality assurance policy of the academic unit is in line with the Institutional policy on quality, and is included in a published statement that is implemented by all stakeholders. It focuses on the achievement of special objectives related to the quality assurance of study programmes offered by the academic unit.

The quality policy statement of the academic unit includes its commitment to implement a quality policy that will promote the academic profile and orientation of the programme, its purpose and field of study; it will realise the programme's strategic goals and it will determine the means and ways for attaining them; it will implement the appropriate quality procedures, aiming at the programme's continuous improvement.

In particular, in order to carry out this policy, the academic unit commits itself to put into practice quality procedures that will demonstrate:

a) *the suitability of the structure and organization of the curriculum;*
b) *the pursuit of learning outcomes and qualifications in accordance with the European and the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education;*
c) *the promotion of the quality and effectiveness of teaching;*
d) *the appropriateness of the qualifications of the teaching staff;*
e) *the enhancement of the quality and quantity of the research output among faculty members of the academic unit;*
f) *ways for linking teaching and research;*
g) *the level of demand for qualifications acquired by graduates, in the labour market;*
h) *the quality of support services such as the administrative services, the Library, and the student welfare office;*
i) *the conduct of an annual review and an internal audit of the quality assurance system of the undergraduate programme(s) offered, as well as the collaboration of the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) with the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU).*

Study Programme Compliance

Findings

In general, the Quality Assurance Policy aims to support the academic content and scientific orientation of the undergraduate programme, in accordance with international academic standards and the current national legislation. To that extent, there is a rigorous and excellent policy in place for improving the educational experience of undergraduate students, the quality

and quantity of the overall research output of the department, as well as the introduction of innovative teaching and practical training approaches and strategies. Furthermore, such policy extends to the continual monitoring and improvement of human resources, curricula, outreach, mobility, and programme visibility.

The TEPAES programme quality assurance procedures are itemized and articulated in detail, as reflected in all the documents and interviews conducted and examined by the EEAP. Specifically, the TEPAES design is aligned with the quality assurance of the University of the Aegean and was most recently approved by the department on April 3, 2020, with all interested stakeholders. It has become evident that the programme is closely monitored by all the appropriate internal and external committees such as OMEA, MODIP, directions and decisions by members of HAHE, feedback and advice by external partners in pre-school education, as well as recommendations provided by students in all levels and alumni.

The TEPAES Programme sets numerous and continuous quality goals that can be summarized as follows: i) the appropriateness and organizational development and improvement of the programme of study and curriculum quality that align with all and current scholarship trends, as well as the particularities and context-specific qualities of the practical and scientific needs of the programme participants and the community at large; ii) the scientific attention and pedagogical appropriateness of faculty members, that include how they are assessed in terms of their scholarly output and teaching effectiveness; iii) the construction of a learning culture and environment that promotes both individual and collective learning and aims to encourage initiative in forming ad hoc groups of cooperation and advancement.

Analysis of Judgment

Overall, the EEAP finds the quality assurance action plan of the TEPAES department to be exemplary. It is evident that the quality assurance processes are coordinated and supervised by OMEA in collaboration with the MODIP of the institution, and feedback is being obtained on a continual basis from the programme's relevant committees, the department meetings, and the analysis of student evaluation reports.

Conclusions

The EEAP finds the QA policy of the department in line with the institutional policy.

Panel Judgement

Principle 1: Academic Unit Policy for Quality Assurance	
Fully compliant	✔
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- For the process to be laudable, it may be advisable to seek, study and emulate other exemplary pre-school programmes in Europe and the USA (only two lesser-known examples were cited).
- Programme alumni (and perhaps even Erasmus students) that work in programmes that are located outside the friendly environs of the island of Rhodes are pre-school teachers and administrators, and especially those in the public-school domain, can be important consultants to the programme. Such attention would most certainly add important perspectives.

Principle 2: Design and Approval of Programmes

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD DEVELOP THEIR UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES FOLLOWING A DEFINED WRITTEN PROCESS WHICH WILL INVOLVE THE PARTICIPANTS, INFORMATION SOURCES AND THE APPROVAL COMMITTEES FOR THE PROGRAMME. THE OBJECTIVES, THE EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES, THE INTENDED PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND THE WAYS TO ACHIEVE THEM ARE SET OUT IN THE PROGRAMME DESIGN. THE ABOVE DETAILS AS WELL AS INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAMME'S STRUCTURE ARE PUBLISHED IN THE STUDENT GUIDE.

Academic units develop their programmes following a well-defined procedure. The academic profile and orientation of the programme, the objectives, the subject areas, the structure and organisation, the expected learning outcomes and the intended professional qualifications according to the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education are described at this stage. The approval or revision process for programmes includes a check of compliance with the basic requirements described in the Standards, on behalf of the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU).

Furthermore, the programme design should take into consideration the following:

- *the Institutional strategy*
- *the active participation of students*
- *the experience of external stakeholders from the labour market*
- *the smooth progression of students throughout the stages of the programme*
- *the anticipated student workload according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System*
- *the option to provide work experience to the students*
- *the linking of teaching and research*
- *the relevant regulatory framework and the official procedure for the approval of the programme by the Institution*

Study Programme Compliance

Findings

The undergraduate programme of TEPAES, at the University of the Aegean was established as a four-year programme during the reforms in the institutions of Higher Learning in the early 1980s and was designed in accordance with the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education. The programme with its current name (TEPAES) was established in 2002 and has gone numerous iterations and advancements, as designed by the administrative and teaching faculty members. Nonetheless, and as specified in the documentation reviewed by the EEAP, the design of the existing programme concerns many key considerations so that graduates become good practitioners, and include the following: 1) building rigorous theoretical knowledge and establishing skills and dispositions about early childhood education, and specifically about the importance of lesson planning as practiced in the multiple educational contexts where graduates will be employed; 2) preparing students based on the synergy of scientific knowledge and professional experience that are accomplished via the practice teaching opportunities provided; 3) promoting research and innovation that are instantiated in the students' deep understanding, planning and teaching in various contexts.

The programme of studies can be completed in four years. To be eligible to graduate, students must complete 8 semesters of study and must be successfully evaluated on 39 courses, 25 of which are mandatory, and amount to 156 Teaching Units or 240 ECTS. Essentially, courses are designated as *Mandatory, Mandatory Elective, Research* [courses], *Special* [courses], *Practice Teaching,* and a *Final Thesis* that is not mandatory, but in its place, students must take two additional courses. The structure and the selection of courses by semester in TEPAES, as well as the prerequisites needed for graduation, are articulated in the *Student Guide* that can also be accessed on the programme's website.

Analysis of Judgment

TEAPAES pays particular attention in the beginning of the programme so that "learning is conducted via research." Indeed, the claim is that it is far more important to become familiar with the approaches to the "access of knowledge" and not the "consumption of established knowledge" and therefore provides students with opportunities in their early coursework to access "specially designed research programmes".

Additionally, the programme design indicates that a central tenet of the course of study is the structured feedback within the *practice teaching* component that also allows students to gain contextual understanding and appreciation of theory into practice. As such, the programme has built in courses of practice teaching opportunities, in three phases that start in the third semester, and are conducted in small groups, and in partner school classrooms and other sites. Practice teaching is structurally embedded in the programme coursework and accounts for appropriate workload and professional learning standards.

Conclusions

It may be advisable to re-think and re-design the *Research Courses* so that there is a systematic and deeper coordination and integration with the *Practice Teaching* opportunities. This approach would require for the faculty of these courses to examine carefully how the *theory-into-practice* approaches can be fostered.

The EEAP finds that the three phases of practice teaching opportunities, especially regarding the earliest phase, need to be more than observational hours; indeed, *participant teaching* may be introduced in early semesters, so that students are given opportunities to conduct mini lessons, take part in school meetings, meet with parents, and have more overall clock hours within classrooms. Final semester practice teaching that is conducted in groups of three and only one week of actual teaching is performed, is simply not sufficient. Interestingly, alumni and other students from TEPAES expressed an interest in having more individual (not only in groups of three) teaching experiences with children, under the supervision of cooperating/mentor teachers in schools and other sites.

It appears that while a lot of appropriate attention is given to the planning of lessons/units of study for the TEAPES students development across all subject areas, this is very limited-- and is most likely insufficient- given current professional demands.

Panel Judgement

Principle 2: Design and Approval of Programmes	
Fully compliant	✔
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- It would be prudent to establish an *observation protocol* that would be readily available and completed as well as recorded, so that all concerned—students, programme faculty, and cooperating/mentor teachers, are engaged in the same informal and formal assessment process of practice teaching.
- It is advisable to extent the duration of Practicum at schools, especially the duration of real teaching which is limited to one week.

Principle 3: Student-centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES ARE DELIVERED IN A WAY THAT ENCOURAGES STUDENTS TO TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN CREATING THE LEARNING PROCESS. THE ASSESSMENT METHODS SHOULD REFLECT THIS APPROACH.

Student-centred learning and teaching plays an important role in stimulating students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in the learning process. The above entail continuous consideration of the programme's delivery and the assessment of the related outcomes.

The student-centred learning and teaching process

- *respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths;*
- *considers and uses different modes of delivery, where appropriate;*
- *flexibly uses a variety of pedagogical methods;*
- *regularly evaluates and adjusts the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods aiming at improvement;*
- *regularly evaluates the quality and effectiveness of teaching, as documented especially through student surveys;*
- *reinforces the student's sense of autonomy, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teaching staff;*
- *promotes mutual respect in the student - teacher relationship;*
- *applies appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints.*

  In addition:
- *the academic staff are familiar with the existing examination system and methods and are supported in developing their own skills in this field;*
- *the assessment criteria and methods are published in advance;*
- *the assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary is linked to advice on the learning process;*
- *student assessment is conducted by more than one examiner, where possible;*
- *the regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances;*
- *assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures;*
- *a formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*

Study Programme Compliance

Findings

The Department of Pre-school Education Sciences & Educational Design at the University of the Aegean has thoughtfully considered the multidimensional application of Student-centered Learning, Teaching and Assessment. The Quality Policy aims to secure an inclusive education where all students feel equal without any discrimination.

The appointment of an Academic Advisor for each student facilitates the smooth progression through the course of study and encourages overcoming difficulties.

Moreover, the Student Guide, the information on the web site, the e-class, e-learning opportunities, and the administrative and staff support cultivate the student's sense of autonomy and safety, a state of affairs that was also verified during the EEAP meetings with students and graduates. Students are very satisfied with the variety of the teaching topics and they feel that courses prepare them well for the world of work and provide a good connection between practice and research.

During teaching a variety of student-centered methods are used such as cooperative investigation, reflective approaches, practical applications, visits and observations, role playing, projects, decision making, problem solving, action research and research activities. Formative and summative assessment of students' learning is applied via multiple methods.

The use of Moodle and E-course and a variety of synchronous and asynchronous communication through LMS platforms has facilitated the smooth transition to online delivery and the Department has equipped students facing financial difficulties with laptops. Students were grateful for the supportive and encouraging learning environment of the department and the opportunities for personal support services.

Analysis of judgement

The structure of the programme favors student-centred teaching, learning, and assessment, due to the availability of elective and required elective courses. The Department encourages students to take an active role in their learning process, by inspiring them to choose from the pre-defined elective Units of the Practicum School Experience programme. Meetings and work in the Department's laboratories can provide further assistance and individualized support to all students.

Although the percentage of students answering the Student Survey (course evaluation) was very low (18, 20% participation), it still indicates that students hold positive attitudes towards the programme, the staff, the educational material and the teaching process. The Department is aware of the necessity to increase students' participation and the staff has delineated the effort put during the last few years to increase the number of students answering the electronic questionnaire.

The Central Services of the University, along with the committee of the Department, support students with disabilities. Students have the opportunity to submit their complaints centrally and/or to the Department via the administration office and the academic advisor. The procedure for handling students' complaints and appeals promotes students' rights.

The faculty expressed a very clear sense of the Department's identity and direction. They declared themselves committed to a student-centered pedagogical approach that focuses on strategic programming, the development of research skills and the preparation of learners who understand how they can learn and act in a range of educational contexts - from traditional classrooms to alternative settings and environments.

The educational and social partners have very positive attitudes towards the staff and students' work in the community and they welcome their presence in schools, informal learning settings, summer schools and other community events. The 'open door' policy of the Department for students, graduates and partners has resulted in mutual understanding and productive collaboration.

The Department takes seriously into account the limited mobility of incoming and outgoing Erasmus students. It offers five courses in English so that external students and professors have the opportunity to visit the Department. The EEAP had the opportunity to converse with one

Erasmus student, who expressed her satisfaction with the Department's services and the opportunities given through the programme. The student expressed the view that the face-to-face visits at schools, which she is experiencing abroad, and the remote experiences during the Practicum in Greece are not comparable, so she is in favour of the face-to-face experiences. The increase of the Erasmus collaborations to 17 and the new policy of the participation of the Department's staff in the Erasmus Committee is a good start for addressing the limited mobility of Erasmus.

Conclusions

The Policy of the Department of Pres-school Education Sciences & Educational Design of the Aegean University fully complies with a multidimensional application of Student-centered Learning, Teaching and Assessment. The Policy of Quality aims to provide an inclusive education where all students feel equal without any discrimination. The Department's culture of collaboration, the realistic academic expectations and the excellent organization based on indicators of quality and objectives for improvement, support the Department's goal for excellence.

Panel Judgement

Principle 3: Student- centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment	
Fully compliant	✓
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- The Department should continue considering ways to increase the limited mobility of incoming and outgoing Erasmus students (i.e., scholarships, financial support, guidance and rewards).
- There is a need to motivate students to participate in the departmental and University-wide Committees.
- The Department should consider processes and motives to increase the percentage of student responses to the course evaluations.

Principle 4: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD DEVELOP AND APPLY PUBLISHED REGULATIONS COVERING ALL ASPECTS AND PHASES OF STUDIES (ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION).

Institutions and academic units need to put in place both processes and tools to collect, manage and act on information regarding student progression.

Procedures concerning the award and recognition of higher education degrees, the duration of studies, rules ensuring students progression, terms and conditions for student mobility should be based on the institutional study regulations. Appropriate recognition procedures rely on institutional practice for recognition of credits among various European academic departments and Institutions, in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

Graduation represents the culmination of the students´ study period. Students need to receive documentation explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed (Diploma Supplement).

Study Programme Compliance

__Findings__

The mission of the Department of Pre-school Education Sciences & Educational Design is to prepare educators who will teach in pre-primary schools and/or work in other educational settings. In line with the public Higher Education Institutions in Greece, the Department follows the standard regulations related to student admission and certification. The majority of students are offered admission based on their performance on the National Entrance Examination. Alternative routes of admission also exist for foreign, expatriate, transfer, and special needs students, as well as athletes.

The EEAP stresses the effective organization of the Department and the culture of collaboration that promote efficiency and allocation of roles to specific persons, offices and Committees—a policy that allows for successful academic advising and progression of studies. For the transition from high school to the University, the Department applies a comprehensive orientation process, which is appreciated by the students, who referred with enthusiasm to the support by the faculty and the administration office. The students reported that they were aware of their duties and responsibilities and that the communication with their academic advisor and tutors was their strongest support during their studies.

Students are provided information relating to the various stages of their studies via course outlines, and through the Department and University website. Faculty also make themselves available to answer questions and provide career and academic guidance to interested students. Based on data provided and discussions with current students and graduates of the Department, the EEAP concludes that students are making satisfactory progress in the programme. The graduation time is four years. Although some courses are offered in English, the participation of students from abroad is rare.

Practical training in the form of a Practicum is a valuable part of the programme. Students reported finding it very helpful in providing them with experience and the tools needed to develop job-specific skills at schools and to get knowledge of tasks in other settings.

The Department automatically awards the Diploma Supplement to all graduates in Greek and in English.

Analysis of judgement

It is important to stress that factors such as the distance and travelling, increase of expenses and difficulties of living and studying on an island, the Department generally admits students with low grades through the national entrance exams. However, the support that students receive during their studies is a hedge against failure. To that end, the Department has established a very well-organized system of keeping track of students' progress and giving them the support they need.

The Department maintains records of student participation and progression through the years of study. In addition, there are records pertaining to the various coursework. The regulations regarding student admission, progression, recognition and certification are clearly published in electronic format and the students are satisfied with the feedback they have been receiving on their progress.

Conclusions

The University of Aegean has established both processes and tools to collect manage and act on information regarding student progression.

Procedures concerning the award and recognition of higher education degrees, the duration of studies, rules ensuring students progression, terms and conditions for student mobility are clear and based on the institutional study regulations. Appropriate recognition procedures rely on institutional practice for recognition of credits among various European academic departments and Institutions, in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

Students receive documentation explaining the qualifications gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed (Diploma Supplement).

Panel Judgement

Principle 4: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification	
Fully compliant	✔
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- A more attractive design and building content of the English version of the Department's website along with efficient networking with the partner Universities may enhance the participation of students from abroad.

Principle 5: Teaching Staff

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ASSURE THEMSELVES OF THE QUALIFICATIONS AND COMPETENCE OF THE TEACHING STAFF. THEY SHOULD APPLY FAIR AND TRANSPARENT PROCESSES FOR THE RECRUITMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEACHING STAFF.

> *The Institutions and their academic units have a major responsibility as to the standard of their teaching staff providing them with a supportive environment that promotes the advancement of their scientific work. In particular, the academic unit should:*
>
> - *set up and follow clear, transparent and fair processes for the recruitment of properly qualified staff and offer them conditions of employment that recognize the importance of teaching and research;*
> - *offer opportunities and promote the professional development of the teaching staff;*
> - *encourage scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research;*
> - *encourage innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies;*
> - *promote the increase of the volume and quality of the research output within the academic unit;*
> - *follow quality assurance processes for all staff members (with respect to attendance requirements, performance, self-assessment, training etc.);*
> - *develop policies to attract highly qualified academic staff.*

Study Programme Compliance

Findings

The Department comprises seventeen (17) faculty members (DEP) as of Fall 2021, six EDIP (Special Laboratory Instructional Staff) members, and two EEP (Special Research Staff) member, and currently two ETEP (Special Technical Laboratory Staff) members. On occasion and depending on the allocation of funding, it also employs more administrative and teaching staff. A variety of expertise is reflected in the faculty composition ranging from pedagogy, methodology, educational research and evaluation to pre-K education counseling, literature, educational policy, environmental education, new technologies and a heavier focus on math education.

New faculty members are welcomed in the Department and have reported very positive experiences and collegial working relationships, as well as support by senior faculty.

In order to meet the Department's curricular and administrative needs at the undergraduate and graduate level, faculty carry a regular load of 6 to 9 hours of instruction per week, as defined by the legislation. The Department further follows the current legislative framework for the recruitment and promotion processes of faculty members, as well as for advertising new positions.

Analysis of judgement

Faculty are regularly evaluated for their instruction through surveys (evaluations) that students fill out in every course. While the course evaluation return rate is low, it still indicates satisfaction with courses and instructors at TEPAES.

The Department encourages international mobility of faculty through collaborations, invited lectures, teaching abroad and Erasmus Programmes but the number of faculty participating still seems low.

The faculty continue to develop academically, and a significant number of faculty members publish their research work in edited volumes, national and international peer-reviewed journals, and Conference Proceedings. Research is also carried out in three out of seven labs, as presented in their respective Websites. Most research activity seems to take place at the Learning Technology and Educational Engineering Laboratory, and the Laboratory of Research on Practical Philosophy. The webpages for the other laboratories have minimal to no content so it was challenging for the EEAP to identify the kinds of research conducted in these.

Conclusions

Faculty seem to be active in maintaining a publishing record, however the EEAP noted a decrease in scholarly output on faculty publications from 2016 on. OPESP data is inconsistent and does not clearly show faculty's scholarly activity. An increase in citations is noted, however the increase seems to refer to work published before 2015. Finally, a large number of faculty seem to put significant time and energy in publishing Conference Proceedings, compared to peer reviewed national and international journals.

Panel Judgement

Principle 5: Teaching Staff	
Fully compliant	✔
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- There seems to be a heavier focus of expertise in math education, while some sectors (such as Psychology and Special Education or Literature Language and Culture, for example) have only one faculty member. The EEAP recommends that the Department further diversifies expertise in their hiring ahead and further strengthens its creative arts/drama focus and expertise.

- The EEAP encourages the Department faculty to develop a plan for publishing in peer-reviewed national and international journals as well as monitoring faculty scholarly output in order to support colleagues who need to focus more on their scholarship and provide mentoring to do so.

- Most Lab websites have minimum to no content. Enriching them with the Labs' activities and publications would bring more visibility to the Department, possibly attracting more faculty, strengthening mobility to the Department and fostering collaborations.

Principle 6: Learning Resources and Student Support

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE ADEQUATE FUNDING TO COVER TEACHING AND LEARNING NEEDS. THEY SHOULD –ON THE ONE HAND– PROVIDE SATISFACTORY INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES FOR LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORT AND –ON THE OTHER HAND– FACILITATE DIRECT ACCESS TO THEM BY ESTABLISHING INTERNAL RULES TO THIS END (E.G. LECTURE ROOMS, LABORATORIES, LIBRARIES, NETWORKS, BOARDING, CAREER AND SOCIAL POLICY SERVICES ETC.).

Institutions and their academic units must have sufficient funding and means to support learning and academic activity in general, so that they can offer to students the best possible level of studies. The above means could include facilities such as libraries, study rooms, educational and scientific equipment, information and communications services, support or counselling services.

When allocating the available resources, the needs of all students must be taken into consideration (e.g. whether they are full-time or part-time students, employed or international students, students with disabilities) and the shift towards student-centred learning and the adoption of flexible modes of learning and teaching. Support activities and facilities may be organised in various ways, depending on the institutional context. However, the internal quality assurance ensures that all resources are appropriate, adequate, and accessible, and that students are informed about the services available to them.

In delivering support services the role of support and administrative staff is crucial and therefore they need to be qualified and have opportunities to develop their competences.

Study Programme Compliance

Findings

The TEPAES programme faculty is comprised of 17 faculty members, 6 EDIP members, and 3 ETEP members; there are 6 emerita/us professors. In both our virtual meetings with the programme faculty and administrative members as well as in documents received, it has been made explicit that an additional 5 EDIP members and more administrative/secretarial and technical support staff would qualitatively enhance the programme. The faculty-to-student ratio is 42, 4 to 1. At the beginning of each academic year, the new 200 students are assigned to a programme faculty member that serves as their academic advisor; academic advising remains for the entirety of the students' studies.

The administrative team of TEPAES is comprised of three people, reinforced by two EDIP and as such, they serve as support staff, largely responsible for the electronic communication with the students on all operational matters. In our conversation with the head administrator of the secretariat, she reported that the Department's administrative needs are met with satisfactorily with the existing staff, but they would greatly benefit from additional hires.

Although the EEAP was not able to inspect in person the facilities due to the pandemic, a video tour was available of the building, the laboratories, lecture halls, including a 600-seat amphitheater and a 50-person capacity computer lab, as well as administrative offices. The department is housed in a building that contains offices, classrooms, laboratories and library services. The teaching areas are equipped with wireless internet connection and technological equipment, for example computers, projectors, screens, microphones etc. The availability of

these resources greatly enhances teaching and learning. Additionally, the EEAP was informed that the Department's technological equipment (tablets, cameras etc.) is made available for students to borrow and use as needed.

TEPAES programme needs are met in the existing facilities, but as these are shared with the other two departments of the university, there are maintenance and upgrade issues of the equipment, classroom space and faculty and staff offices. The documents received account for these issues as a result of economic/budgetary constraints.

There is an Information Center and Library, including a University wide Library Network that is singular in Greece in that it provides distinct departments in 6 different islands in the Aegean that belongs to a Community of Greek Academic Libraries developing collaborations among libraries in Greece and abroad.

A significant number of student related processes and learning opportunities are realized electronically that the Department and the university have established as instrumental and necessary tools for the students' professional growth and development.

Students are able to practice and deepen their knowledge and gain critical professional tools in highly specialized fields and areas of expertise, that range from "psychometric research and clinical applications" to "children's book discourse and theater game," in the many TEPAES research labs.

There is a university-wide website (*Fititiki Merimna)* that provides students with all relevant information regarding their wellbeing, both academic and personal. In the same vein, a designated counseling office is available to support students' social/psychological needs. Additional cultural and social activity options include a student organization, a radio station (*Escapula)*, theater and choral groups, and a plethora of athletic activities and events.

Analysis of Judgment

The EEAP agrees that TEPAES illustrates a deep commitment to their students in terms of academic counseling and technological support as well as social and cultural access.

Students and alumni we interviewed, describe faculty members as scholars and individuals they wish to emulate; indeed, they described them as excellent and most responsive to students' needs. They were also deeply appreciative of their training that seem to have expanded their individual and collective horizons, as evidenced in the many different areas of teaching and administrative positions they occupy.

Conclusions

One issue that came to the Panel's attention was that there is a large percentage of students who do not deem it essential to provide feedback and evaluative comments on the courses attended, even though there appears to be significant and mutual respect by students and alumni we interviewed, as well as faculty members.

Erasmus opportunities for students seem to also be an area of concern as there are too few seeking and being awarded such placements, but perhaps as one student put it, "going to a remote area of the Aegean [to study] requires adjustment enough." This is worth examining further how to make these scholarship opportunities more attractive.

Panel Judgement

Principle 6: Learning Resources and Student Support	
Fully compliant	✓
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- Even though it became clear that career opportunities abound within the municipality of the island and beyond, it may be advisable to establish a *Career Office* at the Department/University that could assist students in their academic and professional direction. This office might even be staffed creatively by a small number of student *advisors/advocates*. These student advisors/advocates, preferably former students, but also other people with intimate/first-hand knowledge of the graduation requirements, study habits, student concerns, fieldwork school and other site options, might serve a very student-oriented career approach and advocacy.

Principle 7: Information Management

INSTITUTIONS BEAR FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR COLLECTING, ANALYSING AND USING INFORMATION, AIMED AT THE EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT OF UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES OF STUDY AND RELATED ACTIVITIES, IN AN INTEGRATED, EFFECTIVE AND EASILY ACCESSIBLE WAY.

> *Institutions are expected to establish and operate an information system for the management and monitoring of data concerning students, teaching staff, course structure and organisation, teaching and provision of services to students as well as to the academic community.*
>
> *Reliable data is essential for accurate information and for decision making, as well as for identifying areas of smooth operation and areas for improvement. Effective procedures for collecting and analysing information on study programmes and other activities feed data into the internal system of quality assurance.*
>
> *The information gathered depends, to some extent, on the type and mission of the Institution. The following are of interest:*
>
> - *key performance indicators*
> - *student population profile*
> - *student progression, success and drop-out rates*
> - *student satisfaction with their programme(s)*
> - *availability of learning resources and student support*
> - *career paths of graduates*
>
> *A number of methods may be used for collecting information. It is important that students and staff are involved in providing and analyzing information and planning follow-up activities.*

Study Programme Compliance

Findings

The Department of Pre-school Education Sciences and Educational Design of the University of the Aegean aims to provide students with theoretical knowledge, research and critical thinking skills, and practical training in Early Childhood education, in accordance with the European and the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education. The EEAP has determined that the Department has established procedures and collects adequate data concerning students, faculty, course organization and structure. For this reason, the University of the Aegean uses information systems for the collection, analysis and utilization of data necessary to support its educational, research and administrative functions. The basic information systems used by the Department are the "Student Registry" (foititologio) and the Information System of the Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP). Institutional digital resources (Data Center and Unified Data Network of the University of the Aegean) serve the system used by the Department and it is a subsystem of the "Student Registry System" used by the other Departments of the University of the Aegean and has been configured in accordance with the provisions of the Department's Student Programme. The System, through network-authorized access, provides a variety of information to the teachers, the secretariat's executives and the students:

- It enables teachers to see the list of registered students in each course to register the grades of the students electronically, to print the results of the students' exams, to post educational material and announcements etc.

- It enables the members of the Department's Secretariat to register and manage the students enrolled in each course, to create and manage courses, to correspond/assign courses to teachers, to print certificates etc.

- It enables students to enroll in the courses, to see their grades, to see educational material and announcements posted by the teachers, to apply for certificates related to their studies. Moreover, the system produces standardized reports concerning the courses, such as the list of courses of the Programme of Study, many detailed course data like the average and the variance of grades etc.

During the meetings of EEAP with the Head and the members of the OMEA of the Department, a multidimensional analysis of the data was provided, concerning the undergraduate students' population profile and the students' progression, their success and drop-out rates. In particular these aggregated statistical data concern:

- active students and stagnant according to semester of study and to gender respectively;

- active students per year of study and gender respectively;

- active students in the normal and beyond of the normal duration of studies;

- Active students per mode of admission country of nationality, per semester, gender and grade.

Analysis of judgement

Core in this process is the role of OMEA, the internal evaluation committee made up of faculty members from diverse disciplinary fields within the Department. The internal evaluation group (OMEA), based on the system of quality management of MODIP, collects data through surveys, quantitative and qualitative information from faculty and lab directors regarding the content and instruction mode, research and teaching activities, and community outreach activities. Another source of data collection is based on internal department procedures like accountability reports from different committees and units of the Department. It is also based on requests from the educational staff and on literature related to studies in schools of education or to the graduates of pedagogical departments. Finally, it is also based on the existing legislation and any amendments or changes relating to educational studies. Information collected via all these avenues is used to revise the curriculum, implement novel teaching methods, improve infrastructure and department facilities, facilitate the use of ICTs, the organization of conferences, workshops, invited lectures and so forth.

The students gave feedback to the EEAP indicating that they value and rate very highly the information provided by the Department. They expressed satisfaction with the variety of the topics offered that have provided them with a good understanding of the connection between practice and research.

The Alumni who participated in the review with the members of EEAP, reported that they believed that the courses they have taken prepared them well for the job market/workforce. They also expressed with enthusiasm a strong connection with the Department and noted that they felt welcomed to participate in educational opportunities (e.g. events, symposia, conferences, seminars, co-authored papers, PhD programmes).

Conclusions

The EEAP has determined that the Department has established **a multidimensional process** about its information management that informs internal evaluation as well as external evaluation and accreditation processes.

Panel Judgement

Principle 7: Information Management	
Fully compliant	✔
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- The Department does not seem to be presently collecting data on student employability and the career paths of graduates. This would be helpful data regarding the Department's ability to position its graduates and foster future connections and collaborations.

Principle 8: Public Information

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD PUBLISH INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR TEACHING AND ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES WHICH IS CLEAR, ACCURATE, OBJECTIVE, UP-TO-DATE AND READILY ACCESSIBLE.

> *Information on Institution's activities is useful for prospective and current students, graduates, other stakeholders and the public.*
>
> *Therefore, institutions and their academic units provide information about their activities, including the programmes they offer, the intended learning outcomes, the qualifications awarded, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to their students, as well as graduate employment information.*

Study Programme Compliance

Findings

It is obvious that Department of the Pre-school Education Sciences and Educational Design of the University of the Aegean has put in place a comprehensive public information system. This determination is based on reviews of printed and electronic sources that exhibited evidence of critical information sharing with students, faculty members, external partners, and the community at large. It is also based on the interviews with the the Vice Rector of the University, the Head of the Department, members of MODIP, OMEA, faculty, secretarial staff, and students.

Analysis of judgement

The main website of the University is user friendly and easy to navigate and provides a wide variety of information about the University, including announcements and press releases of a general nature, publication of scholarships, competitions, and jobs. The website incorporates all the actions of the Institution resulting from strategic planning such as special interest clubs for students, internal regulations etc.

During the presentation of the accreditation proposal of the undergraduate programme by a member of the OMEA, it became obvious that the Department provides a multidimensional public information about its activities. This is realized through:

- The Department's website. It is worthwhile to notice that the present web-page is in the process of radically renewing itself in order to be multilingual and to supports a database of course outlines;

- Official page on the social networking site Facebook

- The Department's Official YouTube channel

- The official page on LinkedIn;

- A variety of press releases sent to the media (newspapers, radio stations).

Moreover, the Department website is also user-friendly, and it contains a variety of information: about the Department's facilities, its history, the human resources and its administrative bodies, the teaching and laboratory staff and the research activities of the members of the Department, as well as topics of undergraduate and postgraduate studies such as regulations, outline, and courses offered; about the calendar and the timetable and infrastructures of the University. Moreover, the External Evaluation Report of the Department and the Department Quality Policy are also presented on the website.

Finally, department faculty are involved in the edition of different journals related to educational sciences.

Conclusions

Overall, the EEAP is convinced that University and the Department provide students, faculty and visitors with a wealth of information and resources that are easily accessible and the Department provides a multidimensional public information about its activities.

Faculty and students reiterated in our conversations that the Department courses, goals, activities and expectations are clearly delineated and available to all students.

Panel Judgement

Principle 8: Public Information	
Fully compliant	✔
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

None

Principle 9: On-going Monitoring and Periodic Internal Review of Programmes

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE IN PLACE AN INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM FOR THE AUDIT AND ANNUAL INTERNAL REVIEW OF THEIR PROGRAMMES, SO AS TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES SET FOR THEM, THROUGH MONITORING AND AMENDMENTS, WITH A VIEW TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT. ANY ACTIONS TAKEN IN THE ABOVE CONTEXT SHOULD BE COMMUNICATED TO ALL PARTIES CONCERNED.

Regular monitoring, review and revision of study programmes aim to maintain the level of educational provision and to create a supportive and effective learning environment for students.

The above comprise the evaluation of:
- *the content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up to date;*
- *the changing needs of society;*
- *the students' workload, progression and completion;*
- *the effectiveness of the procedures for the assessment of students;*
- *the students' expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme;*
- *the learning environment, support services and their fitness for purpose for the programme*

Programmes are reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders. The information collected is analysed and the programme is adapted to ensure that it is up-to-date. Revised programme specifications are published.

Study Programme Compliance

Findings

The Department of Pre-school Education Sciences and Educational Design of the University of the Aegean gives particular importance to the internal evaluation processes. OMEA and MODIP continuously gather and analyse a host of data (Quality Indicators) in order to maintain loyalty to the mission and goals of the Department.

Regular revisions resulted in a research-oriented programme and adaptation to the emerging needs of the society including new courses such as educational design, sustainability and climate change, gender equality, and multiculturalism.

EEAP interviews with the students, alumni, and external stakeholders provided evidence of an overall high level of satisfaction with the programme, as implemented.

One of the Department's objectives is the cultivation among students and staff of a 'culture of collaboration and excellence. When the staff was questioned about the meaning of 'excellence' as one of the Department's goals, the reply of the president of the OMEA 'to become better' indicates the realistic policy of the Department and its well-planned development.

The OMEA's presentation was very well structured based on the evaluation principles and their interconnection, and it provided the members of EEAP with an overview of the plans and challenges in the Department that affect the TEPAES Programme. The presentation addressed issues concerning effective programme revision and delivery of instruction for maximum learning benefits of the students, who value and rate the Department's information management highly.

The Department established The Policy of Quality according to which the following are indicators of the effectiveness of the Policy: a) the adptation of the evaluation recommendations, b) the improvement of the indicators provided by MODIP, c) the change of the Department' s position in the national and international rankings.

For the improvement of the learning outcomes, 16 measurable objectives have been defined including the programme's revision, students' orientation, upgrading the role of the academic advisor, and the organization of events and conferences.

Conclusions

The declared Quality Assurance Policy of the Department is a constructive guide to programme and instructional quality.

The Department also conducted a realistic SWOT analysis underlining internal and external strengths and weaknesses, such as the lack of adequate human resources, limited student mobility, limited participation in international research programmes, and insufficient promotion of the Department's work. EEAP considers the weaknesses of the Department as inherent deficiencies of the Higher Education system and the low budget for its development.

Panel Judgement

Principle 9: On-going Monitoring and Periodic Internal Review of Programmes	
Fully compliant	✔
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

None

Principle 10: Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programmes

PROGRAMMES SHOULD REGULARLY UNDERGO EVALUATION BY COMMITTEES OF EXTERNAL EXPERTS SET BY HAHE, AIMING AT ACCREDITATION. THE TERM OF VALIDITY OF THE ACCREDITATION IS DETERMINED BY HAHE.

HAHE is responsible for administrating the programme accreditation process which is realised as an external evaluation procedure, and implemented by a committee of independent experts. HAHE grants accreditation of programmes, with a specific term of validity, following to which revision is required. The accreditation of the quality of the programmes acts as a means of verification of the compliance of the programme with the template's requirements, and as a catalyst for improvement, while opening new perspectives towards the international standing of the awarded degrees.

Both academic units and institutions participate in the regular external quality assurance process, while respecting the requirements of the legislative framework in which they operate.

The quality assurance, in this case the accreditation, is an on-going process that does not end with the external feedback, or report or its follow-up process within the Institution. Therefore, Institutions and their academic units ensure that the progress made since the last external quality assurance activity is taken into consideration when preparing for the next one.

Study Programme Compliance

Institutions of higher education in Greece achieve compliance by demonstrating that they meet the Quality Assurance principles and the principles established by HAHE. The Panel reviewed all the available documentation, including the 2013 External Evaluation Report, the website, and conducted extensive online interviews with key members of the university community such as the Vice-Rector for Academic and student Affairs, the Head of the Department, members of the OMEA and MODIP, faculty, secretarial and laboratory staff, students, graduates and external partners and employers. The Pre-school Education Sciences and Educational Design Undergraduate Programme (TEPAES) draws on the Quality Policy and the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS) of the University. There is continuous monitoring and periodic internal evaluation of the Programme, as was evident during the interviews with the faculty and internal evaluation committee (MODIP and OMEA) members. OMEA meets regularly and systematically monitors quality data on an annual basis. Finally, it draws up annual and periodic evaluation reports and recommendations to the Programme Committee and the General Assembly of the Department.

Students evaluate the content and the objectives of the courses, the organization and quality of teaching and instructor (level of generating interest & student encouragement, accessibility and consistency) through a survey (course evaluation) every semester.

Based on the recommendations of the prior external evaluation, the Department has worked on addressing as many as possible. More specifically:

1) *Attracting high quality academic staff and students while acknowledging the challenges stemming from having a university campus on a remote island (the periphery of Greece)*: The Department has been working on attracting both faculty and students through strengthening graduate studies that would generate research, mobility, and bring

visibility to the Department; through fostering international collaborations and inviting renown foreign scholars to campus; and by supporting local research initiatives. The remoteness of the island remains an issue to the degree that the Department and the University as a whole do not receive additional funding from the educational national budget to support students, faculty and staff. This is obviously an issue beyond the Department's reach and control.

2) *Building infrastructure*: There has been significant progress in this area since 2013, as the Department has now moved to the renovated campus space they currently occupy, that meets the needs of the programme, its students, faculty and staff.

3) The 2013 evaluation report highlighted the need on the part of the Department to *redesign and restructure the curriculum and monitor its effective implementation*. The Department has addressed this concern through multiple reviews and redesign of the curriculum, including a redistribution of courses, establishing course sequences and designing coursework along ECTS. The new curriculum focuses on developing research skills in students, centering on instructional design and planning, and its implementation and student progress are closely monitored by faculty and academic advisors.

4) *Develop policies and take action to improve the quality of student assessment*: The Department has put in place important tracking and monitoring processes and has diversified assessment of student progress.

5) Take actions to promote research in education: The Department still needs to consider this recommendation. The EEAP acknowledges the research orientation of the new curriculum and the focus on graduate-level research production. The Department needs to invest in supporting faculty research and in developing a more international research profile for faculty. Statistics in the accreditation report are not clear about the production and impact of faculty research and publications. The EEAP also was not able to identify a set of internal standards for reviewing the quality of faculty and student research neither an Internal Human Research Ethics Committee.

6) *Limited financial resources*: This 'weakness' is inherently systemic and depends on allocations of the Ministry of Education budget, it remains a true concern for TEPAES as it does for most Greek Institutions of Higher Education.

Conclusions

Overall, the Department has been putting considerable effort in improving in all aspects, taking into consideration the recommendations of the 2013 review. The EEAP notes that those recommendations that have been within the Department's control, have been largely addressed. However a Department is a living body that constantly develops, evolves and improves and the EEAP hopes that our recommendations will contribute in this direction.

Panel Judgement

Principle 10: Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programmes	
Fully compliant	✔
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The Department should consider investing in supporting faculty research and in developing a more international research profile for faculty. A mentoring plan that would guide both junior and senior faculty on publishing would be post useful.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I.   Features of Good Practice

- Comprehensive and effective organization and administration of the programme and the Department.
- Realistic learning goals and objectives and effective monitoring of their fulfillment.
- Inclusive system of students' progression throughout the programme.
- Student - centred teaching, services and overall approach.
- Cultivation of a culture of collaboration among students, faculty, OMEA, MODIP and administrative staff.
- Consideration of the parameters of 'nisiotikotita', (to study in an island) and the Department's important efforts to counterbalance weaknesses and limitations.
- Functional distribution of tasks among the administrative personnel and effectiveness of main administrative office.

II.   Areas of Weakness

- Limited duration of the Practicum and lack of protocols about students' performance during their active teaching as an innate deficiency of the Higher Education system in Greece.
- Students' limited participation in Departmental and University-wide committees, despite the Department's efforts.
- Low percentage of students answering the Student Questionnaire (course evaluations).
- Low percentage of Erasmus students and overall student mobility.
- Absence of systematic collection of data on student employability and the career paths of graduates.

III.   Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

Summarizing the recommendations listed in the context of the ten principles, moving forward it is advisable for the Department to:

- Study and draw best practices/policies from other exemplary pre-school programmes in Europe and the United States, especially regarding the organization of the Practicum-school and teaching experiences.
- Programme alumni (and perhaps even Erasmus students) who work in programmes that are located outside the friendly environs of the island of Rhodes (pre-school teachers and administrators, and especially those in the public-school domain) can serve as important consultants to the programme.
- Establish an observation protocol that would be readily available and completed as well as recorded, so that all concerned-- students, programme faculty, and cooperating/mentor teachers, are engaged in the same informal and formal assessment process of the Practicum (practice teaching).

- Extent the duration of practicum at schools, especially the duration of real teaching which is currently limited to one week.
- Continue considering ways to increase the limited mobility of incoming and outgoing Erasmus students (i.e., scholarships, financial support, guidance and rewards).
- Motivate students to participate in the departmental and University-wide committees.
- Consider processes and motives to increase the percentage of student responses to the course evaluations.
- Develop a more attractive design and build content of the English version of the Department's website; enhance networking with partner Universities in order to enhance the participation of students from abroad.
- Plan on diversifying expertise in the Department's future hiring and further strengthen creative arts/drama focus and expertise.
- Develop a plan for publishing in peer-reviewed national and international journals, as well as monitoring faculty scholarly output in order to support colleagues who need to focus more on their scholarship and provide them with mentoring to do so.
- Enrich lab websites with their activities and publications so as to bring more visibility to the Department, possibly attracting more faculty, strengthening mobility to the Department and fostering collaborations.
- Collect data on student employability and the career paths of graduates.

IV.   Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: **1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10**

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: **None**

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are: **None**

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are: **None**

Overall Judgement	
Fully compliant	✔
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname   **Signature**

1. **Professor Emerita Mary Ioannidou-Koutselini** (Chair)
   University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus

2. **Prof. Emeritus Athanasios Gagatsis**
   University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus

3. **Prof. Panayota Gounari**
   University of Massachusetts Boston, Boston, United States of America

4. **Prof. Emerita Eleni Katsarou**
    University of Illinois Chicago, Chicago, United States of America