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ΑΡΧΗ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ
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HELLENIC REPUBLIC

HQA

HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE
AND ACCREDITATION AGENCY

Accreditation Report
for the Undergraduate Study Programme of:
Economics

Institution: University of Patras

Date: 23/6/2019

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Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση
Ευρωπαϊκό Κοινωνικό Ταμείο

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



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION
FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Report of the Panel appointed by the HQA to undertake the review of the Undergraduate Study Programme of **Economics** 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 Study Programme of **Economics** 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 Michael S. Michael (Chair)
University of Cyprus
2. Docent Jannis Angelis
KTH Royal Institute of Technology
3. Kyriakos Neanidis
University of Manchester

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

The panel members arrived in Athens on Monday the 17th of June. On Tuesday morning, they met at the HQA office. After an official briefing on the procedures and requirements, the panel members departed for the University of Patras.

On the morning of Wednesday 19th the panel had its first meeting with the Vice-Rector, Professor Nikos Karamanos, Head of Department, Professor Michael Demoussis as well as members of the University of Patras Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP) and the Department of Economics (DoE) Quality Assurance Unit (QAU). This was followed by a meeting with faculty members of the Department of Economics. The Panel was briefed on the Department's structure and organization. During the meeting several documents were presented and delivered to the Panel members concerning the curriculum, teaching methods and research activities. Further meetings with Department faculty covered various teaching and research issues related to the programme as well as the on-goings of the Department.

In the afternoon, meetings with students, without the presence of Departmental staff, allowed for capture of student experiences, and provided worthwhile insights. The students were open and frank about their experiences and views, and overall very positive. The panel also met with former students as representatives of the alumni of the DoE. They similarly provided noteworthy insights, and compared their experiences at the DoE in relation to other institutions they have attended. Again, the common view of the DoE and of their studies there was very favourable although they also identified some areas for improvement.

The second day started with a Campus tour in which the Panel met the administrative and technical staff, and visited the DoE's buildings and installations such as classrooms, lecture halls, the computer lab and study room. Central facilities of the university, that the DoE students have access to, were also visited, and administrative staff there provided useful information of how the facilities are being used in practice. Overall, this gave a positive view of the resources available to the DoE students. Later in the same day, the Panel members met again with the DoE staff, MODIP and QAU members, where needed clarifications and further queries were addressed.

All meetings with academic, administrative and technical staff, undergraduate and postgraduate students, were very useful and informative. All meetings were conducted in a very respectful and constructive manner, and all Panel questions were answered openly and without avoiding any issues. The Panel was also provided with detailed and comprehensive documentation as part of the accreditation process. For all these things, the university members should be commended. Everyone the Panel met with was extremely helpful and all seemed to understand and accept the principles, objectives and demands of the external accreditation process (see Appendix I).

III. Study Programme Profile

The DoE offers an undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral programme. The Undergraduate programme leads to a Bachelor Degree in Economic Science. The postgraduate (Master Degree) programme offers an MSc in Applied Economics and Data Analytics. There is a large number of undergraduate students in the DoE (approx. 1400), especially when compared to the number of faculty (18). Currently the DoE is dispersed among several adjoining buildings, but the current development of a new building will allow for re-location to one site. This will be both a significant and a positive contribution to the DoE.

The scope of the undergraduate programme is to provide a general economics curriculum, taking into account the standards of similar programmes in Europe and North America. The DoE provides a four-year single subject degree programme, grounded in economic theory (micro and macro), quantitative methods (mathematics, statistics and econometrics) and applied economic subjects. The curriculum was significantly revised in 2004 and 2016, and is continuously undergoing minor revisions and improvements. It is under ongoing monitoring from a five-member Committee (QAU), including one student. Proposals for changes and adaptations are discussed yearly during formal staff meetings.

There are 38 required courses for the completion of the Bachelor Degree. Among these courses 20 are compulsory and 16 are electives. Most courses carry the same load, corresponding to 6 ECTS units. Of the compulsory courses, 10 are considered as core courses and are given 8 ECTS. To be awarded a Bachelor Degree in Economic Science a student must obtain 240 ECTS units. There is also a requirement of 2 courses in English, each with 2 ECTS units. The curriculum is organized in 8 semesters. Each semester lasts 12-13 weeks. All courses have three teaching hours per week except the core courses which all have four weekly hours. The workload in terms of readings, assessments, etc, for equivalent ECTS units is rather uniform across the various courses.

There are also quite a few elective courses available to the students, primarily for the 3rd and 4th year of study. These electives are not accumulative in terms of knowledge requirements, but mainly function as independent courses with a narrow rather than broad scope. Hence, they can be part of a thematic grouping for the individual student choosing given electives, but they are not designed as such.

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

The DoE at the University of Patras has established a Quality Assurance Policy (QAP) for its undergraduate programme that is appropriate for the programme. It includes a commitment to satisfy all applicable requirements and a commitment to continuous improvement. The QAP represents a core document in the functioning of the DoE and is clearly communicated to all involved parties. It documents a set of goals that are specific, measurable, achievable and relevant in respect of teaching methods and delivery, student satisfaction and learning outcomes.

Continuous improvement is promoted through a process of several steps, which covers targeting clear objectives, achieving the set objectives, evaluating the outcomes, and reflecting on these outcomes and adjusting the set objectives.

The DoE commits itself to put into practice quality procedures that demonstrate all above items (a)-(i). These are clearly documented in the QAP and there is an ongoing process of revision.

Panel judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

At this stage, the Panel would encourage the DoE to adopt a mechanism that further improves upon the assessment of the quality and effectiveness of teaching, as stated under item (c). One proposal is to develop a peer-review system for supporting tenured academic staff who obtain low student evaluation scores for a continuous period of 2-3 years, and more frequently for non-tenured staff (possibly every year). Such peer-review committee will be composed of senior members of the DoE academic staff (and possibly a School staff member), who will be assessing the quality of teaching delivery. This will give the opportunity for the dissemination of good teaching practices and the improvement of student learning. At the same time, it will provide academic staff with support in developing and sharpening their teaching skills.

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

The Panel finds that the study programme is designed based on appropriate standards and reflects common practices in the design of undergraduate study programmes in Economics around the world. Hence, the DoE programme curriculum is comparable to universally accepted standards in the discipline.

The structure of the undergraduate programme is rational and clearly articulated in the documentation, and there are regulations in place for periodic revisions of the curriculum that take into account the views of current students and graduates. However, the Panel has noticed several issues, referred to as recommendations below.

Panel judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

To successfully complete the undergraduate programme a student has to take 38 courses (20 compulsory, 16 elective, and 2 English language courses) for a total of 240 ECTS. The current structure corresponds to a reduced number of courses, by 3, following a recommendation of the DoE's external evaluation in 2015. This change is in the right direction, but there are 3 further items we recommend for consideration and adoption by the DoE.

First, the undergraduate programme does not currently have a dissertation in its curriculum. We would recommend a dissertation to be incorporated into the programme curriculum as elective, in the first stage, and subsequently be made compulsory, with an appropriate number of ECTS. This recommendation also reflects the will of the students the Panel met, who have made a similar request to the DoE (which currently is under deliberation).

Second, from the courses offered as electives in the study programme, a maximum number of 6 can be taken from the Department of Business Administration. This is welcome as it offers students the opportunity to be exposed to courses outside of the DoE. We would further encourage this practice and recommend students are allowed to choose elective courses from other relevant fields of study (such as the Department of Mathematics, Department of Computer Engineering and Informatics, and even the Department of Education Science and the Department of Philosophy) so as to further promote academic knowledge and student preparation for job placements and/or further studies.

Third, quantitative courses (e.g., Mathematics, Statistics, and Econometrics) represent an integral part of any undergraduate Economics curriculum. This is reflected in the programme curriculum of the DoE which offers a total mix of 11 core and elective such courses. However, there is a segmentation of those offerings with none of them being offered in the second year of study. It is important that this gap is closed and at least one quantitative course is offered in the second year of study. The addition of further quantitative courses was identified as important in both the meetings with the DoE's graduates and with stakeholders. To minimize resource implications, a possible solution is to allow the outsourcing of these courses to the already existing such courses, for instance, given by the Department of Mathematics.

All above recommendations will help students develop valuable skills (e.g., writing, presentation, quantitative), which are highly valued by employers and higher education institutions, the latter which is important for students that seek to pursue further studies.

The Panel also notes an issue brought about by stakeholders is the further development of the English language of the students, who currently only need to complete 2 such courses as part of the programme of study. The improvement of the students' English proficiency could be facilitated either with the introduction of new English courses, or the beefing up of the already existing courses. A complementary avenue would be to encourage students to choose from the elective courses that are already offered in English for the students in the Erasmus exchange programme.

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

Overall the Panel finds the programme is largely compliant with this principle. In particular, there is sufficient flexibility in course electives for the students. All courses, core and elective, are evaluated by the students taking them. Surveys covering the evaluation of the whole programme are also conducted upon graduation. All these considerations provide useful feedback to the DoE on student perceptions as well as performance. Also, there is extensive use of online access to course material via e-class. The e-class system provides students with early and timely access to course material and supports significant flexibility for the student in their preparations for each course, further strengthening the learning environment.

Staff members are very welcoming and open to interactions with current and former students, as stated by all students met by the Panel. There is a student-faculty body dealing with student matters related to teaching and learning. Any complaints can be raised through the student representatives. It seems that this body functions well in terms of quickly addressing any issues students may have.

Regulations at Department and University level ensure that course delivery and examination take into account student mitigation circumstances, e.g., family events and illness, as well as continuous circumstances such as learning disabilities. However, some issues were noted by the Panel as described below.

Panel judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The Panel has two recommendations for consideration for further improving the student learning conditions.

First, there is a number of courses, which offer a voluntary assessment in addition to their existing course examination. However, this added feedback and the benefits it provides should be given to all students by making the additional assessment compulsory. Further, such additional assessments should be adopted by more courses. This will ensure an equitable treatment of students by forcing all students to sit the same number of assessments. Such required assessment follows the recommendation made for principle 2 earlier.

Second, the function of e-class is commendable, but it could be put to greater use. For instance, some courses are podcasted online, but not all. Hence, there is scope for expanding on this practice and include more courses, and possibly make them available to past graduates as a form of continuous learning.

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

For compliance with Principle 4, the Panel found that the DoE has developed and applies published regulations that cover all aspects and stages of undergraduate studies. In particular, four aspects are noted:

First, the DoE recognises the internship completed by students by rewarding them 3 ECTS. Participating students are given a record of their successful completion of this in the Diploma Supplement.

Second, the DoE provides a certificate of student progression and performance both in Greek and English. This covers courses taken, grades, ECTS per course and other such student specific information. This is helpful for students applying for further studies or work opportunities in Greece as well as abroad.

Third, students that participate in the ERASMUS exchange programme have their courses taken at the host institution recognized by the DoE as equivalent to the home courses in terms of grades and allocated ECTS credits.

Fourth, for the internship, the DoE seeks and obtains feedback from the employers on the individual student's performance (about 50 students annually) as well as the students providing evaluation of the employers. This helps over time to create a mutually beneficial experience for the students and the employers alike, and allows for improvements of the internship programme.

Panel judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

While the Panel finds the DoE being fully compliant with Principle 4, it may be useful for promoting student achievement to create some form of student awards, for instance based on exceptional performance of a student's examination results for each cohort.

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

For compliance with Principle 5, the Panel has noted several points. On faculty recruitment, there are clear, transparent and fair processes in place. For instance, the recruited candidates are required to provide a certificate of adequacy of teaching and/or a summary of teaching evaluation scores from the institutions they have been teaching. In the absence of any of these, the DoE requires candidates to give a lecture in front of students and staff as part of the interviewing process.

On professional development of the faculty, there is both research leave and training for teaching available for all staff. Staff may apply for a research leave (Sabbatical) for up to six months for every three years of service, which can be accumulative. For teaching training, there is a dedicated centre for teaching and learning at University level that offers specialized seminars and workshops with the objective of improving the teaching skills of teaching staff at all levels and employment contracts.

The DoE's use of the ABS journal ranking list with set requirements provides clear and fair criteria for research assessment and promotion. The Panel notes that the DoE gives staff the opportunity to teach in their respective specialized areas of expertise, and in this way provides a strong link between research and teaching. The staff are also given equal chances to develop by being allocated the same number of courses and teaching workload.

To attract competent and high quality candidates for opened positions, the DoE advertises job openings through traditional channels of the discipline, such as the Job Opening for Economists (JOE).

Panel judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The Panel has noted that the available funds for research are insufficient. This limits staff development as well as reduces research output and results dissemination.

For further professional development, the DoE should consider having a publicly shared seminar series on the Departmental website which should be updated regularly. Similarly, ongoing research by staff members should be made available online (e.g., working paper series) to enhance readership and discussion.

The Panel notes the School's good practice to award a Prize for the best research output of the year. It would be further beneficial for the DoE to instigate an award for its best Graduate Teaching Assistant, based on course evaluations and teaching performance. This would further promote recognition to teaching excellence.

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

The Panel has noted that available facilities are sufficient for those students regularly attending lectures and seminars. However, if all registered students were to attend, it would be difficult to cater for everybody. This issue should be addressed in the new building under construction. The teaching facilities in use are equipped with all necessary technology and tools.

Administrative staff are qualified to support students and are highly dedicated in catering to them, as noted by the Panel during meetings with them, and also stated by current and former students alike.

The students are supported by the friendly environment and open door policy at the DoE and are encouraged to meet regularly with the staff. This is facilitated by the regular presence of the faculty, a point also emphasized by current and former students.

Panel judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The Panel has two recommendations for this principle.

First, there is a lack of a formal academic advisor scheme where students are allocated to a member of staff who acts as advisor for academic matters. Currently students seeking such advise have easy access to it, but a more structured and formal approach may be beneficial to less forthcoming students.

Second, the existing Careers Office at the University level is a good way to link the university (students) with employers. However, in the discussion with employers and former students it was noted that there is a need for more student interaction with employers and targeted career advise better suited for economists.

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

The Panel wishes to commend the DoE for using multiple sources of feedback, from students, graduates and employers, in regard to the achieved Intended Learning Outcomes of the programme. There is a wealth of data that the DoE analyses for incoming students and their progression throughout the programme, such as tracking failure rates for individual courses, and graduation and degree grades.

The provision of a life-long email account to all students is similarly commendable, which may provide benefits to the students, the graduates and the DoE. For instance, the development of an alumni base linking past students with new graduates enables the data collection of former students and their current profiles.

Panel judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The Panel notes that the information management in place collects data from graduating students on their learning experience and from employers on the quality of interns. It is advisable that the information provided from these feedback sources is used to adjust and update the programme curriculum.

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

The Panel found that the publicly available information is up to date, easily found on the departmental website, and that the course information is detailed. For example, course requirements, examination forms, and syllabi are readily available. The website also includes offered courses and their learning outcomes. The DoE even offers openly available courses to the public, as well as allowing people from the general public interested to attend a particular lecture or course.

Panel judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

While the Panel finds this Principle fully compliant, one area that can be developed further is for all staff to have updated profiles. Staff webpages should include more extensive information on their individual current and ongoing research interests, including any working papers. This would make faculty matching easier with other researchers, and for the future with students that opt doing an undergraduate dissertation.

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

There is a self-assessment procedure in the DoE that takes place annually. The outcomes of this procedure are conducted by the QAU in the DoE and shared with the DoE members and MODIP. The Panel noted that the undergraduate programme has changed in recent years following the recommendations of the last external evaluation review, and due to the latest trends in the discipline, and these are in line with those in Economics Departments of other Institutions. Typically, there is ongoing monitoring of the learning environment and support services. Whenever the need arises, the DoE takes appropriate steps for its improvement.

Panel judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

While the QAU functions well, the Panel recommends that the learning exchanges at the University level are retained and expanded for further learning opportunities.

Principle 10: Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programmes

PROGRAMMES 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 programme accreditation process which is realised as an external evaluation procedure, and implemented by a committee of independent experts. HQA 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

There is an ongoing process of external evaluation of the undergraduate programme, with a first evaluation having taken place in 2015. For this accreditation, the Panel finds that the DoE, the QAU and the MODIP were extremely helpful in clarifying various aspects, and openly discussing areas without hesitation that they themselves found in need of attention. They have been very active in implementing all feasible actions recommended by the evaluation, the outcomes of which are clearly visible in the improvements made to the programme and its underlying processes.

During the Panel's site visit, the staff (academic as well as administrative) was readily available, indicating their awareness of the importance of the accreditation for the ongoing improvement of their services. Given the DoE's response to our presence, the Panel is certain that the DoE will carefully reflect and respond to the recommendations found in this report.

Panel judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The Panel finds the DoE fully compliant with Principle 10 and encourages the continuation of the external evaluation procedure as a way to further improve the study programme.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

The Panel found evidence of good practice in several areas at the DoE about the study programme. The policies for quality assurance are in place and well entrenched among staff and administrators. Student learning is emphasized with sufficient resources made available. Care is taken to ensure that student performance is tracked and recognized in a systematic manner. The underlying support in terms of information systems and management is in place and functions well. Collegiality in the DoE is also strong, both in terms of research and teaching activities.

II. Areas of Weakness

The Panel noted a few areas of weakness that should be given further attention. First, increased student numbers are putting pressure on existing facilities. The new DoE building will have a pivotal role in alleviating this pressure. Second, the increased student numbers also put a strain on the available teaching resources which need addressing by reducing the student-staff ratio. Third, the limited available state research funding adversely affects all aspects of teaching, research and faculty development. Hence, this also needs to be addressed.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

1. Develop a peer-review system for supporting academic staff that assesses the quality of teaching delivery. This will support good teaching practices and the improvement of student learning, and support academic staff in sharpening their teaching skills.
2. Reduce the student-staff ratio. This can be achieved by a reduced student annual intake and/or the hiring of more teaching staff.
3. All courses that have an additional component of assessment beyond the final exam, should have that component made compulsory to all students. Further, such additional assessments should be adopted by more courses.
4. The undergraduate program should incorporate a dissertation, at least initially as elective and subsequently as compulsory, with an appropriate number of ECTS.
5. The program should contain more elective courses, if needed drawn from other Departments. In addition, at least one quantitative course should be offered in the second year of study.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

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

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: 2, 3

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	

APPENDIX I – VISIT SCHEDULE

19 June 2019		
09:30 - 10:00	Meeting with Vice-Rector/President of MODIP & Head of Department	Welcome meeting - Short overview of the Undergraduate Programme (history, academic profile) current status, strengths and possible areas of concern
10:15 - 12:15	Meeting with OMEA & MODIP	Discuss the degree of compliance of the Undergraduate Programme to the Standards for Quality Accreditation - Review of students assignments, thesis, exam papers & examination material
12:30 - 13:15	Meeting with teaching staff members	Discuss professional development opportunities, mobility, workload, evaluation by students; competence and adequacy of the teaching staff to ensure learning outcomes; link between teaching and research; teaching staff's involvement in applied research, projects and research activities directly related to the programme; possible areas of weakness
13:15 - 14:15	AP members only	Reflect upon impressions of meetings and complete information where necessary
14:30 - 15:15	Meeting with students	Students satisfaction from their study experience and Department/Institution facilities; student input in quality assurance; priority issues concerning student life and welfare
15:30 - 16:15	Meeting with graduates	Discuss their experience of studying at the Department and their career path
16:30 - 17:15	Meeting with employers, social partners	Discuss relations of the Department with external stakeholders from the private and the public sector
20 June 2019		
09:30 - 10:30	Visiting classrooms, lecture halls, libraries, other facilities (computer rooms, libraries, etc.)	Evaluate facilities and learning resources to ascertain that the learning materials, equipment and facilities are adequate to ensure a successful provision of the programme
10:45 - 11:15	Debriefing meeting	Discuss on the outcomes of the visit and begin drafting the oral report
11:15 - 11:45	Meeting with OMEA & MODIP	Discuss on several points/findings which need further clarification
11:45 - 12:00	Closure meeting with the Vice-Rector/President of MODIP, Head of Department, OMEA & MODIP	Informal presentation of the AP key findings

**The members of the Accreditation Panel
for the UGP Economics of the
University of Patras**

Name and Surname

Signature

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Assoc. Prof. Jannis Angelis,
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