



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ

HELLENIC REPUBLIC

**Α.ΔΙ.Π.**

**H.Q.A.A.**

ΑΡΧΗ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ

HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY

ΑΝΩΤΑΤΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ

FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

## **EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT**

**NATIONAL SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

**JUNE 2011**

### **External Evaluation Committee**

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the National School of Public Health (NSPH) in Athens consisted of the following three (3) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by the HQAA in accordance with Law 3374/2005:

1. Tryfon Beazoglou University of Connecticut, USA (President)
2. Dr. Georgios Tsakos, University College London, UK
3. Dr. Nicandros Bouras, Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London

***N.B.** The structure of the “Template” proposed for the External Evaluation Report mirrors the requirements of Law 3374/2005 and corresponds overall to the structure of the Internal Evaluation Report submitted by the Department.*

*The length of text in each box is free. Questions included in each box are not exclusive nor should they always be answered separately; they are meant to provide a general outline of matters that should be addressed by the Committee when formulating its comments.*

## **Introduction**

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) visited the National School of Public Health (NSPH) in Athens from Monday 13<sup>th</sup> to Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2011. The members of the EEC had been provided with the Internal Evaluation report and the “Guides of Studies” prior to the visit and had the opportunity to consider them. The EEC was also briefed in Athens by the Member of ADIP, Professor Achilleas Gravanis, prior to the visit.

The EEC met on the 13<sup>th</sup> June with the Dean of the NSPH, Professor Yanis Kyriopoulos, the Vice-Dean Professor Anastasia Roumelioti, Professor Tzeni Kremastinou, who oversaw the process of internal evaluation of the NSPH, and the members of the OMEA, Professor Alkiviadis Vatopoulos, Elpida Pavi, Vassiliki Papanikolaou, Georgios Dounias, Dimitrios Laggas and Ioanna Markopoulou, representative of the administrative staff. The EEC attended an informative presentation session by the Dean of NSPH Professor Yannis Kyriopoulos, and members of the OMEA

During the visit, the EEC met with students, teaching, research and administrative staff at the NSPH, which also provided the EEC with additional information as requested.

On Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> June the EEC met:

- a) with a group of five (5) students (selected by the NSPH due to timing of the visit during the exam period),
- b) teaching and research members of the NSPH faculty
- c) administrative staff

The students were very positive and enthusiastic with the external evaluation process and spoke openly.

All teaching and research members of NSPH faculty were very eager and enthusiastic to participate in the external evaluation process and impressed the EEC with their openness, commitment and comments.

Facilities visited included:

Teaching theatres, laboratories, library, administration and other areas

The EEC found the internal evaluation report and associated relevant documentation very informative and essential for understanding the functions and components of the NSPH. Though the internal evaluation report was produced in 2009 the EEC received plenty of additional update information and felt that the objectives of the internal evaluation process were met. The EEC expresses its gratitude to Professor Kyriopoulos and all members of OMEA for putting together such an extensive documentation.

The EEC was very pleased with the very warm welcome and the serious commitment of all to the process of evaluation and is very grateful for their cooperation and collaboration.

## **A. Curriculum**

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

The National School of Public Health (NSPH) offers postgraduate education and training to a wide variety of graduates through the following postgraduate programs (PG):

- PG in Health Services Management
- PG in Public Health
- PG in Applied Public Health

It also offers two specialized training programs (STP):

- STP in Theoretical Aspects of Occupational Health (duration: 1year)
- STP in Epidemiology, Statistics and Research Methodology for General Practice Specialty (duration: 1 month)

This section will cover these programs separately and also briefly comment on the training and professional development of NSPH academic staff, as this is also part of the School's mission and curriculum.

### **PG in Health Services Management**

#### **Approach**

The main aim of the curriculum is to provide academic knowledge and develop skills in health services management and health economics so that graduates can be employed in the public and private health sector or continue in the research field. The program is offered on a full-time (1 year) or part-time (2 years) basis. An additional year is allowed for both for writing up the dissertation. The full time course is open to all graduates and the part time focuses exclusively on health care personnel already employed in the public sector, Full-time students tend to be younger with better academic skills and prospects, while part-time students are usually older and with career motives. In terms of curriculum, the two programs are identical; though they differ in teaching structure and characteristics.

The aims of the current program and the overall approach of the curriculum have been informed by an earlier external evaluation by the European Health Management Association (EHMA) and a more recent NSPH internal evaluation process. The EHMA evaluation highlighted the potential of the program and identified a number of areas that needed to be improved. The thorough internal evaluation process that followed attempted primarily to address the concerns raised in the EHMA report through staff workshops in relation to the course content. These workshops considered the students' evaluations of the program and internal benchmarking with very reputable international MSc courses in the field. This is an excellent practice that should take place on a periodic basis and should also involve student representatives in the final formulation of the curriculum.

#### **Implementation**

Having taken into consideration the EHMA review, the current NSPH curriculum has been revised in terms of:

- Emphasis on management modules (both quantitatively and qualitatively)
- Detailed outline of modules in order to facilitate better interaction and eliminate overlap
- Orientation day and preparation seminar in the beginning of each academic

year

- Increase in practical experience and problem-solving teaching
- Dissertation guidance, in order to fulfill minimum requirements and encourage publication

The program is well staffed by the existing NSPH staff and the invitation of external lectures. It is sufficiently attended by students and the drop-out rate is reasonable. Furthermore, the students that we had the opportunity to meet voiced their appreciation of the effort of the academic staff and spoke very positively. The EEC found the program to be coherent, functional, well-structured and resourced and fulfilling the expected requirements. However, on-going evaluation for consolidation and further improvement of the program is necessary.

### **Results - Recommendations**

The EEC identified the following areas that need to be considered:

- A shift in the balance towards the full-time program, as opposed to the part-time, would result in a more research-oriented student population. This may be critical in terms of recruitment of doctorate students, provided that the current legal and organizational barriers will be overcome
- Further rethink of the directed teaching workload with potential introduction of placements in the management structures of public and private health care organizations
- Introduction of modules on:
  - 1) Health Services Research (by creating a coherent module using also parts of the existing modules on “Research methods of social sciences”, “Epidemiology as applied in health services”, and “Statistics as applied in health services”)
  - 2) Critical Appraisal of Literature (by strengthening and further building on the relevant sessions in the existing module “Evidence and assessment in health and health services”)
- Re-think of the relative weight of the different modules, particularly in terms of increasing the importance of the dissertation

### **Improvement**

The evaluation of the curriculum performance is embedded in the existing processes; therefore there are structures available to inform the implementation of

suggested improvements. The course committee plans to move towards strong links with international institutions in the field and potential internationalization of the student population by also offering the course in English language. Setting specific targets and deadlines in that respect would facilitate this process.

## **PG in Public Health**

### **Approach**

The curriculum places emphasis in “New Public Health” and aims to cover in depth and in a multidisciplinary fashion the knowledge and skills required in order to deal effectively with the public health challenges locally and globally. This program is, also, offered on a full-time (1 year) or part-time (2 years) basis, with the same student and teaching characteristics as mentioned for the PG in Health Services Management. Furthermore, the program is structured in 3 different directions:

- I - Public Health Personnel / Workers (with around 20-25 students yearly)
- II – Lifestyle and Behaviours – Health Promotion (with around 5 students yearly)
- III – Laboratory Public Health (with around 5 students yearly; 2010-11 is the first year this program runs)

The curriculum for the three directions is very similar in terms of the modules available but differs in the first degree of the graduates and there are also some differences in the number and composition of compulsory modules. The Public Health Personnel direction has only 2 compulsory modules and is considered relevant primarily for clinical and health related graduates while the second direction is intended for social and psychological sciences graduates and has more compulsory modules. Laboratory Public Health is a new direction running for the first year in 2010-11. The EEC noted that the different directions are distinguished primarily according to the discipline of the first degree of the graduate students rather than the specific course content where there are broad similarities with few differences.

The program has a multidisciplinary curriculum covering more traditional aspects of public health and also expanding into areas of the “new public health”. Its development seems to be a work-in-progress that has been enriched in an ad-hoc basis according to the interests and expertise of the core academic staff. The EEC understands that the process of external review of the curriculum by the Association of School of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER) has already been initiated. We consider this an encouraging and necessary first step in an on-going strategic planning process that will critically review the curriculum and revise it in a structured and formalized manner. The revised curriculum should adhere to international standards, have more balanced structure and complement the transition towards modern aspects of public health, further promote interconnection between disciplines and address the core public health competences.

## **Implementation**

The recent development of the curriculum has been characterized by a shift in the balance towards the introduction of modules and the teaching of concepts that are in line with the modern direction of public health. The current curriculum has a wide variation and the required multidisciplinary composition in terms of content coverage. In addition, it contains innovative modules (e.g. Bioethics, e-learning module on Migrant Health) not necessarily seen in other relevant courses. The program is well staffed by the existing NSPH staff and the invitation of external lectures. The program is well attended and the drop-out and success rates are similar to the PG in Health Services Management. The student interviewed provided very positive feedback during their meeting with the EEC.

The curriculum's coherence and functionality need to be reviewed taking into consideration internationally recognized trends in similar PG programs. Furthermore, it is important to review the structure of the program particularly in relation to the first direction that is rather loose having only two compulsory modules for all students. There seems to be a time lag in the modernization of the curriculum compared to the MSc in Health Services Management. The core academics were committed to the improvement of the program and receptive to these suggestions when they were brought up by the EEC.

## **Results - Recommendations**

The EEC welcomes the intention of the NSPH to seek external review of the program by ASPER and suggests embarking first on an internal critical review of the program and an informal evaluation by external international experts, before attempting the official evaluation and accreditation of the program by ASPHER. Without aiming to provide a comprehensive list, we identified the following issues that should be considered:

- A more coherent curriculum for the direction of the Public Health Personnel with the revision of the compulsory modules for all students. In this respect, the role of the Biostatistics module should be enhanced and it should be switched into a compulsory module.
- Short-term public health placements should be introduced for students (e.g., practicum). This is a very realistic target considering the excessive network and links of the academic staff and the NSPH with public health organizations in Greece.

- Introduction of new modules, such as:
  - 1) Research Methods (by restructuring and expanding on the existing module on “Research methods of social sciences”)
  - 2) Global Health
  - 3) Social Epidemiology
  - 4) Critical Appraisal of Literature (by strengthening and further building on the relevant sessions in the existing module “Evidence and assessment in health and health services “)
  - 5) Genetic Epidemiology
- Consolidate and strengthen the links with the Centre for Infectious Disease Control and Prevention (KEELPNO), in order to invest further in the third direction of the course (laboratory public health)
- Exploit the potential for collating and analyzing available public health data through student dissertations. This could also facilitate recruitment of high caliber doctorate candidates.
- Re-think of the relative weight of the different modules, particularly in terms of increasing the importance of the dissertation. It is worth noting that the MSc in Applied Public Health gives significantly higher relative weight to the dissertation.

### **Improvement**

The EEC remained with the impression that there is a genuine interest and emphasis in adapting the curriculum to international standards taking into account also the necessities of the national agenda. This should be implemented through a structured and continuous process and by further strengthening the international links of the curriculum. The fact that there are pockets of internationally recognized research activity within the academic staff could facilitate this process.

### **PG in Applied Public Health**

This program runs in collaboration between the NSPH and the Technological Educational Institute (TEI) of Athens. It is a self-funded program that covers the field of public health with an emphasis on applied technology. Therefore overlaps considerably in terms of content and teaching staff with the aforementioned PG program in Public Health. The EEC understands that the students of this program lack a public health background; therefore the curriculum focuses more on seminars

and practical exercises in order to help them achieve the required standards.  
Overall, the EEC found this program to be appropriately structured and coherent.

The feedback provided by the interviewed students was very positive. Most recommendations for the PG in Public Health also apply for this program including the suggested restructuring and critical appraisal of the PG in Public Health that provides an excellent opportunity for further improvement and harmonization of the PG in Applied Public Health as well.

### **Specialized Training Programs (STP)**

The specialized training program in Theoretical Aspects of Occupational Health aims to cover the theoretical knowledge and laboratory aspects of the training for specializing medical doctors in Occupational Health. It is an extensive specialist training programme of one out of four years duration covering a wide range of relevant subjects and practical experience mostly in case studies, based on national guidelines according to the Union Européenne des Médecins Spécialistes (UEMS) schedule. The EEC noted that the evaluation and feedback provided by the trainees was not equally positive as the feedback of the students of the PG programs. However, it is possible that this program is not methodologically directly comparable with the PG programs due to the different composition and career development of the participants. The EEC understands that there is limited flexibility of the NSPH to initiate major changes to the specialist training programme, as this is determined at a national level. The suggestions for improvement in this program made in the OMEA report, e.g. modernization of the curriculum and harmonization with EU standards as well as the more practical suggestion of keeping a logbook, are supported by the EEC.

In addition trainees in General Practice attend one-month training course in Epidemiology, Statistics and Research Methodology at the NSPH. This program is too short to cover the above mentioned topics comprehensively, both in theoretical knowledge and practical experience, and make it compatible with international standards.

### **Staff members' curriculum**

The EEC was impressed by the commitment and sustained efforts for personal development of the faculty members. There was a genuine interest about improving the programs' curricula and advance their professional development. However, there are no established procedures for regularly reviewing the competence of trainers that has been a common practice in post-graduate education in Europe and USA. Furthermore there is not clear procedure for promotion of faculty members resulting in frustration and disappointment that eventually will have a detrimental

effect on recruitment.

Recommendations:

- Clear scientific and academic criteria, comparable to those already existing in European and USA Universities, should be set for the development and promotion of faculty members.
- The legal status of NSPH needs to be clarified in order to create incentives for faculty members to seek promotion.

## ***B. Teaching***

APPROACH:

The present evaluation of the teaching approach and methods of the National School of Public Health refers to all post-graduate programs (i.e., Masters in Public Health, Applied Public Health, and Health Service Management) unless otherwise is indicated.

The pedagogic approach and methodology of the NSPH is to educate and train its students according to the established curriculum of each post-graduate program.

For the Masters in Public Health and Applied Public Health, the curriculum consists of 12 mandatory courses offered in two semesters. In addition, students have to complete a thesis equivalent to 20-28% of the course load. There are not prerequisites. However, students to be admitted in these programs are required to pass exams in epidemiology, biostatistics and English. In the Health Service Management program the curriculum consists of 14 courses, 10 of which are mandatory, offered in two semesters. In addition, students have to complete a thesis equivalent to 13% of the course load. There is almost complete overlap between the courses offered in Public Health and Applied Public Health programs and significant overlap between the latter and the Health Service Management program. There is inconsistent assignment of credit hours for the same module across programs and across modules with the same teaching hours.

Each post-graduate program admits about 30 students annually. A faculty is

assigned to each student as study advisor.

All faculty members are expected and are involved in the teaching of these courses. Every faculty member carries the responsibility for the development of the course content, the instructional materials and delivery methods, and the assessment. There is no systematic way of training the faculty in new ways of teaching and assessment utilizing principles of adult learning and outcome-based education.

Teaching is based on a combination of modern educational methods. Depending on the curriculum modules these methods include lectures and presentations, case studies, problem solving, workshops involving small and large number of students, observational site visits, and laboratory work. Students are expected to attend and participate in all required modules included in their selected fields of study.

Recommendations:

- Development of a Teaching Committee consisting of faculty that represents all disciplines and students' representatives. This group will be responsible for the oversight and management of the teaching in NSPH both: a) quantitatively, in terms of all staff involvement; b) qualitatively, based on peer review and student evaluation.
- Consideration should be given in more interactive ways of learning as well as experiential learning and self-directed learning. Systematic review of all modules across programs and consistent assignment of credit hours.
- It is essential to put together a comprehensive faculty development program that will improve knowledge and skills of the faculty in the areas of teaching, student assessment and program evaluation, educational administration and educational scholarship. In addition to improving the curriculum, such a program will make possible the recognition and support of the faculty who sustain the educational mission of the institution, thereby creating a pathway to promotion and career enhancement.

Teaching staff/ student ratio and teacher / student collaboration:

The mean student/faculty ratio across all post-graduate programs of the NSPH is 1.92. This ratio varies between 0.74 (Masters in Public Health) and 3.67 (Masters in

Health Care Management). However, the ratio varies between 0.49 and 1.91, respectively, when special scientists with teaching assignments in the NSPH are added to the faculty. These numbers are more than adequate for the didactic and laboratory component of the curriculum. There appears to be strong commitment of key faculty members to the teaching mission of the institution. In discussions of the EEC with faculty and students it became obvious that there is mutual support and collegiality between faculty and students.

Recommendations:

- Better balance between theory and practice
- Incentives like teaching awards are not granted. These could be important criteria for faculty development.

Adequacy of means and resources:

The EEC as already mentioned visited a number of facilities and established that there is adequate space. The lecture halls have all the technical equipment necessary to achieve their educational goals. Most of the lab space is new and pleasant. Financial resources seem adequate to supply all needs and consumables for the labs. In addition, the technical and administrative staff is sufficient to meet the requirements of the courses.

The library is new and well designed. It has individual working stations for students and a sufficient number of electronic resources and journals. However, the hours of operation seems to be limited for the student needs. Furthermore, it is important that the library stock is maintained up-to-date including electronic subscriptions of all relevant journals. Consideration should be given of electronically linking the NSPH library with a central electronic library of another major post-graduate center either in Greece or abroad.

Use of information technologies:

The School offers a number of information technologies. The curriculum management system developed within the last five years offers exciting teaching and learning opportunities. However, full use is not made available of this technology for teaching. The School offers opportunities for videoconferencing and other interactive technologies.

It is our understanding that these technologies are not fully utilized by the faculty. Initiatives that would combine faculty development opportunities and the allocation of additional resources will increase the number of faculty users of these technologies. The NSPH plans to expand on the development of e-learning programs and this will be a good opportunity to make better use of these technological resources.

Evaluation system:

The methods of student assessment currently used include written and oral examinations and written study reports during or at the end of each course depending on the requirements imposed by the course director. Grades are given on a scale of 0-100 with 50 as the minimum passing mark. There are two assessment periods for each course. The months of February and September are designated as the assessment periods for the first semester and June and September for the second semester in terms of written exams. Students must pass all courses within two years from the time they started their program. The EEC noted that there was increased emphasis in the written exams and suggests a more balanced approach to evaluation that gives also weight to coursework.

IMPLEMENTATION

Quality of teaching procedures:

The EEC met with the directors of the various programs as well as faculty members of these programs and acknowledged their dedication and interest in student's achievements. However, there is no systematic collection of data that can be used to improve the delivery of the curriculum apart from the anonymous questionnaire based evaluation of the programs by the students at the end of each semester, followed by the relevant analysis and review meetings of the faculty.

Based on the NSPH's internal evaluation covering the academic years 2007-2009 all required courses were evaluated by students regarding among other things the quality of the teaching. Overall, students think that the faculty of NSPH is well qualified, prepared and effective teachers. However, no objective criteria have been used to document faculty effectiveness. This is important across the various courses and programs, given that their student grading varies significantly. The attendance of lectures is estimated to be over 80%. This is in contrast to international low attendance associated with traditional curricula that emphasize passive learning. Again, based on the NSPH's internal evaluation covering the academic years 2007-

2009 students complain regarding the duration of courses and their mandatory attendance.

Quality and adequacy of learning materials and resources:

Course materials consist of textbooks written or translated in Greek and PowerPoint presentations. Some courses offer additional supportive materials on line. The library has a number of reference materials in other languages. The majority of them are in English. It is not known to what extent additional resources are used by the students. The courses use a number of supportive materials for their laboratory activities.

RESULTS

Efficacy of teaching:

Based on the NSPH's internal evaluation covering the academic years 2007-2009 student performance across programs and courses varies but it is overall good.

This is an area that needs to be developed. At the moment, the only assessment data come from the students. There is no peer evaluation that will improve the quality and the efficacy of teaching. As we have commended elsewhere, there is no formal training for faculty who wish to improve their teaching skills. The EEC recognizes that this is a national problem that needs further discussion and consideration. However, we would like to encourage the faculty to identify models that successfully exist in the US and Europe.

**C. Research**

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

APPROACH

The research activities (R&D) of the NSPH cover a wide range of projects that are divided in academic research, consultancies, interventions and training related projects. Some of the consultancies, interventions and training related projects lead to "applied research". From 1995 to 2009, NSPH listed an impressive total

number of 458 projects, an average of 32.7 projects per year. Academic research represents about 25% of all R&D activity from 1995 to 2009, though some research activity might have been included in other related projects and was not assessed by the EEC. Academic research is mostly funded by some competitive national programmes, the European Union and the industry. The main sources of funding for consultancies, interventions and training related projects are the Ministry of Health and other Greek state and governmental organizations while some projects are financially supported by other similar organizations from abroad including the WHO and the European Union, as well as the private sector (e.g. the pharmaceutical industry). The EEC understands that some funding from consultancies, interventions and training related projects is diverted to support academic research and particularly to the recruitment of research staff and NSPH's infrastructure and running costs. It seems that the research function of NSPH is skewed towards "applied research" of consultancies. Interventions and training related projects cover a very wide range of health service management and public health related topics reflecting the multi professional nature of the field. The EEC believes that this is an important function of NSPH to support and promote health service management and public health functions and actions. However, these functions are not included in the academic curriculum, teaching and research portfolio of NSPH, and therefore an in-depth analysis and evaluation of their quality lies outside the remit of the EEC. The EEC considered only the academic research of the NSPH.

Academic research is embedded in the overall R&D function of NSPH covering also a wide range of public health topics with emphasis on environmental epidemiology. Recently there is an increasing activity of academic research in child health, microbiology, and health service management. Most of the academic research is carried out in collaboration with other academic national and international departments of recognized reputation. In general the academic research infrastructure is weak and unevenly distributed. However, the existing research excellence pockets can serve as a guide, with measurable targets, to increase research output and achieve comparable performance for the whole NSPH.

There are also strong research collaborations with several Universities in the country and an increasing number of NSPH academics are actively involved in the supervision of doctorate theses in other institutions. Overcoming the current

complex legal status relating to carrying out doctorate theses is expected to facilitate a stronger academic research profile for the NSPH.

#### Scientific publications

NSPH cites a reputable average number of publications for all faculty members with reasonable citation index and impact factor. The OMEA report indicates a linear increase in publications in international journals between 2006 and 2008. The EEC reviewed the more recent publication records and noted that the number of international publications has continued to increase in years 2009-2010. The scientific impact is generally modest, although selected staff members have an excellent scientific output and citation index, thereby disproportionately shaping the high total impact factor and citations index. The h index is at the range from 0 – 46 with eight members scoring above 10. It is important, however, to distinguish original research from literature review publications or book chapters (they were in most cases presented together under the generic grouping “publications”) and ascertain the relative contribution of each type of publications related to the presented statistics. It is also worth exploring further what research publications from NSPH made a significant impact in any one of the public health areas. One pattern that was evident from the examination of some of the publications was a tendency for inclusion of multiple faculty members as co-authors; thereby the level of scholarship and research achievement of individual members was not always clear.

Several research collaborations have been cited with public health and health service management institutions in several Balkan and European countries as well as in the USA, some of which are of international reputation. The scope and significance of the above will be helpful to be identified in relation to research priorities of NSPH. Several members of the NSPH faculty participate in high esteem national and international organizations and hold senior executive positions.

#### RESULTS

It was difficult to assess the results of academic research activities in NSPH because the objectives were not clearly set and there was not an overall research strategy. The EEC formed the opinion that most of the academic research was

reactive and not based in an overall strategic view with identified objectives. It should be noted that this is one academic tradition that generally lacks benchmarks and is not particularly friendly to measurements. There is some evidence of an emphasis shift in the research and publication record, from infectious to chronic diseases, with a considerable increase in the volume and quality of publications of the latter. This could be an important part of the NSPH's strategic planning that should develop around providing incentives for research.

One of the best indicators of efficacy in the R&D activity of an academic department is its ability to attract funding in competitive grant applications. In the case of Greek Institutions, such applications are divided into international and national. However, the case of the NSPH is exceptional as it generates funding from the Greek Ministry of Health and other governmental organizations mostly for consultancies, interventions and training related projects some of them leading to "applied research" representing over 50% of the overall grant income in the last 3 years. The EEC formed the opinion that a more balanced approach towards more competitive (international) funding is paramount for the further development of NSPH into a modern academic unit.

#### ***D. All Other Services***

NSPH has a very robust administrative infrastructure that supports its functions. Some members of the administration work in some kind of "secondment" from the Ministry of Health. This is an exceptional status for institutions with academic responsibilities in Europe and US. The EEC holds the view that the current administrative capacity of the NSPH is satisfactory even for further expansion of the School. The EEC met with representatives of the administrative staff and was impressed by their skills, technical knowledge and enthusiasm for the evaluation process.

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

NSPH has formed over the years very strong links with the Greek Ministry of Health acting as the major adviser of public health issues and health service management affecting policy and delivery of services. In addition NSPH has developed very strong links with other Greek governmental organisations, regional and local authorities, local communities, ecclesiastical organisations, hospitals and other health service delivery organisations, the pharmaceutical industry and the private health service sector. Furthermore NSPH has long standing links and collaboration with the education sector including primary and secondary schools etc.

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

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

The NSPH has developed a clear vision and strategy that is well presented in the OMEA report. The main focus is on restructuring and development so that the NSPH will offer postgraduate teaching and training, research and consulting services of the highest caliber, comparable with internationally established relevant schools. The vision of the NSPH is to play a leading educational role in the Balkans, Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean region. According to the OMEA report, this can be achieved through four strategic actions:

- a. institutional reform and upgrade
- b. improvement of the administrative and technical infrastructure
- c. development and quality reorientation of teaching, R&D and consultative services.
- d. reconstruction, improvement and modernisation of the infrastructure.

The EEC concurs with the above strategic actions but would like to point out that a time framework and clear lines of responsibility and accountability need to be added to each of them and to the more detailed action plans.

Furthermore the EEC would like to highlight some issues for improvement, in addition to recommendations made in other sections of this report. The EEC list is not an exhaustive one and includes:

- The vision should be for a research-intensive institution that is closely linked to the public health and health care organizations and provides state-of-the-art training
- Emphasis in the development of research strategy with focus on certain core areas. This may have implications for re-thinking the overall NSPH structure to align it to the research strategy and promote collaboration between disciplines.
- There is no systematic assessment of the quality of teaching that might lead to redesign of teaching approaches. Systems need to be developed and adhered to, that will guarantee at least an evaluable minimum quality of teaching and training across the board.
- Systematic training of trainers in novel and effective teaching approaches.
- A doctorate - awarding program that will comply with the Bologna reforms and international standards.
- It is necessary to establish minimum scientific and academic criteria for each step of the faculty members' promotions, comparable to those already existing in numerous European universities.
- There are conflicting priorities with teaching and research responsibilities particularly among the faculty members lacking individual "job plans" and that needs to be addressed.

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

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

The development of NSPH has been a major milestone in Public Health and the Management of Health Services in Greece. According to the legislation governing the establishment and operation of the School, the NSPH is an autonomous and self-governing legal entity of the public sector which offers postgraduate education, scientific research and can provide consulting services. The NSPH operates in line with other Higher Education Institutions, irrespective of its exceptional links with both the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education. The consultative role to the Ministry of Health and other governmental and non governmental organisations including the private sector is of major importance. The curricula, teaching and training of the three postgraduate programs are

adequate and are delivered by enthusiastic faculty. NSPH has strengthened the faculty in recent years with individuals of

international recognition that, if offered appropriate support and opportunities, will contribute significantly to the promotion of the School. The small size of NSPH offers a major opportunity for close collaboration. There is a lack of research strategy, though there are certain pockets of very high quality research. This needs to be addressed as a matter of priority.

The NSPH faces several challenges that need careful consideration. These challenges include:

- a. The status and operational association and collaboration of the NSPH with the Ministry of Health and the University system are exceptional. NSPH receives a core funding from the Ministry of Health but extends its function to university level postgraduate degrees, while NSPH academics collaborate with other universities in academic research and supervision of doctorates. In this case the university system seems to be benefiting by Ministry of Health funding. The status of the NSPH might create challenges in implementing its strategic focus for a research-led academic institution with a strong focus on postgraduate teaching and public health training.
- b. Linked to the previous point, a strategic research milestone relates to the ability and recognition of the NSPH to offer a doctorate-program that complies with the Bologna reforms and international standards.
- c. Furthermore, the NSPH faculty members should follow the career structure and personal development - including promotion - of their counterparts in the university system. The current status quo is an anomaly that creates several problems and does not offer any incentives.
- d. Develop and implement a clear research strategy leading to improved outputs with focus on certain areas that reflect the research interests and skills of the faculty and take also into consideration the broader and more modern approach to public health. In order to be sustainable, this development is advisable to take place in phases of realistic time schedules.
- e. While the NSPH's core funding from the Ministry of Health is not sufficient to cover its current and expanding activities, NSPH addresses this inadequacy by generating considerable further funding that is mostly related to consultancies, interventions and training projects, but not necessarily to research. We suggest that a strategic target should be to achieve more balanced approach and increase the level of more competitive (international)

research funding.

- f. Maintain a strong presence in health service management and public health for non-strictly academic activities such as consultancies, advising on policy, carrying out interventions and training related projects as well its role with specialist laboratories.
- g. Continue to facilitate the process of evaluation by having an interim internal evaluation of progress in approximately 2 years from now. The development of an overall culture of quality assurance, with effective and transparent mechanisms to support it, and a strategy of dissemination of its positive effects to faculty and students is necessary and will be a great achievement.

The EEC felt that was very warmly welcomed by the leadership of the School and was extremely impressed by the commitment of all to the process and necessity of evaluation. The students that we were able to meet provided extremely positive feedback and were very appreciative of the programs. We were mostly impressed with the commitment of the faculty members to succeed under conditions that are not always optimal. We were also mostly impressed by the administrative infrastructure.

The EEC recognizes that several of the deficiencies and problems mentioned in this report are not unique to this School but represent practices and realities that are spread throughout the academic institutions in Greece. Furthermore, the exceptional status of the NSPH implies that fully addressing some of the previous challenges is not within the remit of the NSPH. The EEC felt that they had to mention what they saw as problematic, regardless of whether they represented systemic issues or local deficiencies. This report is presented, thus, in the spirit of constructive criticism and with the hope that it will spearhead changes that will improve not only this School but could be useful for tackling the Greek academia systemic problems.

The EEC welcomes with great satisfaction the introduction of the evaluation process in Greek Universities, in accordance with well established international practices and standards. It is believed that the evaluation process will become an important contributing factor in monitoring Quality Assurance and leading to considerable improvements in teaching, training, research and developments as well as clinical practice.

## The Members of the Committee

Name and Surname

Signature

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2. Dr. Georgios Tsakos, University College London, UK
- 3, Dr. Nicandros Bouras, Institute of Psychiatry, King's College, London