



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
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Accreditation Report for the New Undergraduate Study Programme in operation of:

Tourism Management

Institution: University of West Attica

Date: 18 November 2022

Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the New Undergraduate Study Programme in operation of **Tourism Management** of the **University of West Attica** for the purposes of granting accreditation

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PART A: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE REVIEW

I. The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

The Panel responsible for the Accreditation Review of the new undergraduate study programme in operation of **Tourism Management** of the **University of West Attica** comprised the following five (5) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

- 1. Prof. Dr-Ing Orestis Schinas (Chair)**
Hamburg School of Business Administration (HSBA), Germany

- 2. Prof. Polymeros Chrysochou**
Aarhus University, Denmark

- 3. Sotiris Hji-Avgoustis**
Ball State University, United States of America

- 4. Ioannis Michiotis**
Economic Chamber of Greece

- 5. Ms Despoina Liotsaki**
Student of Business Administration, Athens University of Economics and Business, Greece

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

The Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE) mandated an external and independent panel of experts to conduct an assessment of the compliance of the undergraduate study programme (UGP) on Tourism Management of the Department of Tourism Management (DTM) of the University of West Attica (UWA) under the provided Quality Assurance requirements. The assessment was conducted online and through document reviews (related to the undergraduate study programme of the DTM), its operation and quality assurance initiatives, interviews, and online material (website), and observation of premises (through video). The assessment aimed to:

- evaluate the fulfilment of the HAHE requirements of the relevant quality standard of the study programme,
- comment on its compliance, effectiveness, and applicability for the scope of the requirements,
- provide constructive remarks regarding the improvement of the delivery of the UGP for the perusal of the DTM

Per the provided schedule, on Monday, 14 November 2022, at 16:00, the External Evaluation and Accreditation Panel (EEAP) had a private online meeting to discuss the proposal report, allocate tasks, and list related issues to the accreditation process. At 17:30, EEAP attended an online appointment with the Rector, the Vice-Rector, the Chairperson of MODIP, and the Deputy Head of the Department. The Rector and the Vice-Rector outlined the institutional transition and the critical strategies developed for all Schools and Departments of the UWA that govern the DTM and the UGP. In addition, the Vice Rector and the representatives of the DTM gave detailed presentations on the principles and issues under assessment, the profile of the DTM, its aims and objectives, staffing and their achievements, student numbers, SWOT Analysis, and structure and overview of the programme.

Afterward, the panel had a meeting with the team of OMEA. The discussion was focused on academic issues, mainly on didactic approaches and quality control and assurance procedures. The panel had the chance to ask OMEA and MODIP members questions, exchange views, and offer constructive comments and examples of best practices from Universities abroad.

On Tuesday, 15 November 2022, the panel met with the department's teaching faculty members per the schedule. During this meeting, the EEAP had extensive discussions on the practice and internships, research issues related to the development of the faculty, as well as student-centred teaching and learning processes. Other topics discussed were methods currently used to couple teaching with research, staff workload, professional development, career advancement, research and administration, funding of the departmental staff, staff and student mobility, and the curriculum's structure, content, and evolution. The EEAP also requested additional documents, such as staff conference participation and mobility lists,

internal evaluations, etc., to gain a broader overview of the department's activities. Some requested documents, such as information on mobility and exchange programmes, were only partially available due to the recent pandemic and the few years of operations (since 2018 only).

Later, the panel had a meeting with undergraduate students. During this meeting, the students expressed their overall satisfaction with the department, its study programme, and their overall learning experience. In addition, they discussed the student-centred activities supported by the department that directly or indirectly support their studies and the effectiveness of the administration staff. However, they also admitted that they do not use online libraries and resources for their studying, and they see room for improvement in the examination of modules.

Following the meeting with the students, the panel had the opportunity to visit the university's facilities, such as classrooms, amphitheatres, the library, and IT laboratories.

After that, the EEAP met with the selected stakeholder and potential employers. All stakeholders, employers, and social partners provided positive comments regarding the department and its students, highlighting their willingness to employ department graduates in the future and cooperate with the department for its further development, as well as to provide input for the updating of its curriculum. However, the discussion revealed the diverse objectives and expectations of some stakeholders as well as gaps in understanding the role of the DTM as an academic unit and research priorities.

Various clarifications and explanations were provided throughout all these sessions.

Finally, the panel had a debriefing to discuss the outcome of all discussions and the message to be conveyed in the final sessions with the representatives of the DTM. During a closing meeting with the Rector, the Vice-Rector who is also leading MODIP, the Deputy Head of the Department, OMEA, and MODIP, the panel provided initial feedback regarding the accreditation process.

III. New Undergraduate Study Programme in operation Profile

The Department of Tourism Management (DTM) is located in Athens, and particular in the western side of the city. It constitutes the result of the merger of Technological Educational Institute (TEI) of Athens and Piraeus, in this scientific field. The DTM commenced operations in 2018.

The undergraduate studies in the DTM last 4 years (8 academic semesters). The UGP is frequently the first choice of applicants; this trend seems solidified in the last few years. The DTM also offers postgraduate programme and doctoral degrees.

Moreover, the DTM enjoys established links with stakeholders and industrial partners, as a positive result of the merger. Various MOU as well as links to employers are in place, servicing mainly the internship and practice of students.

The UGP envisages to offer a holistic approach to the field of tourism and develop further the perspective of management and leadership in tourism. This educational orientation distinct this UGP from other similar programmes in Greece, that either focus more on local and regional market needs or on specific topics, such as hotel management, hospitality, etc.

Successful completion of the UGP leads to the title of BSc in Tourism Management. The DTM suggests that the graduates can pursue a career as executives in the industry of tourism, regardless of the sector or specialty.

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

Principle 1: Strategic Planning, Feasibility and Sustainability of the Academic Unit

Institutions must have developed an appropriate strategy for the establishment and operation of new academic units and the provision of new undergraduate study programmes. This strategy should be documented by specific feasibility and sustainability studies.

By decision of the institutional Senate, the Institutions should address in their strategy issues related to their academic structure in academic units and study programmes, which support the profile, the vision, the mission, and the strategic goal setting of the Institution, within a specific time frame. The strategy of the Institution should articulate the potential benefits, weaknesses, opportunities or risks from the operation of new academic units and study programmes, and plan all the necessary actions towards the achievement of their goals.

The strategy of their academic structure should be documented by specific feasibility and sustainability studies, especially for new academic units and new study programmes.

More specifically, the feasibility study of the new undergraduate study programmes should be accompanied by a four-year business plan to meet specific needs in infrastructure, services, human resources, procedures, financial resources, and management systems.

During the evaluation of the Institutions and their individual academic units in terms of meeting the criteria for the organisation of undergraduate study programmes, particular attention must be placed upon:

a. The academic profile and the mission of the academic unit

The profile and mission of the department should be specified. The scientific field of the department should be included in the internationally established scientific fields of Higher Education, as they are designated by the international categorisation of scientific fields in education, by UNESCO (ISCED 2013).

b. The strategy of the Institution for its academic development

The academic development strategy for the operation of the department and the new study programme should be set out. This strategy should result from the investigation of the factors that influence the studies and the research in the scientific field, the investigation of the institutional, economic, developmental, and social parameters that apply in the external environment of the Institution, as well as the possibilities and capabilities that exist within the internal environment (as reflected in a SWOT Analysis: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats). This specific analysis should demonstrate the reason for selecting the scientific field of the new department.

c. The documentation of the feasibility of the operation of the department and the study programme

The feasibility of the operation of the new department should be justified based on:

- *the needs of the national and regional economy (economic sectors, employment, supply-demand, expected academic and professional qualifications)*
- *comparison with other national and international study programmes of the same scientific field*
- *the state-of-the-art developments*

- *the existing academic map; the differentiation of the proposed department from the already existing ones needs to be analysed, in addition to the implications of the current image of the academic map in the specific scientific field.*

d. The documentation of the sustainability of the new department

Mention must be made to the infrastructure, human resources, funding perspective, services, and all other available resources in terms of:

- *educational and research facilities (buildings, rooms, laboratories, equipment, etc.)*
- *staff (existing and new, by category, specialty, rank and laboratory). A distinct five-year plan is required, documenting the commitment of the School and of the Institution for filling in the necessary faculty positions to cover at least the entire pre-defined core curriculum*
- *funding (funding possibility from public or non-public sources)*
- *services (central, departmental / student support, digital, administrative, etc.)*

e. The structure of studies

The structure of the studies should be briefly presented, namely:

- **The organisation of studies:** *The courses and the categories to which they belong; the distribution of the courses into semesters; the alignment of the courses with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).*
- **Learning process:** *Documentation must be provided as to how the student-centered approach is ensured (modes of teaching and evaluation of students beyond the traditional methods).*
- **Learning outcomes:** *Knowledge, skills and competences acquired by graduates, as well as the professional rights awarded must be mentioned.*

f. The number of admitted students

- *The proposed number of admitted students over a five-year period should be specified.*
- *Any similar departments in other HEIs with the possibility of student transfers from / to the proposed department should be mentioned.*

g. Postgraduate studies and research

- *It is necessary to indicate research priorities in the scientific field, the opportunities for interdisciplinary research, the challenges towards new knowledge, possible research collaborations, etc.*
- *In addition, the postgraduate and doctoral programmes offered by the academic unit, the research projects performed, and the research performance of the faculty members should be mentioned.*

Relevant documentation

- *Introductory Report by the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) addressing the above points with the necessary documentation*
- *Updated Strategic Plan of the Institution that will include its proposed academic reconstruction, in view of the planned operation of new department(s) (incl. updated SWOT analysis at institutional level)*
- *Feasibility and sustainability studies for the establishment and operation of the new academic unit and the new study programme*
- *Four-year business plan*

Study Programme Compliance

Findings

Based on the provided material, as well as the discussions with all members of faculty, students, and stakeholders, the following significant findings are listed below:

1. The scientific field of the UGP is included in the internationally established scientific areas of Higher Education, as they are designated by the international categorization of scientific fields in education by UNESCO;
2. The Strategic Plan of the Institution considers the UGP as an integral part of its academic offering;
3. The provided strategic, and SWOT analysis at the level of UWA and DTM sufficiently considers the current academic environment in Greece and assesses the impact at the strategic and tactical level of operating the UGP;
4. The provided material, namely the feasibility study for the UGP, sufficiently addresses the related objectives, input, and expected output; and
5. A four-year business plan of the academic unit considers all issues related to the structure, operation, and activities of the DTM. It provides critical figures, such as the number of admitted students, staff, funding, and infrastructure allocated for the operation of the UGP.

Moreover, the panel also highlights the following findings:

1. The DTM experienced a relatively smooth institutional transition. After 2018 the DTM operates under the new institutional framework of Higher Education.
2. The higher-level management of the UWA applied a common strategy for all new programmes (at least for the case of DTM), and many administrative and academic issues were addressed with a top-down approach that resolved many operational complexities.
3. The high number of students - annual intake of 350 - served by almost 20 faculty members. This implies a ratio of 1:70 ($=20:350*4$) of lecturers against all enrolled students. This is a very high ratio and deems many administrative and didactic processes cumbersome.
4. The high employability of the average graduate is reported and praised by all stakeholders, namely students, faculty, and industry representatives.
5. The DTM has already established many cooperations with industrial and academic partners, and the UGP takes advantage.
6. The research strategy is still in development, and therefore research output is relatively weak.
7. Contemporary issues, such as Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), still need to be fully addressed or considered in the offered content and delivery of the UGP.
8. Academic resources, such as HEAL, are available, yet the faculty should guide the students to use them accordingly.
9. Streamlining of examination procedures of the UGP should be discussed and agreed upon within the framework of the UGP to increase transparency and fairness in didactic methods.
10. The panel did not identify any practice or procedure that was not streamlined with Regulation 2016/679 of the EU on GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation).

However, cyber-security issues should be examined in detail by the DTM due to the online offering and the expected hybrid nature of work and delivery in the future.

Analysis

Given the findings, the panel wishes to analyse further the following points:

1. The top-down strategic approach applied in the case of DTM and UGP contributed to the smooth transition into the new institutional framework. This is reflected in the quality assurance and control documentation. However, the panel considers that internal fine-tuning within the framework of the DTM and the UGP is currently necessary to generate a distinct academic identity for the DTM (including the UGP and postgraduate offers) as well as to strengthen research output and research-based delivery. Hence, it is recommended that the faculty discuss and agree on a strategy and academic orientation that will also determine the allocation of resources, e.g., faculty members that will lecture in both post- and undergraduate courses, faculty members that will devote time and effort to enhance their research profile, budget for traveling, conferences, etc.
2. In regards to other strategic issues, the panel strongly suggests the DTM identify 'peers and competitors in the European academic map, i.e., Departments and Programmes offering similar content, to set benchmarks, establish relations, e.g., to enhance mobility of students and faculty or synergies, as well as of submitting research proposals and contributing in commissioned research. The goal of achieving a minimum amount of revenues from research (aggregate or per faculty member) is measurable and enables the deployment of other strategies, e.g., the accreditation by international and external bodies of the UGP.
3. The faculty members should discuss the triple crown accreditation (AACSB, AMBA, EQUIS), and a strategic allocation of resources is also recommended. Such an accreditation could result in revenues from research, funding from stakeholders, and increased attractiveness to students (including exchange students) and international experts.
4. The panel considers that issues related to SDG and ESG should become focal and pivotal in all curriculum modules. International practice suggests that almost all modules are re-engineered or reconsidered based on the SDG, and ESG and relevant policies run horizontally (all modules) or vertically (specialization modules). Moreover, it is strongly suggested that the DTM adopt ESG policies that concretize and fine-tune broader ESG policies of the UWA, such as quotas of males/females in assignments, projects, etc., or policies related to recycling and paperless delivery. In principle, gender and diversity issues should also be considered at all levels. Ergo, it is an excellent opportunity to incorporate them as early as possible in any strategic revision and plan.
5. The panel considers soft skills, as well as academic writing, as indispensable qualifications of the graduates. Therefore, it is encouraged to include model examination forms that strengthen these skills and competencies of the students in all modules. The rationale behind this suggestion serves the following purposes:

- a. Lecturers select a 'pre-defined' examination form for their class; the same rules apply in all cases, cohorts, and years. Such an approach enhances transparency and levels the playing field. Uniformity of procedures and well-defined didactic and examination methods constitutes a possible way to address the high ratio of students per a lecturer.
 - b. The examination forms include skills and competencies, such as presentations, citation rules, etc., and misunderstandings are avoided. The marking scheme, along with the determining criteria, is also publicly available. Transparency and levelled playing field goals are also served.
 - c. Quality metrics, such as the correlation of one's performance against examination method or relative marking and scores comparison among lecturers of the same modules, are enabled. Such metrics can shed light on many didactic issues, spark discussions and lead to solutions.
 - d. Online libraries and sources like HEAL should be encouraged and integrated into all modules. Students should be able to search and find arguments in electronic libraries and adequately cite and make references. These academic skills should also be assessed in all forms of examinations.
6. GDPR issues, especially cyber-security, should be examined further and in detail. The panel did not have time or input to explore this issue further. However, it is strongly suggested to consider GDPR issues in all strategies and policies of the DTM, particularly in the delivery of the UGP (online classes, administrative processes, etc.), as well as in the communication with students, alums, and stakeholders.

Where applicable, some of the above issues will be revisited in other applicable principles.

Indicative information on the postgraduate programme was provided to the panel, too; the aim of presenting the postgraduate offer was no other but to assess the faculty's workload and demonstrate the visibility of the lectures in the local scientific field in Greece.

Conclusions

Given the findings and the above analysis, the conclusions of the Committee boil down to the following points:

- The existing strategy has served its goals and purposes; fine-tuning and further adaptation to the needs of the DTM and UGP is recommended. The goal-setting and the drafting of the pathway to the triple crown accreditation should be discussed in the DTM and with the management of the UWA.
- A clear research strategy that will increase and improve the research output and the academic visibility of the faculty is necessary.
- Special attention to SDG, common examination forms and research-based delivery should be given to improve the UGP.

The postgraduate offer is deemed satisfactory.

Panel Judgement

| | |
|---|---|
| Principle 1: Strategic planning, feasibility and sustainability of the academic unit | |
| a. The academic profile and the mission of the academic unit | |
| Fully compliant | |
| Substantially compliant | X |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |
| b. The strategy of the Institution for its academic development | |
| Fully compliant | X |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |
| c. The documentation of the feasibility of the operation of the department and the study programme | |
| Fully compliant | X |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |
| d. The documentation of the sustainability of the new department | |
| Fully compliant | X |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |
| e. The structure of studies | |
| Fully compliant | |
| Substantially compliant | X |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |
| f. The number of admitted students | |
| Fully compliant | |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | X |
| Non-compliant | |

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| g. Postgraduate studies | |
| Fully compliant | |
| Substantially compliant | X |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

| | |
|---|----------|
| Principle 1: Strategic planning, feasibility and sustainability of the academic unit (overall) | |
| Fully compliant | |
| Substantially compliant | X |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

Panel Recommendations

Based on the findings, the panel recommends the following:

R1.1 The DTM to consider future strategic goals and plans that serve the scientific field and the UGP better, such as the goal of achieving a triple crown accreditation in the future.

R1.2 The faculty is to discuss and agree on a research strategy with measurable objectives and results, to enhance the academic visibility and integrate research findings in the modules.

R1.3 The faculty is to update the material (modules) with special consideration of the SDG and related policies.

R1.4 To determine standard examination methods for all modules to enhance transparency and the soft and academic skills of the graduates as well as to address the issue of the high number of the annual intake of students.

Principle 2: Quality Assurance Policy of the Institution and the Academic Unit

The Institution should have in place an accredited Internal Quality Assurance System, and should formulate and apply a Quality Assurance Policy, which is part of its strategy, specialises in the operation of the new academic units and the new study programmes, and is accompanied by annual quality assurance goals for the continuous development and improvement of the academic units and the study programmes.

The quality assurance policy of the Institution must be formulated in the form of a published statement, which is implemented by all stakeholders. It focuses on the achievement of special annual quality goals related to the quality assurance of the new study programme offered by the academic unit. In order to implement this policy, the Institution, among others, commits itself to put into practice quality procedures that will demonstrate: the adequacy and quality of the academic unit's resources; the suitability of the structure and organisation of the curriculum; the appropriateness of the qualifications of the teaching staff; the quality of support services of the academic unit and its staffing with appropriate administrative personnel. The Institution also commits itself to conduct an annual internal evaluation of the new undergraduate programme (UGP), realised by the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) in collaboration with the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) of the Institution.

The quality assurance policy of the academic unit includes its commitment to implement quality procedures that will demonstrate: a) the adequacy of the structure and organisation of the curriculum, b) the pursuit of learning outcomes and qualifications in accordance with the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education, c) the promotion of the quality and effectiveness of the teaching work, d) the adequacy of the qualifications of the teaching staff, e) the promotion of the quality and quantity of the research work of the members of the academic unit, f) the ways of linking teaching with research, g) the level of demand for graduates' qualifications in the labour market, h) the quality of support services, such as administration, libraries and student care, i) the implementation of an annual review and audit of the quality assurance system of the UGP through the cooperation of the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) with the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) of the Institution.

Relevant documentation

- *Revised Quality Assurance Policy of the Institution*
- *Quality Assurance Policy of the academic unit*
- *Quality target setting of the Institution and the academic unit (utilising the S.M.A.R.T. methodology)*

Study Programme Compliance

DTM has a Quality Assurance Policy (Q.A.P.) consistent with the standards of the European Higher Education Area and the guidelines of the Hellenic Agency for Higher Education (H.A.H.E.). Q.A.P. is based on the following areas: a) Support of academic background; b) Continuous improvement of the curriculum; c) Improvement of research practice; d) Efficient management of services; and e) Meeting strategic goals through the implementation of internal procedures and actions.

The internal Evaluation Team (O.M.E.A.) coordinates the procedures leading to quality assurance in collaboration with U.N.I.W.A.'s Unit of Quality Assurance (M.O.D.I.P.). Continuous improvement is communicated, and feedback is collected. Student feedback is high, and from the discussions that E.E.A.P. members had with students, they expressed gratitude for the DTM

and the associated staff, as well as the whole university. However, how this feedback is assessed and integrated into the strategy needs to be made clear.

An Advisory Board is established that meets twice a year. E.E.A.P. members. Similarly, it needs to be clarified how much influence the advisory board can have on decisions such as curriculum improvement.

The Q.A.P. is communicated to the relevant stakeholders (staff, students) through information meetings and is available on the Department's website. An English version of the Q.A.P. is missing. In general, the English version of the website could be improved to attract international audiences and reach international stakeholders.

The academic unit has set goals for the undergraduate programme concerning teaching methods, student satisfaction, learning outcomes, and research output. The goals are S.M.A.R.T. compliant.

E.A.A.P. members acknowledge that the transition to a higher education institution has been done sufficiently, but the research development (e.g., publications in a top-ranked journal in the field of tourism; externally funded research grants) still requires improvement.

The goals are paired with suitable KPIs. However, their analysis and monitoring could be more explicit.

Panel Judgement

| Principle 2: Quality assurance policy of the Institution and the academic unit | |
|---|---|
| Fully compliant | X |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

Panel Recommendations

R 2.1 Apart from Q.A.P., which is already listed on the DTM's website, additional relevant documents could be added (e.g., KPIs). In addition, an English version of Q.A.P. could be added.

R2.2 Educational goals should incorporate scholarly developments and an overall sustainable development agenda (e.g., link to SDGs).

R2.3 A long-term mission strategy concerning quality improvement should be nice to include.

R2.4 More efforts to support the research development of the staff are needed that will focus on quantity and quality. The committee suggests that the DTM establishes a list of target journals that are internationally recognized that are relevant to the research field.

Principle 3: Design, Approval and Monitoring of the Quality of the New Undergraduate Programmes

Institutions should design the new 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.

The Institutions develop their new undergraduate study programmes, following a well-defined procedure. The academic profile, the identity 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 European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education are described at this stage. An important new element in the structure of the programmes is the introduction of courses for the acquisition of digital skills. The above components should be taken into consideration and constitute the subject of the programme design, which, among other things, should include: elements of the Institution's strategy, labour market data and employment prospects of graduates, smooth progression of students throughout the stages of the programme, the anticipated student workload according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), the option of providing work experience to the students, the linking of teaching and research, the international experience in study programmes of similar disciplines, the relevant regulatory framework, and the official procedure for the approval of the programme by the Institution.

The procedure of approval or revision of the programmes provides for the verification of compliance with the basic requirements of the Standards by the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU).

Study Programme Compliance

The University Of West Attica Department Of Tourism Management is uniquely positioned to provide quality tourism education that meets national needs while maintaining adherence to international standards. It is located in an ideal urban educational setting surrounded by a well-established private tourism infrastructure that can act as a teaching and learning laboratory for the department's faculty and students.

The University was established in 2018 after the merging of two educational institutions. This recent reorganization allowed the department to design a curriculum that meets the tourism industry's needs. This is significant because current literature reveals a significant disparity between the tourism education provided by institutions and the skills required by the industry. A considerable challenge facing institutions offering tourism education is the correct identification of industry needs and requirements and industry involvement in curriculum design. This is not the case here. The Department's strong partnerships with its industry stakeholders allowed them to identify 'gaps' and develop courses that address the current needs of the industry.

The perceptions of its end users can best measure the value of a curriculum. When students embark on a higher education program, they have expectations that they will find meaningful employment after graduation and will be able to make use of the skills acquired during their studies. At the same time, employers expect that education providers have ensured that their curriculum is aligned with the needs of the industry. During a session with ten industry stakeholders, references were often made to the academic and industry preparedness of the students completing their practicum/internship experiences, as shown by their critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills. A similar session with a group of primarily senior-level students provided identical results. The students believed they were adequately prepared academically to embark on their tourism careers.

Our interactions with department faculty, staff, and especially students allowed us to recognize the system in place to support student progress and success. There is no question that the vast number of students in the program puts added pressure on departmental resources and prevents the student advisors and support personnel from building stronger relationships with students.

Examining the support material provided by the Department points to adherence to the per semester total student workload by the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (30 ECTS units). The workload also appears appropriate for the learning outcomes and final qualifications.

Panel Judgement

| Principle 3: Design, approval and monitoring of the quality of the new undergraduate programmes | |
|--|----------|
| Fully compliant | X |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

Panel Recommendations

R3.1 In future redesigns or new designs of tourism courses, it is highly recommended to incorporate faculty industry and research expertise along with the collective knowledge of the department to address the changing landscape of the academic field of tourism.

R3.2 A sustainable tourism industry can contribute to multiple SDGs, including, for example, SDG 14 (life below water), SDG 15 (life on land), SDG 13 (climate action), and SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production), as well as support local communities by providing them with jobs and reliable incomes that lift people out of poverty (SDGs 1, 2, 8, and 11). Our recommendation is to design or redesign tourism courses that meet this directive.

Principle 4: Student-centred Approach in Learning, Teaching and Assessment of Students

The academic unit should ensure that the new 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.

In the implementation of student-centered learning and teaching, the academic unit:

- ✓ *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 application of 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*

Relevant documentation

- *Questionnaires for assessment by the students*
- *Regulation for dealing with students' complaints and appeals*
- *Regulation for the function of the academic advisor*
- *Reference to the planned teaching modes and assessment methods*

Study Programme Compliance

Findings / Analysis

The approach is student-centred, with various pedagogical methods and delivery modes. Apart from the traditional lectures, there are also practical lab training and exercises, which help students acquire some hands-on experience and focus on how something is done correctly and precisely with the guidance of their professors. Moreover, students in most courses need to work on some projects which they will later have to present to their professor and co-students in the class. Moreover, during the semester, students have the opportunity to interact with experienced professionals from the market and collect helpful information about their potential employment choices and the career path they may be interested in following after their studies.

From the discussions with the students and the faculty, students are encouraged to have an active role during classes and participate in the events that the Department holds or announces, such as conferences, competitions, seminars, etc. Therefore, it is confirmed that the students are seen as active partners in the learning process.

The assessment criteria for student performance are published in advance in the course outline of each course on the website and the Student Guide and are also announced during the 1st lecture of each term and throughout the semester. Apart from the final exams, the students usually have to conduct, deliver and present some projects, which are generally mandatory and shape their final grade from 20% to 40%, depending on the module. Sometimes, the project is exculpatory and shapes the students' final grades entirely. In addition, some mid-term tests or projects contribute to the student's final grades.

The student satisfaction surveys are conducted during each semester between the 8th and the 11th week, electronically and measure the effectiveness of educational goals; the material is given, the teaching ability of the faculty, and the teaching methods that are followed, as well as the participation of the students in the teaching processes.

Additionally, through the Academic Advisor, each student can give feedback and share any thoughts, comments, and ideas for improvement. There is also an Academic Advisor for students with special needs.

What is more, there is a formal procedure for student appeals in the place, as apart from the Academic Advisor, the students can fill in and then submit the Complaints Form to report any problem that may occur and needs to be solved or highlight any case that should be addressed.

The EEAP considers that the programme is delivered in an environment that promotes mutual respect and puts the students at the centre of the learning and development process.

The curriculum is updated and streamlined with international practice. It offers interdisciplinary aspects, yet it is not fully interdisciplinary, the way interdisciplinarity is understood in other Universities abroad. In principle, it would be unreasonable to expect a fully interdisciplinary undergraduate offer, given the hierarchical concept and fragmented structure of undergraduate studies as per the Law, as well as considering that the DTM was founded in 2018. Interdisciplinary programmes require flat hierarchies and contributions from faculty members with diverse backgrounds and distinct academic identities, which differs in DTM and is not usual for undergraduate programmes.

Conclusions

In general, the EEAP considers that the new undergraduate programme is delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in the learning process, as the Department's culture supports them. The students seem close to their teachers, and feel free to ask them for advice and guidance.

There is a formal procedure for student feedback and appeals in place, as there are plenty of channels for students to express their comments, give feedback and interact with the faculty.

Panel Judgement

| Principle 4: Student-centred approach in learning, teaching and assessment of students | |
|---|----------|
| Fully compliant | X |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

Panel Recommendations

R4.1 Promote feedback culture and encourage constructive criticism so that the students are more likely to participate in any opportunity for assessment.

R4.2 Student satisfaction surveys should include questions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the faculty as well as the infrastructure.

Principle 5: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition of Academic Qualifications and Award of Degrees and Certificates of Competence of the New Study Programmes

Academic units should develop and apply published regulations addressing all aspects and phases of studies of the programme (admission, progression, recognition and degree award).

All the issues from the beginning to the end of studies should be governed by the internal regulations of the academic units. Indicatively:

- ✓ *the registration procedure of the admitted students and the necessary documents - according to the law - and the support of the newly admitted students*
- ✓ *student rights and obligations, and monitoring of student progression*
- ✓ *internship issues, granting of scholarships*
- ✓ *the procedures and terms for writing the thesis (diploma or degree)*
- ✓ *the procedure of award and recognition of degrees, the duration of studies, the conditions for progression and assurance of the progress of students in their studies*

as well as

- ✓ *the terms and conditions for enhancing student mobility*

Appropriate recognition procedures rely on relevant academic practice for recognition of credits among various European academic departments and Institutions in line with the principles of the Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region. 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).

All the above must be made public within the context of the Student Guide.

Relevant documentation

- *Internal regulation for the operation of the new study programme*
- *Regulation of studies, internship, mobility and student assignments*
- *Printed Diploma Supplement*

Certificate from the President of the academic unit that the diploma supplement is awarded to all graduates without exception together with the degree or the certificate of completion of studies

Study Programme Compliance

Findings / Analysis

Students have access to the Study Guide at any time and, therefore, can get informed about the structure of the programme of studies in advance. It explains everything about university life, processes, modules, the faculty, and supportive staff clearly and in detail. In addition, first-

year students can participate in the annual informative event, which takes place on campus to welcome them to the University and the Department so that they have a smooth transition. During this ceremony, which usually takes place in the first weeks of the semester, valuable details are provided to students regarding the undergraduate programme, the means of internal communication and interaction, the services offered by the Department, the clubs and societies of the University, as well as the processes followed for some issues, their responsibilities etc.

The student's progression is monitored through the electronic platform of the Department's Administrative Staff. Through this platform, the students have access to the courses they have succeeded in, their grades, and generally their progression.

Student mobility is well encouraged. An ERASMUS+ office on the campus centrally manages the applications for studying abroad. A responsible deputy professor in the Department informs the students about the programme during an event, monitors the process, and supports students interested in studying abroad. There is also a module in the undergraduate programme during which the students can further discuss the Erasmus programme and its benefits in detail. In addition, there are more than 70 contracts the Department has signed with foreign institutions to ensure student mobility. According to the data given to the EEAP, in the last academic year, there were 52 outgoing and 59 incoming students. During their mobility, students might be able to conduct their practical training.

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is well applied across the curriculum, and thus the full academic acknowledgment of the courses that students were successfully examined in while they were abroad is assured, provided that the matching of the courses covers the same aspects of each course. Therefore, 240 ECTS points are required to complete the studies successfully, and 30 ECTS per semester of mobility need to be collected.

The Department issues a Diploma supplement to each student upon graduation in Greek and English.

A student can conduct a Thesis in the 8th semester. The Thesis is optional and can be chosen over two elective courses. It awards students with 8 ECTS points with its completion. Its formal duration is 6 to 12 months after the students submit their applications to the secretariat. The academic unit has defined a set of quality requirements for the implementation of the Thesis and has published the regulation of the Thesis along with the application templates on the website.

Practical training is mandatory for all students, as hands-on experience is required. Students are accredited with 10 ECTS points with the successful completion (pass/fail) of their practical training. Its duration is five months in total. A significant network has already been developed to offer practical training to the students of the Department, as businessmen of the local and national markets have come together to provide students with professional opportunities and support.

Conclusions

The EEAP, after examining the submitted documents, concludes that there is an obvious progression path, described in detail in the Student's Guide. The processes of Student

Admission, Progression, Recognition of Academic Qualifications, and Award of Degrees and Certificates of Competence of the New Study Programmes are defined and documented by the Department. However, there is room for improvement, especially regarding institutionalising cooperation between the Department and the external stakeholders who offer valuable training opportunities.

Panel Judgement

| Principle 5: Student admission, progression, recognition of academic qualifications, and award of degrees and certificates of competence of the new study programmes | |
|---|----------|
| Fully compliant | X |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

Panel Recommendations

R5.1 Organize an annual event focused on all the information a student needs about the Thesis and the Practical Training.

R5.2 Sign Memorandum of Understandings (MoU) with external stakeholders to cover offering practical training opportunities, project engagement as part of the Thesis, research initiatives, etc.

Principle 6: Ensuring the Competence and High Quality of the Teaching Staff of the New Undergraduate Study Programmes

Institutions should assure themselves of the competence, the level of knowledge and skills of the teaching staff of the academic units, and apply fair and transparent processes for their recruitment, training and further development.

The Institution should attend to the adequacy of the teaching staff of the academic unit, the appropriate staff-student ratio, the suitable categories of staff, the appropriate subject areas and specialisations, the fair and objective recruitment process, the high research performance, the training – development, the staff development policy (including participation in mobility schemes, conferences and educational leaves- as mandated by law).

More specifically, 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 recognise 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.

Relevant documentation

- *Procedures and criteria for teaching staff recruitment*
- *Regulations or employment contracts, and obligations of the teaching staff*
- *Policy for staff recruitment, support and development*
- *Performance of the teaching staff in scientific-research and teaching work, also based on internationally recognised systems of scientific evaluation (e.g., Google Scholar, Scopus, etc.)*

Study Programme Compliance

The faculty composition of the department consists of 19 permanent members (8 full professors, six associate professors, four assistant professors, and one lecturer). The supplemental material for our review covered a wide range of topics related to teaching effectiveness, from detailed descriptions of department priorities and objectives to specific information about the various courses, including assessment tools used.

The department uses a holistic approach to teaching. The faculty members are encouraged and somewhat supported to pursue professional development opportunities. There is also discussion to support participation in professional academic and industry conferences and events. The faculty members appear qualified to teach their assigned courses, and each brings a unique set of experiences to the classroom.

The curriculum is similar to one offered by other European and U.S. universities. The specialized tourism courses (urban tourism, religious tourism, sustainable practices, etc.) are appropriate for the local market. Of note is that the department offers training in some of

the latest software tools used by hotels, tourism offices, and airlines worldwide. This is a unique feature.

One recommendation is to invite guest speakers from these tourism submarkets to introduce students to career opportunities outside hotels and tourist offices. Another growth area is the MICE industry (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Expositions). As mentioned earlier, the university is ideally situated with the reach of several state-of-the-art facilities in the Greater Athens Metropolitan Area.

Students also appreciate the quality of instruction they receive from the department faculty. This was evident during a discussion with student representatives, where the majority, if not all of them, agreed that their instructors were well qualified to teach in the program. The students believe that their education prepares them for managerial careers in tourism. A discussion with students who had already completed their internship led to the same conclusion.

The discussion identified an area of concern that involves the lack of expectation for students to access recent manuscripts and related academic work outside the requirements stated on the syllabus. The field of tourism, like other fields, is constantly changing. Staying current with the growing body of tourism literature is extremely important for academics because it allows us to bring the latest theories and practices into the classroom. At the same time, introducing students to knowledge-building through academic research becomes a valuable lesson that will help them in their professional careers. The department will most likely face challenges in maintaining the high-quality teaching its students are accustomed to if the growth in student numbers remains unchecked. Even though there is not a widely accepted “magic ratio” in terms of how many faculty members are needed to teach a certain number of students, the current ratio of students to faculty in the department makes it very challenging for faculty members to devote time to professional development, including improving their research productivity.

The second area of concern is a lack of a clear research strategy to guide the research productivity of the Department’s faculty, including when supervising postgraduate students. A focused research agenda stands to elevate the quality of instruction across the curriculum and strengthen the reputation of the Department nationally and internationally.

Panel Judgement

| Principle 6: Ensuring the competence and high quality of the teaching staff of the new undergraduate study programmes | |
|--|----------|
| Fully compliant | |
| Substantially compliant | X |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

Panel Recommendations

R6.1 Empower Department faculty to establish individual research agendas that align with their academic preparation and industry interests.

R6.2 Provide support to faculty to attend and present at local and international conferences.

R6.3 Incorporate in the Department's strategic plan an expectation that classroom learning incorporates access to the latest academic journals and the course-assigned reading material.

Principle 7: Learning Resources and Student Support of the New Undergraduate Programmes

Institutions should have adequate funding to meet the needs for the operation of the academic unit and the new study programme as well as the means to cover all their 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 resources, on a planned and long-term basis, to support learning and academic activity in general, in order to offer students the best possible level of studies. The above means include facilities such as, the necessary general and specific libraries and possibilities for access to electronic databases, study rooms, educational and scientific equipment, information and communication services, support and 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 students, students with disabilities), in addition to 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. Students should be informed about all available services. In delivering support services, the role of support and administration staff is crucial and therefore this segment of staff needs to be qualified and have opportunities to develop its competences.

Relevant documentation

- *Detailed description of the infrastructure and services made available by the Institution to the academic unit to support learning and academic activity (human resources, infrastructure, services, etc.) and the corresponding specific commitment of the Institution to financially cover these infrastructure-services from state or other resources*
- *Administrative support staff of the new undergraduate programme (job descriptions, qualifications and responsibilities)*
- *Informative / promotional material given to students with reference to the available services*

Study Programme Compliance

Findings / Analysis

The Department has the necessary facilities to support an appropriate teaching and learning environment for the new undergraduate programme. The accessibility to people with special needs is ensured, as the campus has elevators and ramps. There is one shared auditorium of 300 seats, six classrooms of 120, 84, 64, 52, 25, and 22 seats each, six laboratories fully equipped with 25 PCs each, and one laboratory with equipment used in touristic businesses. There is also the daily use of software in touristic businesses (e.g., Metabyte-Group Travel, Ermis, Medallion, Fidelio, Galileo). There are projectors for the presentations and microphones for the Faculty to be well heard by the students. There is a library that gives access to national and international bibliography, a restaurant, and a canteen selling snacks and beverages at reasonable prices. Moreover, there is an infirmary. There are only a few student rooms for the students of the University of West Attica offered from other universities or local dormitories.

There is an adequate range of support services available to university students. Primarily, all students have access to the webmail, e-class platform, free wi-fi connection via Eduroam, etc. Additionally, they can benefit from the services centrally provided by the main campus of the University of West Attica, such as the Students Counselor, the Student Advocate, the Health services, etc. Also, students can use the Sports Facilities and interact with the various social Activity Groups, information about which is available on the website.

There is an Administrative Staff of a total of 3 people to ensure the smooth operation of the student support services and, thus, the students are sufficiently informed about the offered services and the processes that need to be followed in time.

Conclusions

Overall, there is a rational distribution of the existing facilities, and students are informed about the availability of services through the website and directly by the staff.

Panel Judgement

| Principle 7: Learning resources and student support of the new undergraduate programmes | |
|--|----------|
| Fully compliant | X |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

Panel Recommendations

R7.1 Create a Career Office in addition to the Academic Counselor's responsibilities so that students can refer to it for job opportunities, professional advice, counselling, etc.

R7.2 Prioritise the development of dormitories for students (especially in this specific Department, there are students from tourist destinations far from Athens that would certainly appreciate this service).

R7.3 Encourage students to familiarise themselves with using the library to access papers from national and international bibliographies and trustworthy academic sources.

Principle 8: Collection, Analysis and Use of Information for the Organisation and Operation of New Undergraduate Programmes

The Institutions and their academic units 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.

Effective procedures for collecting and analysing information on the operation of Institutions, academic units and study programmes feed data into the internal quality assurance system. The following data is of interest: key performance indicators for the student body profile, student progression, success and drop-out rates, student satisfaction with the programme, availability of learning resources and student support. The completion of the fields of National Information System for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NISQA) should be correct and complete with the exception of the fields that concern graduates in which a null value is registered.

Relevant documentation

- *Report from the National Information System for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NISQA) at the level of the Institution, the department and the new UGP*
- *Operation of an information management system for the collection of administrative data for the implementation of the programme (Students' Record)*
- *Other tools and procedures designed to collect data on the academic and administrative functions of the academic unit and the study programme*

Study Programme Compliance

Findings / Analysis

The Department processes data of interest gathered on an ongoing basis to serve its operational needs through the university's information system. Large data sets include student questionnaires, student completion of studies, student employability, student progress monitoring, and many other data categories.

Student evaluations of individual courses are conducted at the end of every semester. The assessment includes

- information related to the Programme of Studies,
- learning outcomes,
- workload,
- faculty member performance,
- teaching material and resources, and
- other information related to the Undergraduate Program goals.

The evaluation results and student remarks are examined by the OMEA and MODIP, summarized well, and submitted to the Department chair, who studies the effects and, if needed, may raise individual issues with the teaching staff and take corrective action.

Data collection, processing, and analysis of information are healthy functioning and established. Associated KPIs are updated, and it is evident how the QA improvement cycle and the follow-up of the implementation of results and feedback are completed. This is perhaps

due to the early stages in the operation of the newly formed Department, and the internal review process has been applied only once so far.

Conclusion

The EAAP observed that the Department has an adequate data collection mechanism and suitable information processing capability to generate a variety of reports to statistically analyse, assess and monitor the results as needed per the requirements of the Quality Assurance framework.

Panel Judgement

| Principle 8: Collection, analysis and use of information for the organisation and operation of new undergraduate programmes | |
|--|---|
| Fully compliant | X |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

Panel Recommendations

R8.1 Establish an alum information database of graduates and use alum feedback to modify and enhance the Undergraduate studies program.

Principle 9: Public Information Concerning the New Undergraduate Programmes

Institutions and academic units should publish information about their teaching and academic activities in a direct and readily accessible way. The relevant information should be up-to-date, clear and objective.

Information on the Institutions' activities is useful for prospective and current students, graduates, other stakeholders and the public. Therefore, Institutions and their academic units must provide information about their activities, including the new undergraduate programmes they offer, the intended learning outcomes, the degrees awarded, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to their students. Information is also provided, to the extent possible, on graduate employment perspectives.

Relevant documentation

- *Dedicated segment on the website of the department for the promotion of the new study programme*
- *Bilingual version of the website of the academic unit with complete, clear and objective information*
- *Provision for website maintenance and updating*

Study Programme Compliance

Findings / Analysis

The Department has expended considerable effort in designing its website and incorporating extensive, helpful information, including its mission, complete Undergraduate Program detail, academic personnel profiles and functions, student services, and research activity.

The OMEA and the Secretariat of the Department are tasked with controlling the website's content three times a year, ahead of each semester and the examination periods. The website is also available in English in some sublinks. The Department's website could be an information tool, open to students, and an access portal to applications such as e-Secretariat and e-Class. The web application of the electronic secretariat allows students to search for information about courses that are offered in the curriculum, instructor assignments to classes, a variety of course-related issues, access grades for courses in which they have been enrolled, receive a confirmation of studies instantly in electronic format, and obtain a variety of other documents related to their academic endeavors. It also serves as a tool for electronic registration for courses each semester. Access to this application is simple by using the student username and password, ensuring its confidentiality.

Conclusion

The EEAP thinks that the website is user-friendly, well-designed, informative and well-maintained. However, believes that the department has to establish a periodic updating of the content of the websites to follow the developments in the global markets (professional, scientific etc).

Panel Judgement

| Principle 9: Public information concerning the new undergraduate programmes | |
|--|----------|
| Fully compliant | X |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

Panel Recommendations

R9.1 The department has to strength its website, specially in English, following its external valuation and accessibility to international markets, so far to attract the interest of more foreign students.

Principle 10: Periodic Internal Review of the New Study Programmes

Institutions and academic units should have in place an internal quality assurance system, for the audit and annual internal review of their new 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 the new study programmes aim at maintaining the level of educational provision and creating 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.

Relevant documentation

- *Procedure for the re-evaluation, redefinition and updating of the curriculum*
- *Procedure for mitigating weaknesses and upgrading the structure of the UGP and the learning process*
- *Feedback processes on strategy implementation and quality targeting of the new UGP and relevant decision-making processes (students, external stakeholders)*
- *Results of the annual internal evaluation of the study programme by the QAU and the relevant minutes*

Study Programme Compliance

This assessment is based on face-to-face conversations with department faculty and a review of a document compiled by Dr. Evstathia Papageorgiou. President of MODIP, titled Processes, Assessment, and Certification, 2021.

In theory, a self-study describes how the academic department fulfils its mission by focusing on teaching, scholarship, and service. Ideally, a self-study discusses how goals and objectives are linked to the university mission and strategic priorities and include strategies for further developing the department's programs. The self-study should provide information that reveals the department's efforts to create and offer high-quality education for students through a relevant, rigorous, and current curriculum. The self-study often includes identifiable student outcomes and assessment of those outcomes. The self-study also contains descriptions of faculty contributions to quality, including teaching, research, and service excellence.

The University of West Attica is well on its way to building the infrastructure that will contribute to a culture of academic excellence through ongoing assessment efforts of its educational programs. The Committee had the opportunity to review the Department's 2021 Quality Assurance report, summarized in a PowerPoint file and supporting documentation.

The report summarizes the internal review process, such as student satisfaction surveys, an established method for students to file grievances, including access to a student ombudsman, and the role of external partners, such as the industry advisory board and internship site coordinators, in the review process. The Committee would like to applaud the Department's efforts in this endeavour.

Panel Judgement

| Principle 10: Periodic internal review of the new study programmes | |
|---|----------|
| Fully compliant | X |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

Panel Recommendations

R10.1 - An internal review is as good as the quality of the data gathered for analysis. Therefore, we encourage the Department to employ the services of a third party to collect data and compile student and faculty feedback for quality improvement.

Principle 11: Regular External Evaluation and Accreditation of the New Undergraduate Programmes

The new undergraduate study programmes should regularly undergo evaluation by panels of external experts set by HAHE, aiming at accreditation. The results of the external evaluation and accreditation are used for the continuous improvement of the Institutions, academic units and study programmes. The term of validity of the accreditation is determined by HAHE.

HAHE is responsible for administrating the programme accreditation process which is realised as an external evaluation procedure and implemented by a panel of independent experts. HAHE grants accreditation of programmes, based on the Reports submitted by the panels, 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 Standards, and as a catalyst for improvement, while opening new perspectives towards the international standing of the awarded degrees. Both academic units and institutions must consistently consider the conclusions and the recommendations submitted by the panels of experts for the continuous improvement of the programme.

Relevant documentation

- *Progress report on the results from the utilisation of the recommendations of the external evaluation of the Institution and of the IQAS Accreditation Report.*

Study Programme Compliance

This is the first time the Department has undergone an external accreditation process by a panel of international and independent experts. The University has a robust external evaluation process which Professor Papageorgiou explained during our two-day visit to the institution and outlined in a PowerPoint file shared with our committee.

The external evaluation process conforms to the stated policy of HQA/ADIP and provides an international filter for the Department. It has as an overarching objective to enhance the Department's academic brand, allow its faculty members to compete for research funds from EU sources, facilitate student mobility within the ERASMUS program and other international exchange opportunities, and the cross-fertilization of ideas and best practices between the local academic community and the international accreditation panel of experts.

Quality improvement is an ongoing and persistent process whose end goal is academic excellence.

Panel Judgement

| Principle 11: Regular external evaluation and accreditation of the new undergraduate programmes | |
|--|----------|
| Fully compliant | |
| Substantially compliant | X |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

Panel Recommendations

R.11.1 - The Committee encourages the Department to establish partnerships with international higher education institutions and organizations to remain abreast of changes in the global higher education landscape.

R.11.2 - It is also recommended to forge relationships at the faculty level with international academic programs specializing in tourism management education to allow for the exchange of ideas. Leveraging these partnerships will ensure that the Department and its faculty remain engaged with the global academic tourism community in teaching, research, and service.

Principle 12: Monitoring the Transition from Previous Undergraduate Study Programmes to the New Ones

Institutions and academic units apply procedures for the transition from previously existing undergraduate study programmes to new ones, in order to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Standards.

Applies in cases where the department implements, in addition to the new UGPs, any pre-existing UGPs from departments of former Technological Educational Institutions (TEI) or from departments that were merged / renamed / abolished.

Institutions should implement procedures for the transition from former UGPs to new ones, in order to ensure their compliance with the requirements of the Standards. More specifically, the institution and the academic unit must have a) the necessary learning resources, b) appropriate teaching staff, c) structured curriculum (courses, ECTS, learning outcomes), d) study regulations, award of diploma and diploma supplement, and e) system of data collection and use, with particular reference to the data of the graduates of the pre-existing UGP. In this context, the Institutions and the academic units prepare a plan for the foreseen transition period of the existing UGP until its completion, the costs caused to the Institution by its operation as well as possible measures and proposals for its smooth delivery and termination. This planning includes data on the transition and subsequent progression of students in the respective new UGP of the academic unit, as well as the specific graduation forecast for students enrolled under the previous status.

Relevant documentation

- *The planning of the Institution for the foreseen transition period, the operating costs and the specific measures or proposals for the smooth implementation and completion of the programme*
- *The study regulations, template for the degree and the diploma supplement*
- *Name list of teaching staff, status, subject and the course they teach / examine*
- *Report of Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) on the progress of the transition and the degree of completion of the programme. In the case of UGP of a former Technological Educational Institution (TEI), the report must include a specific reference to how the internship was implemented*

Study Programme Compliance

The Department is the result of the merger of two earlier technological institutions and associated departments as part of the regulation (N. 4521/2018): a) the Technological Institute of Athens (department: “Διοίκησης Τουριστικών Επιχειρήσεων και Επιχειρήσεων Φιλοξενίας”); and b) the Technological Institute of Piraeus (department: “Διοίκησης Τουρισμού”).

MODIP has drafted a detailed report on the transition period of the pre-existing undergraduate programmes. The report details the provisions made regarding the transition concerning existing student enrollment and the conduct of practical training.

Since 2018, newly enrolled students have followed the new UGP, while existing students were offered a choice. An additional workload was provided to students who chose the new UGP. The remaining students completed the old UGPs from each respective institution.

Those students were obliged to follow the updated courses. From the discussions the EEAP members had with staff and student representatives, this approach was received positively, while no significant problems were mentioned.

A new Curriculum has been developed, and a match between the latest and pre-existing courses has been made. The EEAP members acknowledge that it needs to be clarified whether sufficient changes have been made to the course descriptions. In some courses, the literature is outdated. Besides, while the majority of the courses have a practical orientation (i.e., asking the “HOW” question), there is a lack of content in courses that also advance theory (i.e., asking the “WHY” question). With the discussion that EEAP members had with students, the analogy was sufficient, but the EEAP members consider that the transition to a higher educational institution will require this focus. Finally, the course descriptions need to introduce trends such as sustainable development.

The practical training has been the core of the new UGP, with 100% of students participating. Practical training has thrived since many students continue in the same position upon graduation. The EEAP also considers that the practical training may require better monitoring to ensure that students participating in the programme advance their skills.

Panel Judgement

| Principle 12: Monitoring the transition from previous undergraduate study programmes to the new ones | |
|---|----------|
| Fully compliant | X |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

Panel Recommendations

R12.1 Update the course descriptions and literature. Focus on advancing theory, but not in the expense of practical orientation that has been the strength of the UGP.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

The panel considers the following as features of good practice:

- Solid strategy and management
- Young, dynamic, and 'malleable' profile of the DTM and the UGP
- The commitment of the Faculty and their hands-on experience;
- Updated curriculum with interdisciplinary perspectives
- High demand from students
- High employability
- Positive feedback from students and external stakeholders, such as employers and associations
- Effective online educational offer
- Compelling ERASMUS offer (mainly for students)
- Coherent practice and internship offer

II. Areas of Weakness

The panel considers the below features as the main points of concern or potential criticism:

- weak research output
- the high number of student intake (380 against 150)
- low academic visibility
- insufficient use of ERASMUS resources and opportunities
- poor inclusion of SDG issues in the curriculum
- inadequate use of educational resources, such as HEAL, by the students
- lack of uniformity in examination forms
- web presence needs substantial enhancement

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

The Panel provides the following recommendations in a constructive manner and as experiences from abroad, worthy of being considered in this case by the faculty:

1. The faculty should discuss and agree on a comprehensive research strategy that is streamlined with the broader policies of UWA and will result in measurable results. The Law provides substantial flexibility, yet the idea of internal rules that serve more

general guidelines of the DTM and UWA should be discussed and accepted by the faculty - it is a signal of commitment to the progress of the DTM and improvement of the UWA. The aim is to enhance academic visibility and generate a distinct identity for the DTM and the UGP. The faculty could consider the following suggestions:

- a. To determine a set of criteria that reflect the research record and visibility of the faculty. These criteria could be h-index, citations, or other combinations from various sources, e.g., SCOPUS, Google Scholar, etc. The aim is to have an everyday basis for ranking the research visibility of the faculty and measuring progress, results, and effort.
 - b. To determine a list of journals that serve research metrics purposes and, at the same time, guide the effort and the output of researchers (faculty, doctoral, and post-doc students). Publications in other journals not included in the agreed list should be discouraged or omitted in the promotion or title-awarding processes.
 - c. Along with the list of journals, the faculty could also determine strategies and metrics of the research output; for example, journals could be classified as A, B, C, or D as per their impact factor, and then doctoral work or similar research could be assessed accordingly. It is common to have internal rules, such as 2C papers equal to 1B paper, or a min of 5 manuscripts that result in min X citations within three years to qualify the applicant, etc.
 - d. Faculty members that lecture in postgraduate programmes or other Universities and do not have a robust research output (based on the thresholds determined above) should solely focus on the mandatory lecturing in the UGP and their research effort before contributing to a postgraduate programme.
 - e. Similar rules could also apply to faculty members that supervise doctoral thesis; for example, a faculty member with publications in B Journals within the last three years should proceed with the supervision, while other faculty members should satisfy this internal rule first etc.
 - f. The faculty could also determine rules for funding participation in Conferences and other events that enhance networking and research opportunities.
2. It is strongly recommended that the DTM explore accreditation from external and international bodies for the UGP and other postgraduate offerings. The goal should be the triple crown accreditation, i.e., from EQUIS, AACSB, and AMBA. The Panel realizes the limitations faced by the DTM. Nevertheless, progress in this direction is expected within the next 3 to 5 years. The triple crown accreditation offers the assurance of research-based delivery and high-quality offer to the students and the stakeholders, therefore, it is also proof that the UGP is one step ahead of the market.
 3. The high intake results in excessive stretching of resources. It was also explained to the Panel that modules with many enrolled students are delivered by external

lecturers and faculty members in cohorts of 60-70 students. Considering the workload and the need for transparency and accountability in all procedures, it is suggested to determine a set of examination forms, e.g., written exams, oral presentations, essays, etc., that will conclude all modules and safeguard the leveled playfield for all lecturers and students. This standard practice in many Universities abroad delivers measurable and comparable results for quality assurance purposes, e.g., relative students' feedback, etc.

4. Promoting and making further use of all exchange programmes for students and faculty is strongly suggested, such as ERASMUS. Such exchange programmes strengthen the visibility of the DTM and the UGP among 'peers,' i.e., other departments offering content on tourism in the EU.
5. The faculty should address SDG issues horizontally (in all modules) and vertically (in specific modules). This way, the continuous improvement of the educational material is encouraged too, as SDG content, case studies, and material available from significant sources (in most cases freely), such as UNCTAD, UN Agencies, etc., is regularly updated and aims at the reengineering of modules and internships of Universities and specialized research centers.
6. It is recommended that the student use HEAL with the requirement of delivering presentations and essays that fully comply with the standards of academic writing in various modules (examination form). It could be an exciting exercise for the students and a good opportunity for faculty members to include in modules the options for students to select a paper from HEAL and then to present and analyze it in the class for the benefit of all students (presentation as examination form - see also the recommendation on standardized examination forms).
7. Periodic updating of websites, enhancing the image of the department. It is also suggested a better utilization of social media.
8. Put into operation the already formalized "ADVISORY BOARD" involving Faculty, External Stakeholders, the Economic Chamber of Greece, and Alumni to improve interaction and communications to explore common interests and mutual benefits.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: **2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12.**

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: **1, 6, and 11.**

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

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

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

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname

Signature

1. **Prof. Dr-Ing Orestis Schinas (Chair)**
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