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HELLENIC REPUBLIC

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HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE
AND ACCREDITATION AGENCY

Accreditation Report
for the Undergraduate Study Program of:
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL
ENTERPRISES

Institution: UNIVERSITY OF PATRAS

Date: January 3rd, 2018

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Επιχειρησιακό Πρόγραμμα
Ανάπτυξη Ανθρώπινου Δυναμικού,
Εκπαίδευση και Διά Βίου Μάθηση
Με τη συγχρηματοδότηση της Ελλάδας και της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης



Report of the Panel appointed by the HQA to undertake the review of
the Undergraduate **Study Program of**
Business Administration of Food and Agricultural Enterprises
of the **University of Patras** for the purposes of granting accreditation

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PART A: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE REVIEW

I. The Accreditation Panel

The Panel responsible for the Accreditation Review of the Undergraduate Program of studies of **Business Administration of Food and Agricultural Enterprises** of the **University of Patras** comprised the following three (3) members, drawn from the HQA Register, in accordance with the Law 4009/2011:

- 1. Professor Emeritus Ioannis Vlahos (Chair)**
TEI of Crete, Greece

- 2. Professor Konstantinos Giannakas**
University of Nebraska-Lincoln, USA

- 3. Professor Emeritus Spyros Economides**
California State University, East Bay, USA

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

The Accreditation Panel (the Panel) members, Professor Ioannis Vlahos and Professor Spyros Economides met at the Headquarters of ADIP in Athens on December 7, while Professor Konstantinos Giannakas was connected via SKYPE and were briefed by the Managing Director Dr. Christina Besta, about the procedures to be followed during the site visit in Agrinion and were also provided with documentation regarding the HQA mission and guidelines of the study program accreditation.

The Panel members arrived at Agrinion on December 9 and discussed the specifics of the proposal of accreditation submitted by the Department of Business Administration of Food and Agricultural Enterprises (DEAPT) and the Chairman allocated the tasks and issues to be discussed during the site visit.

The site visit was realized the following day at the premises of DEAPT and the Panel met with the Vice Rector/President of MODIP, Professor Nikolaos Karamanos and the Head of Department, Associate Professor Grigorios Beligiannis who presented the history of the Department and its current status. An overview of the University of Patras and the quality policy that is applied in all its activities as dictated by MODIP was also presented.

The next meeting was with members of the Internal Evaluation Group (OMEA) Assistant Professors Maria Tsampra, coordinator, Athanasia Bouranta, and Achilleas Kontogeorgos and MODIP President Professor Karamanos and member Professor Athanasios Karalis. During this two-hour meeting the Panel had the chance to hold very informative and extensive discussions regarding the undergraduate program of studies, and the ways in which DEAPT complies with the Standards for Quality Accreditation. Furthermore, detailed discussions were held about the future plans and current challenges faced by the Department.

The Panel met next with the teaching staff members (Professors Athanasios Ladavos, Aggelos Patakas, Konstantina Pendaraki, Evangelos Psomas and Laboratory-teaching staff Dr. Aris Giannakas and Vasillios Triantafilidis), with whom the Panel discussed issues regarding teaching and evaluation methods used, course workload, links between teaching and research, research activities, staff mobility and areas of quality assurance followed by staff members.

The day meetings continued with undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students, alumni and external stakeholders and partners. Discussions with students and alumni centered on student satisfaction from their experiences in DEAPT and their views of the program of studies and other issues relating to quality of their studies and career opportunities. The external stakeholders (Mr. Pistiolas, Mr. Bokas and Mr. Drougas) expressed their strong support to the DEAPT, and described their fruitful cooperation with the staff and graduates of the Department.

Between the meetings the Panel was given a tour of the premises of the Department and visited classrooms, teaching and research laboratories, the auditorium and the library.

The Panel concluded the site visit by holding a brief meeting with the Vice Rector/President of MODIP, the Head of DEAPT, and representatives of both MODIP and OMEA during which further clarifications were given and key findings from the visit were presented by the Panel.

The Panel experienced a warm welcome by the DEAPT Head and staff members and recognized a genuine spirit of cooperation by all members involved in the day long meetings. The willingness to cooperate and support the University's quality policy was evident at all levels.

The Panel was provided, prior to the visit, with the required documentation for study and evaluation. These documents included the proposal for Accreditation of the Department, the University of Patras Quality Assurance Manual, the DEAPT external evaluation report of 2014, the study program guide, and other relevant documentation. Additional documents were provided during the visit upon request of the Panel.

In conclusion, the Panel acknowledges the positive attitude and enthusiasm expressed by all members of faculty involved, and thanks the Department Head and Vice Rector for the cooperation and useful discussions held during the visit.

The Panel members returned to Athens on November 11 and started working on the Accreditation report based on the provided documents and the information acquired during the visit.

III. Program of studies Profile

The Department of Business Administration of Food and Agricultural Enterprises (DEAPT) was established in 1998 as Department of Agribusiness Management (Presidential Decree 96/98) of the University of Ioannina in Agrinio. In 2004, following successive restructuring of the curriculum its graduates were officially accepted as members of the Greek Chamber of Economists. In 2006 the Department was renamed to Department of Business Administration of Food and Agricultural Enterprises (Presidential Decree 110/2006) and in 2009 was granted the status of the University of Western Greece (Law 3794/2009). Following reforms and merges in the Institutions of Higher Education of Greece the Department became part of the University of Patras in 2013 (Presidential Decree 89/2013).

DEAPT premises are in a three story building located at the outskirts of the city of Agrinion and today numbers 1045 registered students. The teaching staff is comprised of two Professors, one Associate Professor, six Assistant Professors and five teaching and laboratory staff members.

DEAPT undergraduate program of studies provides knowledge of agricultural and economic sciences and leads into a business administration degree with a focus on the agri-food marketing system. The program aims at providing its graduates with the necessary expertise to meet the needs of agricultural enterprises and organizations of the public and private sectors and to contribute to the development of the agricultural economy of the region.

The students follow a curriculum of compulsory and optional/selective courses in a period of 5 years (300 ECTS) and, after completing a compulsory thesis on the 10th semester, are awarded an “Integrated Master” degree.

DEAPT aims at effectively integrating its students and staff in the local community and cooperates well with stakeholders that actively support its activities and mission.

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 PROGRAMS. 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 programs 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 program, its purpose and field of study; it will realise the program's strategic goals and it will determine the means and ways for attaining them; it will implement the appropriate quality procedures, aiming at the program'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 program(s) offered, as well as the collaboration of the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) with the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU);*

Study Program compliance

DEAPT offers an undergraduate program of studies which, after recent reorganization and following most of the suggestions from the last external evaluation panel, has a quality assurance policy that is in line with the strategic goals and quality policy of the University of Patras to which it belongs.

The Quality Assurance (QA) policy of the University as it has been developed by the MODIP in cooperation with the OMEA of the Department aims to provide a curriculum that is consistent with its goals.

The courses of the undergraduate program are evaluated annually by the curriculum committee and are modified as needed based on feedback from students, faculty and stakeholders.

As stated by the Department head and staff, DEAPT conducts student evaluations utilizing approved questionnaires that are analyzed by the OMEA and the MODIP of the University.

The Department clearly states the learning outcomes and qualifications of its program in line with the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education. As stated in the Quality Policy, the DEAPT graduates will be able to combine both theoretical and practical knowledge in the agribusiness sector of the economy.

The Quality Assurance Policy of the DEAPT is tailored to maintain a continuous improvement of quality assurance processes. Linking of teaching and research is pursued through the obligatory Diploma Thesis which is encouraged to be of experimental nature and requires a research project.

The practical placement/internship which is undertaken by a number of students during the summer months is a good opportunity for connections with the labour market, however, the available funds for this activity are not enough to satisfy the demand.

There are student advisors appointed for each cohort of students and offer support and advice when needed. The administrative staff offer services to the students, however, none of them were present during the meetings held during the site visit.

Students and staff seem to be actively participating in the local community and industry through social and training activities.

Considering the existing financial constraints that most Universities face and the low replacement rate of retiring staff, DEAPT is making every effort to maintain and support a program of studies that will abide by the rules set by the HQA and applied through the collaboration of the OMEA with the MODIP of the University.

Panel judgement

Principle 1: Institution policy for Quality Assurance	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- The current curriculum structure with its emphasis on the agri-food system differentiates the program from general business administration degrees and provides the DEAPT graduates with valuable knowledge of the economics of agriculture, plant sciences and food technology. The addition of courses on animal science/production would further strengthen the curriculum and would provide its graduates with a better understanding of another important sector of the regional (and national) economy
- The curriculum would also be strengthened by the addition of a course on Research Methodology
- An effort should be made to attract and hire permanent faculty members to compensate for the significant number of faculty members retired and/or moved to different Universities
- Student theses should be encouraged to be mostly research oriented so that the linking between teaching and research can be strengthened

Principle 2: Design and Approval of Programs

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

Academic units develop their programs following a well-defined procedure. The academic profile and orientation of the program, 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 programs 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 program 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 program*
- *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 program by the Institution.*

Study Program compliance

As stated in its profile and chronological development and evolution, DEAPT has undergone a series of changes in institutional affiliations and Departmental title designations since its establishment in 1998. Consequently, its Program of Undergraduate Studies has also undergone redesign and changes in order to (a) ensure compliance and harmonization with the institutional strategy of the University of Patras, (b) accomplish its own academic goals, and (c) adapt to the evolving national and international academic trends and developments. These changes have been implemented both in the design and management of the Program of Studies under the guidance and monitoring of OMEA and MODIP within the context and spirit of a disciplined Quality Assurance Program.

Based on the DEAPT Proposal of Accreditation and the on-site visit, the Panel determined that the Undergraduate Program of Studies, both in its implementation and occasional revisions, takes into consideration and incorporates the following aspects and requirements:

- It receives feedback, requests and suggestions for improvement from faculty, both permanent and temporary, students and external stakeholders from the labor market. This was verified through meetings and discussion with a group of students and three local business owners.
- It incorporates procedures and support mechanisms to facilitate the student progress through the various program stages.
- It ensures that the per semester total student workload is in accordance with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (30 ECTS units).
- Regarding Undergraduate Program revisions, it takes into consideration and complies with the official policy and regulations of the University of Patras.
- It ensures that, to the extent possible, course content incorporates faculty research.
- It provides opportunities for students to obtain work experience through practical training programs (internships) in local business establishments.

The Undergraduate Program of Studies, as its title indicates, is a specialized Business Administration Program. The program in its present form is a five-year program designated as an “Integrated Master” degree and consists of 45 courses for a total of 270 ECTS (6 ECTS for each course) and a mandatory thesis of 30 ECTS. From the total number of courses, 40 are compulsory courses and 5 are elective. The first 4 semesters of the program of study consist of 5 predetermined compulsory courses per semester while after the second year the student can start taking the five 5 elective courses relevant to the program specialization. A significant number of courses focus on the administration and management of food and agricultural enterprises. The comprehensive list of Departmental course offerings is shown in the Department’s accreditation proposal document and included in the Department’s web site. Course offerings are organized in 3 categories, each one including core courses of a Business Administration curriculum and a number of courses focusing on the agri-food marketing system.

The Panel feels that the design of the program serves its intended mission of educating and training individuals in the Business Administration of Agricultural and Food Enterprises very well. This undergraduate program is unique and its graduates are valuable for the support, service and production management activities in the most significant primary sector of the Greek economy.

Panel judgement

Principle 2: Design and Approval of Programs	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- Better communication of the unique nature of this program (i.e., the business administration of agri-food system enterprises) and the significant advantages that this differentiation from mainstream business administration programs provides the graduates of DEAPT
- While the program of studies reflects a strong undergraduate program in agribusiness administration, the program is not a graduate one – the “Integrated Master” title does not reflect the true nature of this program
- Reorganize the listing of your course offerings to better reflect their business administration, economics of agriculture, plant sciences and food technology orientation
- Develop and offer courses in livestock production, re-establishing, this way, the animal production laboratory and complementing the other food system components of the curriculum
- Increase the number of permanent faculty members to effectively service the rich inventory of course offerings

Principle 3: Student-centered Learning, Teaching and Assessment

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS 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-centered 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 program's delivery and the assessment of the related outcomes.

The student-centered 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 Program compliance

During its on-site visit, the Panel had the opportunity to interact with a variety of representative groups associated with DEAPT such as faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, institutional and Departmental units responsible for quality assurance as they affect or being affected by the student-centered culture and environment. Combined with

the evidence provided in the DEAPT's Accreditation Proposal and information contained in the DEAPT web site, the Panel concludes that the academic unit complies and conforms to the typical requirements for student-centered learning and assessment since:

The Department provides adequate orientation on most of its operating aspects, procedures and practices to all incoming students. On an on-going basis, faculty aids and advises in the selection of elective courses to fit the program goals of the individual students.

Faculty provides syllabi upfront to inform students of the expectations and requirements of the course, the schedule of the course content coverage and the ways student performance is evaluated.

Faculty employs a variety of methods for course content delivery, both traditional and technologically advanced, to adapt to current trends and student needs.

The students commented on the good, friendly, personal but respectful interaction with faculty and its willingness to understand and assist in the student academic growth and development.

Faculty promotes an interactive class environment encouraging student participation in presentations, team projects, class subject related research and analysis.

The e-class digital platform facilitates faculty-to-student remote interaction and communication, communicates announcements, ensures availability of past and current learning materials and displays advance notices of schedule modifications, among other course related matters. The use of this platform is also important in the evaluation of student performance and the posting of grades.

Using the institutional digital platform, students are now encouraged to evaluate faculty performance and the course content based on their perception of its relevance to their program of study.

A faculty advisor is assigned to every student such that the student has access to a mentor with whom can share and discuss not only matters of academic nature but also obtain confidential advice and counseling on matters of personal concerns. An appeal mechanism is also in place for students desiring to challenge their grades.

Overall, the Panel feels that it received adequate evidence regarding the student-centered academic environment of the Department in interpersonal faculty-student relations and utilization of digital platforms for information dissemination and Departmental data extraction and analysis for uses relating to student activities and concerns.

The Panel did not have the opportunity to meet with any of the Departmental administrative support personnel to be able to assess the level of service and degree of interaction that the students receive from the Departmental office or the efficiency with which the Departmental services are provided.

Panel judgement

Principle 3: Student- centered Learning, Teaching an Assessment	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- The Department is encouraged to continue its efforts to provide a student-centered learning environment
- Make every effort to provide AMEA access to the Department and its facilities

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 Program compliance

The University of Patras organizes a welcome reception for the first year students where the DEAPT students can receive useful information about their Department. Students are also informed about their Academic Advisor to whom they address any queries relating to their studies and progress. The academic advisor can communicate with the students through e-mails to monitor their progress and assist in any problems that may be faced with.

The Panel asked to see a selection of Diploma theses that were promptly delivered and the panel observed that most of them were well-written and documented. The Department has developed a very informative brochure about the layout and preparation of theses.

The ECTS system is consistently applied across the curriculum, allocating the same number of credits to all courses and ignoring, this way, differences in the workload among courses.

The Diploma Supplement is not issued yet by the administration and this is a legal requirement that should be fulfilled in the immediate future. The DS is a valuable document that indicates the context and the level of studies attained in the Department.

The Erasmus program is available to the DEAPT students and staff as the University of Patras is very active in this European mobility program. However, as the Panel observed, the mobility of both outgoing and incoming students is rather low; the same is also true for the staff mobility.

A two-month practical training of students preferably in agribusiness firms takes place during the summer period and there is a high demand by students who apply. A small number of applications are satisfied due to funding limitations and the State should provide more funding to cover the demand. The Panel finds however the selection procedure to be unnecessarily cumbersome and strongly recommends that the Administration makes every effort to streamline this process.

Panel judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The Department should consider developing a support mechanism (e.g., tutorial courses) for incoming first year students with a low entrance score, to help them overcome their deficiencies and improve their learning experience
- Student advisors should make an effort to more closely monitor the progress of their assigned students so that they can identify any challenges they face early on, and facilitate a fruitful educational experience and completion of their degree in a timely manner
- The number of ECTS given to each course should be adjusted to better reflect the actual work load for each particular course (and not to simply allocate 6 ECTS to all courses)
- The Diploma Supplement (DS) should be provided to all graduates who request it along with their diploma as it is a valuable tool for the alumni
- Efforts should be made to enhance the mobility of faculty and students through the Erasmus program by better promoting the program and by increasing the bilateral agreements with other EU Institutions
- Increase funding of, and streamline the process of student selection for practical training so that more students can take advantage of this valuable opportunity

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 Program compliance

The Department's processes for the hiring of new faculty and the promotion of existing ones are, for the most part, fair, reasonable and consistent with best practices and the rules and regulations of the University of Patras and the Ministry of Education.

The loss of a significant number of faculty members to retirement and resignation/transfer to other Universities has reduced the number of permanent faculty members to nine (9) which, along with an (exogenously determined) increase in the number of incoming students, have resulted in an astounding (and utterly unacceptable) student to faculty ratio of over one hundred (>100)!

In addition to affecting the ability to advise and effectively interact with the student body, the significant reduction in the size of the faculty has important ramifications for the research activities and output of the Unit as well as the teaching and administrative load of the remaining faculty members.

Despite these challenges, students we interacted with were very complimentary of the faculty and satisfied by the access to, and advising from them. Students were also satisfied by the opportunity to evaluate their instructors on a regular basis but appeared unable to explain their reduced participation in the evaluation process after the introduction of/transition to the electronic evaluation system (which streamlines the process significantly). It is important to note that the reduced student participation in faculty evaluation renders the value of and inference from the responses questionable, at best.

The desire to evaluate the teaching ability of job candidates/potential colleagues is appropriate and commendable. However, the request of teaching evaluations from current employers is against best practices and violates the confidentiality that many candidates desire at this stage of the hiring process. Similarly questionable (and surprising) is the exclusion of the faculty present at the teaching seminars from the evaluation of these seminars. While the comments of students can provide useful insights, the inclusion of comments of all those attending the teaching seminar could only enhance the quality of this evaluation process.

On the teaching seminar of job candidates, the Panel finds that informing the candidate of the topic only 5 days in advance counterintuitive (how many instructors have to actually prepare a lecture in five days or less?) and feels strongly that the lecture should be consistent with the position description (rather than the general program of studies).

Regarding the mobility of the faculty, the Department appears to promote and encourage faculty mobility through participation in the Erasmus+ program. Faculty mobility could (and should) be further encouraged through an expansion of the list of collaborating Departments and enhanced opportunities for faculty participation.

The Panel was unable to assess the current state of the Department’s seminar series through the information provided by the Unit and that contained in its website, and strongly encourages and supports the Department’s stated desire to strengthen its seminar series.

Finally, regarding the research activities of the Department, we note that, despite the significant reduction in the number of faculty members noted earlier, this remains a very productive Department. Unsurprisingly, the research output has been affected by the recent faculty losses and can be expected to be further diminished in the future. While adjunct faculty can (and in the case of this Department) do compensate for lost permanent faculty on the teaching side of the program, such compensation is less likely to occur on the research side of it. In this context, the hiring of permanent faculty is deemed essential for the continued productivity and research relevance of the Department.

Panel judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The Panel encourages and supports the Department’s efforts to increase the number of its permanent faculty members as a means of enhancing the breadth and depth of its research and advising activities and reduce the unacceptably high student to faculty ratio

- The Panel also supports the teaching seminars by job candidates but suggests that (a) previous teaching evaluations are requested from the candidates (and not their employers), (b) all those attending the seminar are given the opportunity to evaluate the teaching abilities of the candidate, and (c) the seminar is consistent with the description of the position the candidate applies for
- Faculty development should be facilitated through increased participation in faculty mobility programs (like Erasmus) and Departmental seminars by distinguished colleagues invited to visit the Department and encouraged to interact with faculty and students
- The Department should better inform students about the merits of the evaluation process through the course questionnaires and provide incentives for the increased student participation in this process

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 Program compliance

The Panel finds the existing infrastructure as it pertains to buildings, classrooms, offices, library, laboratories and equipment adequate but increasingly marginal so due to the increased number of incoming students. Visited infrastructure was found clean and very well maintained. The Department's efforts to continuously update its equipment is commendable and necessary for facilitating the effectiveness of the educational process.

Necessary is also the continuous adaptation to the new realities of the Departmental library with an increased focus on purely electronic versions of books and journals.

Our Panel was pleased with the Department's efforts to keep the students informed about the services available to them and the various activities taking place in or/and sponsored by the Department. Even though the Department lacks an on-campus dining service, the Panel was pleased with the Department's provision of meals for its students in an off campus facility.

The lack of student dormitories for low income students continues to be a major deficiency and an obstacle to the Department's efforts to support its students.

Panel judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The current trend on the number of incoming students has been testing the limits of the Department's existing capacity and infrastructure. To the extent that this trend continues (i.e., the number of students continues to increase), the Department needs to adjust its resources (both material and human) accordingly
- Continue pursuing government funding for the development of student dormitories



Principle 7: Information Management

INSTITUTIONS BEAR FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR COLLECTING, ANALYSING AND USING INFORMATION, AIMED AT THE EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT OF UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS 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 programs 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 program(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 Program compliance

The needs of the Department's analysis and use of information, both academic and administrative, are served by the University of Patras' computerized information system with which the Department is seamlessly integrated. All system users who supply their own input data or inquire information obtain access to the system via assigned passwords based on predetermined security levels.

The Panel was impressed by the capabilities and flexibility of the information system which is the Enterprise Resource Planning system supplied by the SAP company. Personnel associated with the information system has trained Departmental personnel in the input, processing and analysis of the Departmental data and provides continuing support in the design and generation of reports by this system. The information system is also serving the Departmental needs for managing and monitoring the quality of the undergraduate program through its ability to provide a great number of indicators and custom formatted

reports on many areas of activity. Departmental users, can initiate different types of inquiries including but not limited to student population profiles, student progression, student program satisfaction, career paths and inventory of graduates, student evaluation forms, faculty profiles and career progress, and Erasmus mobility.

A brief presentation demonstrated the system’s capabilities as they relate to the Departmental processing needs. It was very convincing of the breadth and depth of output information analysis as well as associated graphical display and report generating capabilities. Moreover, the inquiry flexibility provided by the system was impressive. In fact, all metrics and tables included in the Department’s accreditation proposal were generated by the system. Thus, it was concluded that the system has enhanced the information processing efficiency and capabilities of the Department, conferring significant savings in personnel resources.

Panel judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- Continue utilizing the impressive ERP system and its future forms

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 programs 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 Program compliance

DEAPT is to be appraised for the key information that has made available on its website in both Greek and English, regarding the Department itself, the levels of the studies offered, the research, the activities and services to students. Information about staff with their CVs and online (e-class) courses is also available.

In some areas, the information provided needs to be updated, however, and more accurately described.

Useful information is also provided through various publications and the Departmental website that communicate the activities and achievements of the Department.

Panel judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The website of DEAPT needs to be updated and current, and the information provided needs to be improved, both in the Greek and English versions

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

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE IN PLACE AN INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM FOR THE AUDIT AND ANNUAL INTERNAL REVIEW OF THEIR PROGRAMS, 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 programs 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 program in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the program 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 program;*
- *the learning environment, support services and their fitness for purpose for the program*

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

Study Program compliance

The study program committee submits the suggested revisions based on recommendations from students' questionnaires, stakeholders and alumni to the Assembly of the Department for approval. The approved revisions are then forwarded to the MODIP and the Directorate of Education and Research for further processing and approval. The final approval is granted by the Senate of the University.

The Panel recognized that all staff members were very well aware of the process and willing to contribute to the improvement of the quality of the Department. This quality control mechanism is vital for the quality of the Department and is a procedure that will be required for the future accreditation of this program.

The stakeholders that met with the Panel seemed very enthusiastic in actively cooperating to assist and support the development of the Department.

Panel judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The Department should embrace and bolster the relationship with its stakeholders and alumni through formal communication mechanisms and social and professional functions that will foster the exchange of information and ideas for the improvement of the Department
- Develop a database with current information on the alumni and stakeholders of the Department

Principle 10: Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programs

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

HQA is responsible for administrating the program accreditation process which is realised as an external evaluation procedure, and implemented by a committee of independent experts. HQA grants accreditation of programs, with a specific term of validity, following to which revision is required. The accreditation of the quality of the programs acts as a means of verification of the compliance of the program 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 Program compliance

The Panel commends and applauds the Department's responsiveness to some key comments and suggestions of the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) of 2014, like the restructuring of the Curriculum to include a smaller number of more relevant and modern courses, the increased use of term papers and assignments, and the introduction of student fees for the MBA program.

The Panel suggests the increase in the number of elective courses in the program of studies (currently only 5 out of 45 courses are elective) in lieu of compulsory ones, the number of students participating in a practical training/internship, the number of students participating in Erasmus as well as the establishment of pre-requisites suggested by the EEC of 2014. In the light of the reduction in the number of permanent faculty members, the Department might also want to reconsider the EEC's suggestion to encourage the (distant) student participation in appropriate courses offered by sister Departments at the University of Patras (and elsewhere).

Panel judgement

Principle 10: Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programs	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

See part on **Study Program compliance** above.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

Features of Good Practice

- Willingness and desire to change and improve demonstrated by the Department's response to the comments and suggestions of their 2014 external evaluation.
- Updated and modernized Curriculum.
- Focus on an area of continuously increasing relevance and significance for the region and the country. Student exposure to food technology, plant sciences, and the economics of the agri-food system constitutes a key differentiating attribute (and an advantage) of graduates with an interest in agribusiness administration.
- Satisfactory research productivity of existing faculty members.
- Strong relationship and communication with students.
- Strong relationship with local community and stakeholders.

Areas of Weakness

- Significant reduction in the number of permanent faculty members leading to a very high student to faculty ratio and reduced research output of the Department.
- Increased number of incoming students challenging the limits of the existing infrastructure.
- Low student participation in course evaluations.
- Low student grades that, to the degree they are reflective of the student performance, can raise concerns about the average quality of the Department's graduates.
- Lack of student dormitories.
- Structure of teaching seminars by new faculty position candidates.
- While the program of studies reflects a strong undergraduate program in agribusiness administration, the program is not a graduate one – the "Integrated Master" title does not reflect the true nature of this program.

Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

- An increase in the number of permanent faculty is essential for the Department's ability to properly serve its research and teaching missions.
- Limit number of incoming students or expand material and human infrastructure.
- Inform students of the importance of their course evaluations and provide incentives for their increased participation in this process.
- Develop support systems that could facilitate the academic growth and development of weaker students entering the program.

- Continue pursuing government funding for the development of student dormitories and other facilities as needed.
- Restructure the teaching seminar by job candidates by (a) requesting previous teaching evaluations from the candidates themselves, and (b) receiving feedback on the candidates' teaching abilities by all those attending their presentations.
- Revise the title of the program of studies to better reflect its undergraduate nature.

Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are:

Principle 7: Information Management

Principle 9: On-going monitoring and Periodic Internal Review of Programs

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are:

Principle 1: Academic Unit Policy for Quality Assurance

Principle 2: Design and Approval of Programs

Principle 3: Student – centered Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Principle 5: Teaching Staff

Principle 8: Public Information

Principle 10: Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programs

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are:

Principle 4: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification

Principle 6: Learning Resources and Student Support

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are:

NONE

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

The members of the Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname

Signature

- 1. PROF EMERITUS IOANNIS VLAHOS**
- 2. PROF KONSTANTINOS GIANNAKAS**
- 3. PROF EMERITUS SPYROS ECONOMIDES**