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HELLENIC REPUBLIC
H Q A
HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE
AND ACCREDITATION AGENCY

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

UNIVERSITY OF CRETE



Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση
Ευρωπαϊκό Κοινωνικό Ταμείο



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1. EXTERNAL EVALUATION COMMITTEE

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the University of Crete comprised the following five (5) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry kept by the HQA in accordance with Law 3374/2005 and the Law 4009/2011:

1. Prof. John Spiridakis (Chairman)
St. John's University, New York, NY, USA
2. Prof. Emer. Nicandros Bouras
King's College London, UK
3. Prof. Nikitas Dimopoulos
University of Victoria, Victoria, BC, Canada
4. Prof. Daniel Himarios
University of Texas at Arlington, TX, USA
5. Prof. Nikolaos Zahariadis
University of Alabama at Birmingham, AL, USA

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 The External Evaluation Procedure

- Dates and brief account of the site visit
- Whom did the Committee meet?
- List of Reports, documents, other data examined by the EEC
- Groups of teaching and administrative staff and students interviewed
- Facilities visited by the EEC

May 9, 2016, the EEC members began their work with an orientation briefing by the President and Vice President of HQA at the TEI of Crete.

The presentation addressed the role of the EEC and the nature of the criteria for evaluation.

The EEC then travelled to UoC and met with the Rector, Odysseas Zoras, Deputy Rector of Academic Affairs, Ioannis Karakassis, and Deputy Rector of Finance and Development, George Tsironis. Critical issues facing the university and several plans were discussed. UoC was founded in 1977 and today is comprised of 5 Schools and 16 Departments. The EEC met with ΜΟΔΙΠ, as well, to discuss the IER/SIER issues.

There are 18000 Undergraduate and Graduate students.

May 9, in the early afternoon, the EEC met with the President and Members of the Institution's Administration Council. The Council includes five UoC faculty members and four External members. Two of the External Members of the Council participated in the meeting through teleconferencing. The Council's chief function is to advise the Rector on economic matters and to approve budgets submitted by the Rector.

May 9, in the late afternoon, the EEC met with the Deans of Education, Social, Economic and Political Sciences, Sciences and Engineering, and Medicine. The EEC meeting also included the Chairs of the following Departments: Philology; History & Archaeology; Philosophy & Social Studies; Primary Education; Preschool Education; Sociology; Psychology; Political Sciences; Mathematics & Applied Mathematics; Physics; Biology; Chemistry; Computer Sciences; Materials Science & Technology; and Medicine.

May 10, early morning, the EEC members split into two groups and visited the two campuses simultaneously. A meeting was held with the faculty members from Departments housed in Heraklion and in Rethymnon. The relationship of the faculty with UoC Administration and with their students was discussed, among other things.

May 10, later in the morning, the EEC met with the Chief Administration Officers in Rethymnon. The EEC members in Heraklion participated through teleconference. The thirteen administrators discussed their duties and roles in the implementation of UoC strategic development and operation.

May 10, noontime, the EEC met with students from the various Departments to learn of their experiences relevant to QA measures regarding faculty engagement, coursework, research and services provided by UoC, in general. Some students in Rethymnon expressed disapproval of the external evaluation process, fearing it might lead to department closures or loss of funding.

May 10, late afternoon, the EEC members at each campus met with the Master's, Doctoral and Post-Doctoral level students from the various Departments. Their views were also obtained concerning their experience with the aforementioned areas.

May 10, evening, the EEC members in Rethymnon returned to join the other members in Heraklion. A meeting was held with ten alumni who shared their experiences with UoC. They had formed an alumni association a few months earlier with the hope of working with the new Rectorate to increase alumni involvement with UoC.

A meeting was later held with External Stakeholders representing private and public sectors, corporate, social and local authorities. Two representatives participated through teleconference.

Documents examined by the EEC included the Internal Evaluation Report (IER) prepared by MOΔIII, dated August 2015. The “Supplementary Internal Evaluation Report (SIER)” dated May, 2016, was provided to the EEC two weeks prior to our visit. A new Rector and Vice Rectors in place only a few months prior to our visit, introduced changes with the MOΔIII report. The SIER includes updated objectives that seem realistic and more feasible given the current economic realities. These are discussed in the relevant EEC report sections.

The EEC members visited several facilities including the libraries, administrative and academic offices, classrooms and lecture halls, student cafeterias, student Centres, Faculty of Medicine, and the Departments of Mathematics and Chemistry. The EEC visited the archaeological site connected to UoC (Ελευθερνα). The EEC received a pamphlet of information regarding the University Museum of Education.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&2.1):</i>		Tick
Worthy of merit		X
Positive evaluation		
Partially positive evaluation		
Negative evaluation		

Justify your rating:

The process was well organized and the team was received cordially by the entire university community.

2.2 The Self-Evaluation Procedure (p. 7-12)

Please comment on:

- Appropriateness of sources and documentation used

The sources and documentation used were appropriate to the self-evaluation procedure, as the Quality Assurance Unit of UoC (MOΔIII-UoC) was established according to the applicable legislation and approved by UoC Council.

- Quality and completeness of evidence provided and reviewed

The evidence provided and reviewed is considered comprehensive and of high quality, as the MOΔIII used the following evidence in its report:

1. The Departments’ Annual Internal Evaluation Reports (IERs).
2. The Annual Data and Indexes Report regarding Students, Teaching and Administrative Personnel, Financial Data, Research and Operation of the Administrative Services and other Units of the Institution.
3. Data used for the Institution’s participation to international H.E.I. Rankings.
4. Departments’ Academic Programmes and Websites.
5. Decisions of the Departments’ Meetings.

- The extent to which the objectives of the internal evaluation procedure have been met by the Institution

UoC has developed a culture of Quality Assurance through its Departmental IER procedures over the past several years. The newly installed Rectorate and MOΔIII-UoC recognize that the objectives of the internal evaluation procedure have not been fully met by the Institution. The plan has been formulated in terms of important objectives; the procedure currently in

place provides a general assessment of the current condition of UoC at present in terms of highlighting strengths and weaknesses. However, specific timetables are not provided.

- Description and Analysis of the Self-Evaluation Procedure in the Institution

The Self-Evaluation Procedure was carried out by the Quality Assurance Unit of UoC (MOΔIII-UoC) according to the applicable legislation and was approved by UoC Council.

- Analysis of the positive elements and difficulties which arose during the self-evaluation procedure

The knowledge and experience acquired through the procedure for writing the Internal and External Evaluation Reports of the Departments, together with further improvement and consolidation of the quality assurance procedures are considered as positive elements of the self-evaluation procedure. Furthermore, the use of numeric data and the creation of indexes have been established as feedback points and a base for continuous dialogue between MOΔIII-UoC and the Departments.

- Whether the self-evaluation procedure was comprehensive and interactive

The self-evaluation procedure was comprehensive and interactive, as it was conducted according to the applicable legislation and approved by UoC Senate. Parts of the IER were discussed at Departmental Meetings and the Final Report was discussed at the No. 334/23.4.2014 convention of the University's Senate.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&2.2):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	X
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating:

The self-evaluation procedure was conducted according to the rules and accepted standards. A missing part was the final step whereby procedures were not clearly established that guaranteed the implementation of the findings.

3. PROFILE OF THE INSTITUTION UNDER EVALUATION

3.1 Institutional Governance, Leadership & Strategy

Please comment on:

3.1.1 Vision, mission and goals of the Institution

- What are the Institution's mission and goals

The EEC received two documents that outline the vision and mission of the university; the August 2015 IER and the May 2016 SIER. The vision of the institution created by the new Administration is summarized in UoC-200-2025 (SIER, p. 9). The EEC is satisfied that the vision and mission outlined in the SIER provides a good foundation for building a strong strategic plan that has been adopted by the entire university.

- How are the goals achieved

The IER states that MOΔIII-UoC is responsible for the procedures in close contact with the Departments (IER, p.25). The SIER does not address this issue.

- Procedures established by the Institution to monitor the achievement of goals

The University uses MOΔIII-UoC and its procedures, based on continuing interaction with the Departments and their OMEAs, in order to ensure quality. It monitors the achievement of its goals with the following procedures:

1. The Departments present the Annual Report annually and the Internal Evaluation Report every four years.
2. MOΔIII-UoC presents the IER of the Institution every two years.
3. HQAA has organized the external evaluations of the Departments, which have been completed. UoC has a history of repeatedly seeking external evaluations by various institutions (e.g., the European University) and by an agency of "Euro-counselors."

The SIER has refined the procedures to be followed by MOΔIII-UoC and other relevant entities of the university.

- What is your assessment of the Institution's ability to improve

The EEC in its discussions with the wider university community was impressed by the commitment to excellence, enthusiasm and tenacity in the face of external difficulties. Based on this, the EEC believes that the institution has the ability to improve. However, the EEC strongly recommends that UoC institutes a formal process of measuring its progress against the goals set.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.1.1):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	X
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating:

While the EEC finds the Vision statement commendable, a proper strategic plan needs to be developed, **adopted** by the wider academic community and **approved** by the relevant university bodies.

3.1.2 Organizational Development Strategy

- Effectiveness of administrative officials
- Existence of effective operation regulations
- Specific goals and timetables
- Measures taken to reach goals

The institution is administered at several levels including the University, Faculties and Departments. At each level there is a properly constituted body. At the University level, the Rectorate, the Council and the Senate each play their distinct administrative roles (SIER, pp. 11-12).

Since Academic Departments are autonomous, the EEC feels that this may constrain the implementation of UoC's strategic plan.

The EEC in its discussions with the Rector and the Council was informed that the new internal organizational system (Εσωτερικός Κανονισμός) has not been approved by the Ministry of Education.

Given that a new Administration was recently installed, the specific goals and timetables are still under development.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.1.2):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	X
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating:

The tight regulatory environment created by factors external to the university hampers the ability of the university to fully develop its potential.

3.1.3 Academic Development Strategy

- Response of the Institution to Faculties and Departments
- Goals and timetables
- Measures taken to reach goals

Given the legal framework, Departments are operating autonomously. As the Institution itself recognizes, this hampers closer cooperation between the Institution and the Departments.

In discussions with various groups the EEC found a strong desire for greater cooperation among units and between the units and the Institution and certain measures have been taken to promote this goal with a strong emphasis on sharing resources and interdisciplinary offerings for both teaching and research purposes. Indeed, the Institution has set as a major goal the achievement of a more tightly knit relationship among the different departments of the same school. The SIER gives an excellent example of steps taken by the School of Sciences and Engineering (ΣΘΕΤΕ) to achieve such a goal. The institution should encourage/require other schools to the same. The SIER (pp. 13-4) lists additional goals and steps to enhance academic development most of which the EEC finds credible

in the face of shrinking resources. The timetable for the accomplishments of these goals remains undefined, however.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.1.3):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	X
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating:

In spite of shrinking resources, Faculties have been innovative and eager to adopt revisions and best practices.

3.1.4 Research Strategy

- Key points in research strategy
- Research strategy objectives and timetables for achieving them
- Laboratory research support network
- Research excellence network
- Existence of research assistance mechanisms (for preparing proposals, capitalising on patents and innovations, finding partners for research programmes, etc.)

The EEC found a strong culture of research across the Institution. **Excellence** in research was a key point that permeated the discussions of the EEC with all the units (i.e. Departments, Faculties, Rectorate). There is a high rate of peer-reviewed publications in high impact factor journals.

Along with excellence in research units expressed the desire/need for interdisciplinary research. Many of the goals listed are under the direct control of the Institution and depend on the willingness and efforts of the administration/faculty/staff; in this regard we find that many of the goals are realistic (credible) and achievable. The timetable, however, remains undefined and the discussion makes the goals dependent on mainly external factors (SIER, p.17).

The Institution has put in place a research assistance mechanism that seems to be consistent with international standards. The lack of specific data regarding the different forms of assistance offered during a specific period, however, hampers a direct evaluation of its effectiveness. It would be fair to state that the success of the research projects of the institution as a whole attests to its usefulness.

The EEC recommends that the position of Vice Rector for Research be created to signify the research prominence at UoC and to further oversee and enhance the already strong research culture at UoC.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.1.4):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	X
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating:

UoC has a very strong research ethic and performance.

3.1.5 Financial Strategy

- General financial strategy and management of national and international funds
- Regular budget management strategy
- Public investment management strategy
- Organisation and strategy of the Special Account for Research Funds (SARF)
- Organisation and strategy of the University Property Development and Management Company
- Existence of a Quality System for Financial Management (e.g. ISO), computerisation management and Budget monitoring (Regular Budget, Public Investments Programme, SARF Budget, etc.)

The Institution follows the practices prescribed by the legal framework for the management of public and international funds. In response to the reduction in public funding, the institution has undertaken and plans to undertake several measures to maintain and promote the smooth functioning of the institution. Noteworthy actions include (a) establishing a bidding process for services/purchases/contracts that has resulted in significant savings in several instances (anecdotal evidence), (b) attracting private donations, (c) more rational and effective use of real estate holdings, (d) the use of surplus funds from ΕΛΚΕ and ΑΔΙΠΠΚ to fund shortages from public funding and (e) the planned establishment of fee-based graduate programmes.

The institution has adopted a Quality System of Financial Management (ISO) to ensure transparency and efficiency in its financial management. Further details are provided in the SIER (pp.20-22).

We commend the university for trying to find ways to improve the functioning of ΕΛΚΕ and ΑΔΙΠΠΚ

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.1.5):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	X
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating:

The tight regulatory environment created by external to the university factors hampers the ability of the university to fully develop its potential.

3.1.6 Building and Grounds Infrastructure Strategy

- Strategy key points
- Objectives and timetables
- Measures taken to reach goals
- Deviations from model 1 campus/HEI

The key strategy of the institution to maintain and expand the existing infrastructure for the smooth operation of its teaching and research mission appears sensible. The EEC did, however, note a common concern among the various participants that the existence of two campuses imposes

additional challenges on the institution; this separation is viewed with mixed feelings among the various participants. The Institution itself comes to the conclusion that the existence of two separate campuses has had a negative influence on its development (model 1 campus/HEI). The EEC would like to note that since this separation is a matter of social policy which is unlikely to change, the institution should proceed with actions that minimize the difficulties that may be encountered by the physical separation of the two campuses and focus on efforts to “integrate” the two campuses in other ways.

Specific plans for further infrastructure development are listed on page 23 of the SIER and are in line with the objectives of the institution to serve its education, research and service to the community.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.1.6):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	X
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating:

The EEC was impressed by the very well kept and maintained campuses. In spite of the physical separation, the EEC noted a common set of values across the faculty and staff.

3.1.7 Environmental Strategy

- Recycling strategy and measures taken to reach goals
- Hazardous waste management and measures taken to reach goals
- Urban waste management and measures taken to reach goals
- Green energy strategy and measures taken to reach goals

Recycling efforts are evident throughout the campus. Of particular significance is the reduction in paper use (with reduced financial costs and footprint on the environment) achieved through electronic communications and e-learning processes. Again, however, the evidence is anecdotal and not based on direct figures for a specific period.

The institution has processes in place for the handling and disposal of hazardous materials and the education of personnel on safety issues. The institution has set a noteworthy goal of becoming “greener” which would both save resources and reduce its footprint on the environment. The effort is at the initial stages and progress has been made in the planning but the timetable remains undefined.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.1.7):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	X
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating:

The EEC noted creative ideas and plans for creating a greener and more cost efficient campus.

3.1.8 Social Strategy

- Exploitation and dissemination of the Institution's Research Activities for the benefit of society and economy
- Promotion of interaction between the Institution and the Labour Market
- Sustained relationships with key local and regional bodies
- Contribution to the cultural development of society, the city and the region
- Reciprocal and long-lasting relationship with the alumni community

The deep pride and love external stakeholders showed for the institution impressed the EEC. UoC maintains excellent relationships with local and regional civil authorities, and contributes ideally to the cultural outlook of the cities in which it is based (Rethymnon and Heraklion), the island of Crete, and the country. Representatives of several stakeholders, the commercial industry association (Εμπορικό Επιμελητήριο), representatives of local and regional governments, and employees from local firms, and the Friends of UoC (which has been active since the institution's inception) were complimentary and enthusiastic about the role UoC plays in their mission. The university works closely with their activities providing valuable scientific information and know-how – especially in technical areas such as computer science, marine aquaculture, and medicine – thereby contributing to the economic, social and cultural development of the local region and the entire island of Crete. Of note are the start-up companies in innovative technologies, information systems, and life sciences that promote the research and ultimately brand name of the university in the broader regional and Greek markets. The representatives were especially complimentary of UoC activities and institutional willingness to partner and collaborate with them holding events in town to showcase its knowledge and diffuse it to the broader community. To reciprocate, they were eager to establish closer partnerships, develop internships for current students, fund scholarships, and help recent graduates find employment.

The EEC recommends the following:

- There does not exist a clear institutional structure for the university to receive feedback from external stakeholders. The mostly *ad hoc* nature of such discussions dampens the huge enthusiasm and pride that currently exists among social partners. This structure could take the form of an annual (or semi-annual) meeting with external stakeholders to inform them about UoC activities and to listen to ideas, requests, needs, or concerns they may have about further collaborative activities. The point is not to report on or account for UoC activities but to find ways to more deeply embed activities of high value-added to the broader community.
- Although there exists an energetic Alumni Association of Post-Graduate Students, it is too recent (it was established only six months prior to the external evaluation) to show any promising or lasting impact on UoC activities. In addition, there is no UoC Alumni Association although some individual Departments maintain close contacts with their undergraduate alumni (προπτυχιακούς). As a result, the feedback and support UoC could receive from former students remains under-utilized. The EEC recommends the creation and active support of such an umbrella association for undergraduate and post-graduate alumni that could benefit the University, maximizing collaborations. The EEC feels that in the near future, the Alumni Association should play an increasingly important role in University activities. For instance, one of the stakeholders expressed the desire to see further consultation between UoC and external holders in designing academic and professional Programmes that could more directly benefit local industry. Examples of such Programmes include intensive focus on tourism and agriculture.
- While commercial activities and partnerships are important vehicles for disseminating information about UoC, there is room for more activities and events to showcase the humanities and social science work for which the university is less well known in the local community. Examples could be lectures, events, or artistic happenings involving faculty and students that would focus more sharply on issues of local history and culture.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.1.8):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	X
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating:

The external stakeholders are extremely supportive of UoC.

3.1.9 Internationalization Strategy

- Integration of the international dimension in the curricula
- Integration of the international dimension in research
- Integration of the intercultural dimension within the campus
- Participation in international HEI networks
- Collaboration with HEIs in other countries (with a specific collaboration agreement) - measures taken to reach goals

The degree of internationalization is good overall, but it is uneven for different schools and offices. There is a need for greater systematic and systemic effort to internationalize the institution. On the positive side, UoC maintains cooperation of student exchange with several institutions on a bilateral basis and through the Erasmus and Erasmus Plus Programmes. This is an important part of the internationalization strategy that also seeks to attract international students and researchers to the facilities in Crete. Moreover, the fact that researchers have had great success in attracting external grants by the European Union is a testament to the growing links with other parts of Europe and Asia. In terms of delivering Programmes that may attract international students, UoC has been less successful partly because of the language of instruction (the overwhelming majority of Programmes are in Greek) and partly because of lack of marketing these Programmes abroad. There also appeared to be some confusion among students and alumni as to the ability or willingness of various Departments to offer Programmes in foreign languages. Some students informed the EEC, there were no such Programmes, others said there were, and others noted recent changes in the law that rendered problematic development of such Programmes. It is possible discrepancies are due to changes in the legal and institutional framework external to the university, but the EEC believes the administration can do a better job of informing students as to the availability of such Programmes. If current students are confused or not aware, surely potential future students will be even more confused and unsure.

The intercultural dimension did not appear to be particularly prominently integrated within campus. This might be due to the lack of indicators (numbers exist for international researchers but were not provided for undergraduate or graduate students institution-wide).

It is also noteworthy that participation in international networks of institutions of higher education, as is noted in the SIER, may help UoC rise in the rankings by making its activities more widely known. However, clear evidence is warranted in the SIER of the impact and sustainability of these relationships. To make such participation more effective, it may be more productive to specify clearer goals and outcomes, such as track how many collaborative projects have been started or implemented as a result of this kind of participation.

In terms of recommendations, the EEC suggests the following improvements:

- Identify and publicize numeric indicators and targets of internationalization. This might be done on an annual basis within, say, a four-year time horizon where data can be collected on the number of international graduate students or researchers attending UoC in a given year. The target specifies the goal to be achieved while collected data represent actual performance. This can be publicized, i.e., placed on the website, so that all stakeholders may have be able to track the university's performance on an annual basis. Every four years,

UoC may revisit these targets and indicators to identify obstacles or constraints and devise strategies that may more easily identify targeted solutions to specific problems.

- Identify ways to attract and retain international undergraduate students.
- Develop themed summer camps for rising high school seniors offering some support for meritorious or needy students. In addition to any cultural or academic merit, they might serve as potential student recruitment vehicles.
- Create a central strategy that requests from individual Faculties and relevant Offices to systematically devise suitable strategies and indicators of internationalization of the curriculum.
- Develop a strategy to fund more professional activities in international forums by UoC faculty and staff from less well-funded Programmes (or Programmes where external funds for such activities are limited). To aid professional development, the strategy should include specific outcomes and be geared more (but not exclusively) toward assisting junior faculty.
- Institutionalize feedback mechanisms that identify the most efficient and effective internationalization practices. This may involve a meeting of relevant officers every three months or so, who report on successful (or not) internationalization activities and allow other Offices and Departments to draw lessons, provide feedback, or adapt successful practices in different environments.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.1.9):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	X
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating:

UoC is committed to improving and expanding its internationalization efforts.

3.1.10 Student Welfare Strategy

- Student hostel operation and development strategy
- Student refectory development strategy
- Scholarships and prizes strategy
- Sports facilities operation and development strategy
- Cultural activities strategy
- Strategy for people with special needs

According to the IER, the University places great emphasis on the quality of services provided for the welfare and support of students. As an example, it provides room and board for qualified students, while the university also provides access to health and electronic services. A particularly acute problem is the lack of dormitory space for the student size of the university. There exist three dormitories with 261 rooms (the last dormitory with 87-room capacity became operational in 2015) in a university of 16,072 active undergraduate and graduate students. Capacity is clearly inadequate to house even a small fraction of students, raising the price of attendance and lowering the university's appeal. Given that many students come from other parts of Greece, this presents a major problem that has not yet been adequately addressed. The EEC is happy to learn that UoC administration is aware of the problem and that it is working diligently within its means to address it. Of particular note is the willingness of the university to identify resources to provide scholarships to meritorious students, thereby making attendance more cost-effective.

In addition, the recent digitization of applications for food and housing services as well as electronic

alert systems are welcome improvements in student services. They are, however, too recent for the EEC to evaluate their effectiveness. But the EEC stresses they do point in the right direction. The University also offers resources for sports and cultural activities. The structure, opportunities, and availability of the sport facilities and activities are well designed, facilitating the exercise and training of students. Given the fact that UoC operates in two campuses, Rethymnon and Heraklion, it is good to see that sports facilities exist in both campuses despite potential diseconomies of scale. There exist counseling and disability support services for students that are accommodating and student-friendly. UoC is aware of the issue of making facilities more handicap-accessible. The EEC also noted with pleasure the existence of a Students' Advocate who is working diligently to resolve student issues.

In terms of recommendations for improvements, the EEC suggests the following:

- Address student housing to the extent possible and within the financial constraints UoC operates. In case of inability to build more dormitories, create a permanent student-affairs structure whose composition would include members of the central administration, faculty, and students. Its purpose would be: 1. To "officially" record refectory and housing needs and 2. Plan and execute solutions to these issues by streamlining them with UoC's strategic goals and disseminating information to students so that their voice is heard and needs met (to the extent possible).
- Create permanent information dissemination structures that go beyond electronic feedback. Perhaps the creation of a "one-stop shop" station for students in each campus would provide valuable information especially for first-year students who need to adjust to a demanding and unfamiliar environment. For example, the station could be staffed by upper-division, specially trained students who would be "ambassadors" for newcomers. This not only minimizes cost but also potentially helps students acclimate easier and faster if their peers appear to be willing to help. The types of issues this station could address would be informational (e.g., where is the refectory?) and constructive (e.g., which office publishes what certificates or are there counseling services that can help me with a particular problem?). The aim is not to act as a separate bureaucracy but to help students cut through it.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.1.10):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	X
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating:

The EEC found student welfare policies and performance of UoC to be highly satisfactory.

3.2 Strategy for Study Programmes

3.2.1 Programmes of Undergraduate Studies (first cycle)

Please comment on:

- the main strengths and weaknesses of the Programmes

The main strengths include:

A well-structured programme of undergraduate studies with an enriched curriculum of core courses and electives across the different academic departments.

The undergraduate studies programmes follow current requirements of educational attainments enhanced in theoretical knowledge and most importantly linked with applied practical involvement and research evidence base.

There is a systematic use of modern technology and regular open communication between faculty

teaching members and faculty students.

Faculty teaching members are of high standards enthusiastic and committed to their duties. There are impressive laboratories of high modern standards for practical exercises related to relevant studies programmes and to the academic subject.

The systematic collection of student evaluations from all courses will contribute to the improvement of the learning environment.

There is an ongoing strong Erasmus activity across most of the Departments.

The main weaknesses include:

Large number of students that increase at an unpredictable rate.

Delay in the completion of studies that varies among the different departments, and a reduction to the number of faculty members especially of sessionals (ΠΔ 407)

An imbalance in the proportion of students / teaching staff, administrative staff, laboratory facilities due to the large numbers of new students allocated to UoC every year by the Ministry of Education.

Possible shortage of teachers in specific subjects.

There is an issue that the entry criteria for UoC can be lower than of several other Greek Universities.

Shortage of funds to maintain and expand laboratories.

Poor attendance by students in lecture courses.

In addition the geographical position of UoC is not very attractive to students while the economic crisis of the Country in recent years has worsened the situation.

- The basic obligations of students, e.g. attendance of lectures, course requirements, etc.

Register and successfully complete the courses that define the programme curriculum; the curricula are a combination of core and elective courses. However, the EEC noted that in several courses, students were not obliged to attend lectures. This may be a contributing factor to students delaying their graduation. The EEC would like to urge the Institution to examine whether the introduction of incentives of attending lectures may improve graduation rates. The EEC also noted that prerequisites are not defined for several courses. The EEC thinks that the absence of prerequisites (or other controls to ensure that students are adequately prepared for the course they attempt) negatively affects the comprehension of the course material, and urges UoC to introduce methods that ensure that students are adequately prepared for the courses they attend.

- The way the Central Administration of the Institution deals with any remarks and recommendations that the external experts pointed out in the External Evaluation of Academic Units.

UoC has systematically reviewed the External Evaluation reports of all Schools and addressed and implemented many recommendations included in the reports. It should be pointed out that several recommendations of the external evaluations of the different departments cannot be fully addressed because of the very tight level of control of the central government over the number of incoming students and their academic preferences, as well as the serious and continuing budgetary cuts without concessions and flexibility in resolving resource constraints.

The Central Administration:

- is well structured with efficient human resources in facilitating and directly supporting the implementation of the recommendations presented in the External Evaluation reports of the Schools.
- has been very active in identifying funding programmes
- funds high level research of new researchers and offers a prize to the best one
- offers and facilitates scholarships
- promotes the improvement of access to all facilities of UoC to people with special needs
- has made available an electronic allocation of teaching rooms
- has been considering introducing assessment for plagiarism

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.2.1):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	X
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating:

The above rating is a reflection of how funding cuts, increases in student numbers, and loss of faculty and staff members are jeopardizing the quality of education, which requires lower student to faculty ratios than current in all departments. It is also a reflection of lingering issues such as the lack of a method for enforcing course prerequisites and creating new sources of revenue (e.g., tuition for other educational programmes to support undergraduate education). Nevertheless, UoC administration, faculty, and staff must be commended for introducing several innovations and for efforts made towards maintaining the quality of education despite all the external obstacles.

3.2.2 Programmes of Postgraduate Studies (second cycle)

Please comment on:

- the main strengths and weaknesses of the Programmes

UoC currently offers several postgraduate programmes that lead to the equivalent of a Master's degree.

The EEC finds that postgraduate programmes cover a wide spectrum of topics related to different relevant departments. All Programmes appear to have concrete study plans and they cover an impressive range of fields and topics. Requirements, success of recruiting, and selection of students varies by programme. The EEC had an opportunity to speak to several postgraduate students during the site visit and there was an overall satisfaction with their experience though not all the postgraduate students have the same opportunities and similar quality of facilities.

The EEC welcomes the delivery of postgraduate programmes in Greek and English that might also attract fee-paying students from a wider geographical spectrum.

The EEC noticed that some postgraduate programmes have an unusually large number of students and is wondering about their sustainability particularly under the current financial constraints.

- the basic obligations of students, e.g. attendance of lectures, course requirements, etc.

The postgraduate programmes require enrolled students to take courses and to conduct research-oriented projects and final theses. The ECTS requirements differ by programme.

- the way the Central Administration of the Institution deals with any remarks and recommendations that the external experts pointed out in the External Evaluation of Academic Units

The external review of the Departments and their postgraduate programmes is forwarded to the individual Departments by the University Central Administration to address the recommendations and make the suggested improvements. Suggested improvements to postgraduate programmes are discussed by the Faculty and may be adopted and incorporated during the regular programme review periods. The EEC believes that the central administration of the institution deals effectively with the recommendations by external experts through the mediating and effective role of ΜΟΔΙΠ, with quality being the basic guiding principle.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (& 3.2.2):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	X
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating:

UoC currently has several postgraduate programmes that appear to be following a cohesive set of educational and research directions that provide a documented noticeable advantage for University. The current range of postgraduate studies can facilitate the creation of centres of excellence in several subjects particularly with the availability of several impressive laboratory facilities.

3.2.3 Programmes of Doctoral Studies (third cycle)

Please comment on:

- the main strengths and weaknesses of the Programmes
- the basic obligations of students, e.g. attendance of lectures, course requirements, etc.
- the way the Central Administration of the Institution deals with any remarks and recommendations that the external experts pointed out in the External Evaluation of Academic Units

Doctoral studies are offered by most of the departments of UoC. The number of registered Doctoral students varies across the different Departments. The timing of the completion rate varies and that might be a symptom of lack of consistency among different supervisors and tutors.

From discussion with Doctoral students the EEC understands there is a positive interaction between students and advisors/supervisors. Some opportunities for gaining paid teaching experience exist and they are welcomed. The funding mechanism for travel to conferences is rapidly decreasing and might cover only a fraction of actual expenses. This excludes students that do not have other sources of income and pushes students to conferences that are less prestigious, inhibiting their career development. In spite of all these impediments the EEC had the opportunity to meet and discuss issues with Doctoral graduates who hold currently in very competitive positions in industry and academia. The EEC recommends the promotion and establishment of doctoral student seminars, where students are given a chance to discuss their research and exchange ideas with other students and faculty.

The EEC recommends that it is necessary to update continuously the lists and status of all Doctoral students.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (& 3.2.3):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	X
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating:

UoC currently has many Doctoral programmes that, in similar ways to the postgraduate programmes appear to be following a cohesive set of strong directions (e.g., research clusters) to provide a competitive advantage for UoC. The current centres of excellence at UoC could be used as “seed” to create clusters of research development as well as targeting Doctoral student support.

3.3 Profile of the Institution under evaluation - Conclusions and recommendations

*Please complete the following sections regarding the overall **profile of the Institution under evaluation**:*

- Underline specific positive points:*
 - Exceptional research
 - Highly motivated and successful faculty and responsive and efficient administrative staff.
 - Dynamic and committed leadership.
 - Positive student-faculty environment
 - Commitment and contributions to the local and regional communities.
- Underline specific negative points:*

Factors beyond the direct control of the university regarding finances and faculty and student management create obstacles to the progress of the university.
- Make your suggestions for further development of the positive points:*
- Make your suggestions on needed steps for improvement:*

Create mechanisms of support for faculty development.

4. INTERNAL SYSTEM OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

4.1 Quality Assurance (QA) Policy and Strategy

Please comment on:

- the Institution's policy and goals regarding QA and Improvement
- whether the Institution has developed a specific system of QA
- how the Institution's internal QA system has been organized
- how the students and staff of the Institution are protected from biased interventions and discriminations
- whether a detailed implementation guide has been put together, containing an analysis of the QA system's operating procedures
- the involvement of students in QA
- how the Institution evaluates the effectiveness of its QA system regarding the achievement of its goals

UoC, in its self-evaluation study, has made very strong and very positive statements in support of quality assurance. We quote the following statement from their self-evaluation study (IER), which the EEC has found most appropriate.

“Το Π.Κ. θεωρεί ότι η συστηματική αξιολόγηση του εκπαιδευτικού και ερευνητικού έργου των Ακαδημαϊκών Τμημάτων και των Υπηρεσιών του εν γένει, τόσο μέσω εσωτερικών όσο και εξωτερικών διαδικασιών αξιολόγησης, είναι συνυφασμένη με τη διαρκή προσπάθεια για βελτίωση της ποιότητας του Ιδρύματος, με στόχο την εκπλήρωση της αποστολής του Πανεπιστημίου μέσα σε ένα δύσκολο εσωτερικό και απαιτητικό διεθνές περιβάλλον.”

During our visit, the administration and the committees responsible of implementing QA were also very supportive. They stated that UoC had used an external evaluation even before HQA mandated the current system of external evaluations. UoC's administration and members of the academic community repeatedly and proudly stated that UoC has included the achievement of excellence as a goal right from its inception and that external evaluations are a mechanism that can help them improve quality in their quest of excellence.

UoC has developed a system of QA that includes department-level committees (OMEA) and a University-level committee (MOΔΙΠ), and involves faculty at the department level in the study of the findings of these committees. UoC (through its MOΔΙΠ) has developed an electronic system of collecting appropriate data that would feed the process.

The data collected at this point include student evaluations of the courses offered, as well as annual activity reports of the faculty (απογραφικά).

The departmental-level committees (OMEA) collect and analyse the data obtained through the instruments discussed above (i.e. the course evaluations and the faculty activity reports) and then draft an annual report, which is discussed at a special meeting (Γενική Συνέλευση) of the Department. The report is then forwarded to the University-level committee (MOΔΙΠ). These reports include an analysis of the departmental EEC reports, including recommendations for improvement and the status of the implementation of these recommendations.

It is not clear though whether the loop has been closed, i.e. whether UoC's administration has utilized these reports to effect improvements or it is using these reports to just monitor the state of affairs of the Departments.

It seems that all the stakeholders i.e. OMEA and MOΔΙΠ are aware of the procedures involved; however, the EEC was not provided with a concise guide describing these processes and procedures.

There is evidence of an attempt to collect data that would provide a robust view of the quality of the evaluated entity. For example, UoC collects course evaluations as well as course reports (απογραφικό μαθήματος). While course evaluations provide the students' point of view of the quality of instruction, the course report provides the instructor's point of view as well as factual

data concerning the syllabus and the methodology of instruction. These two instruments provide complementary and occasionally counterbalancing information in an effort to eliminate biases.

However, biases may still remain especially when the quality of instruction is concerned. An additional process that may prove useful is that of peer evaluations where small teams of faculty members are invited to observe the delivery of instruction and report on its quality.

Additionally, it is well known that electronic course evaluations have a very low participation rate. UoC reports an average participation rate of 10% (page 233 of UoC's IER), which makes the data collected through such instruments statistically non-robust.

Most of the evaluation instruments developed measure attributes of the program as delivered rather than attributes that would determine qualities of the graduates. This learning outcomes-based process has started to be implemented abroad, and UoC should consider including it in its set of tools in its quest of excellence.

The evaluation process as implemented at UoC is still at its early stage. It seems that the data collection and analysis processes have been implemented and the results have been reported at both the departmental and university levels. Also, it seems that significant actions have been taken at the departmental level to implement the recommendations made by the departmental EECs. However, there is no evidence of a central authority having the overall responsibility of determining priorities, implementing changes and monitoring improvements.

The EEC recommends that UoC:

- Improve the existing MOΔIII-OMEA structure by introducing a feedback mechanism where priorities can be established, and the pace of implementing changes can be monitored and facilitated.
- Consider introducing additional metrics to allow for triangulation (i.e., measuring the same attribute from different points of view).
- Consider exploring outcomes-based evaluation.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&4.1):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	X
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating:

UoC has a tradition of using external evaluations to improve quality in its pursuit for excellence. It has had external evaluations before the HQAA mandated ones. Presently, it has implemented a robust two-level system (MOΔIII-OMEA) to collect and analyse relevant data and recommendations. However, it is not evident that this system has clear and effective feedback processes that will ensure the implementation of changes and the monitoring improvements.

4.2 Design, approval, monitoring and evaluation of the study programmes and degrees awarded

Please comment on:

- whether the learning outcomes have been clearly formulated and whether they have been published
- whether the programmes are designed in such a way as to involve students and other stakeholders in the work
- how the achievement of learning outcomes is monitored
- whether there is a published Guide regarding the organization of programmes of study
- whether the ECTS system is taken into consideration and implemented
- whether there is a periodic evaluation of the programmes according to set procedures and criteria aimed at safeguarding their consistency and regular updating
- the student participation in the QA procedure of the study programmes
- whether the programmes include well-structured international mobility and -where appropriate- placement opportunities

The academic programmes of UoC are designed, reviewed, and modified by its Departments on a regular basis. Programme descriptions are available both in electronic and printed forms. Modifications are approved by UoC Senate. Assessment of Programmes is supervised by pertinent committees at the department level, i.e. the Departmental QA Team (OMEA) that provides regular input to MOΔIII-UoC (and related information systems and services). Students participate in the QA of programmes in various ways, mainly through quantitative course evaluations (survey questionnaires), participation in undergraduate programmes committees, and to a lesser extent job placements and qualitative interview data about general levels of satisfaction. The programmes include well-structured international links, collaborations and placement opportunities for both faculty and students (the EU ERASMUS+ programme, etc.). The EEC noticed that there are arising numerous external constraints, primarily from conflicting legislation and regulations, that significantly worsen the overall environment for enhancing quality of programmes, with significantly higher quotas of students for entry at several leading departments in the past years, loss of faculty as a result of on-going retirements and study leaves abroad, lack of available on-going recruits for new posts in all departments, etc.

The EEC recommends the following:

- The programmes should clearly formulate and publish learning outcomes at the programme level and use quantitative and/or qualitative metrics to show their level of achievement in each and every case. The learning outcomes should be compatible with the pertinent National (or European) Framework(s) describing the qualities of graduates at any exit level of Higher Education. The Departments should then make sure that graduates satisfactorily cover the above criteria and can be credibly assessed within specific framework(s).
- The programme assessment process should be defined in terms of data selection methods (quantitative or/and qualitative), data analysis and evaluation methods, and pertinent actions and reactions/feedback with clear leadership involvement, for assessing and rewarding quality enhancement both bottom-up (OMEA to Head of the Department to Faculty) and top-down (Vice-Rector to MOΔIII to OMEAs); it should also be aligned with programme learning outcomes according to National (or European) framework(s).
- Alternative methods should be identified to address the low student attendance of courses whenever existing methods do not work as expected (e.g., use of student ambassadors, student mentors, etc.).
- The EEC encourages the continuation and possible expansion of actions to strengthen not only the critical and academically reflective part of the learning outcomes, but also the practical/hands-on component in the academic programmes, such as small group course projects, practical training, educational trips, individual work-place placements, etc.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&4.2):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	X
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating:

Learning outcomes are not yet clearly defined and embedded in UoC courses. OMEA needs to be linked formally to the leadership of departments and student bodies; and processes should be strengthened to take into account the student feedback and help the faculty improve their courses and satisfy the needs of students and linked stakeholders.

4.3 Teaching and learning - Assessment by students

Please comment on:

- whether multiple and coherent learning paths are provided according to the needs of students in the Institution's Departments / Faculties
- how proper guidance and support is offered to students by the Departments / Faculties' teaching staff
- whether students are informed clearly and in detail regarding the strategy of evaluation that is implemented for their programme of study, the exams or other methods of assessment they will be subjected to, what is expected of them and which criteria will be applied for the evaluation of their performance
- whether there is a formal procedure for addressing complaints and objections by students in the Departments / Faculties of the Institution

The Programmes of study include a set of mandatory courses and a set of electives a student may choose. The set of electives include courses from other departments and Faculties.

UoC has implemented the faculty advisor system whereby each faculty member is assigned a group of students and in certain departments, a student has access to two advisors.

Faculty interviewed by the EEC stated that they have implemented an open door policy whereby they encourage students to meet with them.

The EEC in talking to graduate students was told that graduate students are also involved in interfacing with undergraduate students and stated that they believe that undergraduates would feel more natural interacting with them (graduate students) than faculty.

Although the EEC was not provided with course syllabi to determine directly whether the students were provided with adequate information concerning the courses they attend, the "Course Report" (Απογραφικό Δελτίο Εξαμηνιαίου Μαθήματος <https://modip.uoc.gr/sites/default/files/files/ver3modipApografikodeltiomathimatos1192015.pdf>)

provides evidence that this information is made available to students. In particular, it asks the faculty teaching the course to provide the course outcomes, whether there are office hours, whether the students made use of the office hours, the method of assessment. The EEC was therefore satisfied that there is enough evidence to ensure that students are provided adequate description of the course objectives and the methods used to assess their performance.

The EEC was not presented with a formal way of addressing student complaints at the department level apart from faculty availability to students. However, at the University level, UoC has established the office of the Students' Advocate. The Students' Advocate (Professor Emerita

Σωσάννη Παπαδοπούλου) is very active and is supported by the appropriate secretarial services. The Students' Advocate provides an annual report to the Senate summarizing her activities.

The EEC is satisfied that UoC is providing good support to students as they progress through their studies ensuring that the students are provided with the specific course syllabi and method of assessment. The EEC is also satisfied that at the University level, the Students' Advocate provides an invaluable service to the student body.

However, the EEC did not find an organized framework of guidance and support at the department level.

The EEC would like to recommend that the undergraduate student advisor and the graduate student advisor roles be introduced at the department level to ensure a single point of reference for guidance and support for undergraduate and graduate (i.e. master's and doctoral) students respectively.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&4.3):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	X
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating:

The EEC is satisfied that the students are given adequate guidance and support. However, these services would be improved should the departments adopt the offices of undergraduate and graduate student advisors.

4.4 Admission of students, progression and recognition of studies

Please comment on:

- whether the procedures and criteria for admission to the second and third cycle of studies are implemented with consistency and transparency

The criteria for admission are published on the websites of the corresponding Programmes. These vary based on entrance exams to a basket of criteria that may include the grade of the previous degree, the grades of a set of relevant courses, interviews etc. Exams are prevalent in social sciences.

- whether there are clear and distinct procedures within the Departments/Faculties, as regards recognition of higher education degrees, periods of study and knowledge acquired at an earlier stage
- whether there are clear and distinct procedures of recognition of study periods and prior learning (including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning)

The internal evaluation report of UoC states that foreign degree credentials are certified by the National Academic Recognition Information Centre (ΔΟΑΤΑΠ).

It also provides a list of relevant criteria and regulations concerning the recognition of periods of studies in other institutions both in Greece and abroad (c.f. pages 226 and 227 of UoC IER.

- whether there are clear procedures in place regarding the cooperation of other Institutions with national ENIC/NARIC centres for ensuring coherent recognition and mobility among programmes within / among Institution (s)

These are governed by relevant agreements with other institutions including UoC's participation in the Erasmus program.

- whether students are provided with detailed information (e.g. Diploma Supplement) regarding the degrees conferred to them, the achieved learning outcomes as well as the framework, the level and the content of studies they successfully completed

According to UoC, all students are provided with a diploma supplement in both Greek and English listing the ECTS units they obtained.

- whether the Institution has in place processes and tools to collect, monitor and use information regarding student progression

UoC monitors the progress of the students (both graduate and undergraduate) collectively through the data collected by OMEA-MOΔIII.

The IER of UoC states (p. 221) that according to law 4009/2011 each department has established the position of the Academic Advisor. The same is stated on UoC's website (<http://www.uoc.gr/studies-at-uni/counseling/symvouleutiki.html>). However, the person(s) who are the departmental advisors are not necessarily easily identified on the departmental websites. The SIER dated May 2016 states that at the departmental level, the Academic Advisors monitor the progression of studies of the students in their departments.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&4.4):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	X
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating:

Based on the discussion above, UoC has instituted all the processes and procedures necessary for the admission (of second and third cycle) students, the monitoring of their progression and the recognition of their prior degrees and studies where applicable.

A serious issue though is related to the admission of undergraduate students, as this is controlled centrally by the Ministry of Education. There is evidence that a much larger number of undergraduate students are admitted to the undergraduate Programmes of UoC than the number of students the University can educate with its current resources.

Additionally, many students with low academic achievement, especially in the relevant field of studies for the degree they were admitted for, are admitted to UoC. This situation is unacceptable as it undermines the academic standards; overcrowding does disservice to the learning process and prevents UoC from achieving excellence.

4.5 Quality Assurance as regards the teaching staff

Please comment on:

- how it is guaranteed that the vacancy notices and recruitment of teaching staff include procedures which provide assurance that all new teaching staff members have at least the basic teaching skills

The SIER states that the procedures for and the qualifications of candidate faculty are defined by the relevant legal framework and that UoC adheres to it.

- opportunities offered to the teaching staff for their professional/scientific advancement

The SIER states that faculty have the opportunity of sabbaticals, mobility and educational seminars organized by UoC or other institutions. Also, faculty has access to funding through ELKE especially young faculty who are given priority.

- how potential weaknesses of the teaching staff are identified as regards the delivery of their teaching courses

These are recognized through the course evaluations. However, this method may not be as robust as desired. The current course evaluations, being collected electronically, show a very low participation rate which does not provide statistically robust data one can use to obtain correct conclusions. Further, it only provides evidence from the student point of view. This evidence may be tainted because of the difficulty of the material or from facts such as the time the course is offered.

A more robust environment would require obtaining supplemental evidence such as the one provided through peer evaluations.

- the Institution's procedures for the support of new teaching staff as regards the teaching and evaluation methods

There is no evidence of procedures to support new teaching staff as regards teaching methods. Additionally, there is no evidence of similar support for established faculty.

Such supporting structures are common in institutions abroad - called Learning and Teaching Centres (LTC). LTCs provide a number of services available to all faculty including state of the art techniques to improve instruction.

- how scientific activity is assessed and encouraged among the teaching staff in order to strengthen the connection between education and research

The faculty at UoC are, by and large, active in research. As such, they introduce the latest research findings in their courses. Additionally, in several departments, undergraduate students are given the opportunity to be involved in the research Programmes of faculty invited to join their research teams and help in the labs.

- the procedures in place so that the teaching staff members receive the necessary feedback on their personal performance as well as on the opinion of students

The faculty are provided with the course evaluations of the courses they taught. The same is provided to the Chair of the Department and the departmental OMEA. However, there is no evidence that there is a mechanism through which a relevant authority, e.g., the Chair of the Department, can provide feedback and advice as to the teaching, research or university service performance of the faculty member. The evidence is that such evaluation happens only when the faculty member is applying for promotion.

The standards at several institutions abroad are that the Chair (or a committee) would evaluate faculty members on an annual basis, especially young faculty members. Also, in cases where far below normal evaluations are obtained, especially in teaching, the Chair would consult with the affected faculty and would try to plan for corrective action.

- whether a regulatory framework is in place for the investigation of disciplinary and academic misconduct of the teaching staff

The SIER states that such issues are governed by relevant legislation and regulatory framework. Certain serious matters such as plagiarism are referred to special committees and may result in dismissal.

The EEC recommends that:

The University establish a Learning and Teaching Centre to contribute to the improvement of the instructional capabilities of UoC and make websites such as Lynda.com available to faculty to enhance faculty-student engagement.

The University establish a framework and resources through which Chairs of Departments could provide feedback on faculty effectiveness and facilitate corrective actions where necessary.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&4.5):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	X
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating:

As per the discussion above, there is a legal and regulatory framework that governs the many aspects of the academic life of faculty ranging from hiring procedures to detecting and addressing misconduct.

However, for many aspects UoC environment lacks processes through which the administration could intervene at an earlier stage to improve the effectiveness of faculty; nor are there services that are recommended or can be accessed by the faculty for the same purpose.

4.6 Learning resources and student support

Please comment on:

- whether there are procedures for the systematic monitoring, evaluation, review and improvement of the appropriateness and effectiveness of supporting services available to students

The academic program evaluation completed by students requires them to provide information as to the services provided. Additionally, the Students' Advocate can identify and provide an opinion as to missing services. Such opinions may be triggered through a student complaint or independently by the Students' Advocate.

- the available support services in regard to Libraries, Information systems and infrastructure

The Library is housed in its own building that is well designed and staffed by sufficient personnel. It is member of the Greek Library Association through which it can provide increased services.

However, the recent financial crisis has resulted in large cuts to the budget and forced the library to not have access to some very critical collections, e.g., IEEE.

- the procedure in place for offering individual assistance (counselling and tutoring) to students

The EEC, in its interviews with students and faculty, was provided evidence of the involvement of graduate students and faculty in tutoring students. Most impressive was the venue shown to EEC by the Department of Mathematics where large lounges were used for two-hour tutorials where the faculty in charge aided by graduate students would help undergraduate students as they solved assigned problems.

The EEC would like to recommend that more funds be allocated to reinstate the most important journal subscriptions.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&4.6):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	X
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating:

As per the discussion above and noting the severe budgetary constraints to the library.

4.7 Information Systems for Recording and Analysing Data and Indicators

Please comment on:

- whether the Institution possesses reliable means for collecting, analysing and utilizing valid information in respect to key performance indicators, the profile of the student population and student progression, success and drop-out rates

UoC has developed an integrated information system (ΟΠΣ) that is used to collect a series of data including data from course evaluations, student records, faculty annual reports etc. ΜΟΔΙΠ is using the system to extract relevant indicators. However, some indicators related to the drop-out rate or to the students transferring out of UoC were missing.

- whether the Institution possesses reliable means for collecting, analysing and utilizing valid information regarding its other functions and activities

The IER includes a large number of data and indicators derived from the data collected by ΟΠΣ. These include number of faculty, number of students in each department and in graduate and doctoral studies, budget data, courses offered, questionnaires completed etc. The EEC believes that UoC has developed an excellent tool through which it can collect, and manage data and extract the indicators it needs.

- whether the Institution collects information about student satisfaction with their programmes of study and the career paths offered to graduates

The EEC was given evidence that this information is collected through relevant questionnaires especially at graduation.

However, the EEC would like to recommend that UoC should develop a system of keeping track and regularly contacting its alumni, e.g. providing its alumni with a stable UoC email address. An email address that is not randomly created, rather one that would identify its owner.

- whether the Institution seeks comparison with other similar establishments within and beyond the European Higher Education Area, with a view to developing self-awareness and finding ways to improve its operation

UoC has taken steps to be included in several world-wide university-ranking surveys (e.g., *Times Higher Education*) where it has placed enviably high. UoC is to be congratulated for its foresight in being included in such rankings and for its excellent placement in such rankings.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&4.7):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	X
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating:

As per the discussion above and noting the excellent placement in world university ranking surveys.

4.8 Dissemination of information to stakeholders

Please comment on:

- how the Institution sees to the publication of information on the programmes offered, the expected learning outcomes, the degrees awarded, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures it uses and the learning opportunities it offers to students
- whether the information regarding the Institution's offered programmes of study is available in English or in other languages
- whether the teaching staff's CVs are included in the publicized information, both in Greek and in English

UoC uses the world-wide web effectively. Its Institutional web presence is well thought out and consistent.

Information that influences the quality of undergraduate and postgraduate Programmes is published in the homepage of each department in both Greek and English. The CVs of administrators and academic staff are published in the homepages as well.

However, there are some inconsistencies in translating Greek terms to English. An example is that of the Faculty of Sciences. The official Greek title for this Faculty is "Σχολή Θετικών και Τεχνολογικών Επιστημών". This is translated as "School of Sciences and Engineering". The term Engineering has certain established connotations one of which is the awarding of an engineering degree. This is not the case for the University of Crete.

In general, a lot of information regarding research grants and international awards of faculty and students is regularly published, which contributes to information dissemination and improves the University's quality and reputation. However, some information on the web is dated or incomplete; for example, some faculty have left but remain on the website as current members of the Department. In other cases, such as the Centre for European Studies, the website is not available in the Greek version of the website although the English version directs the reader to the Director's personal website.

The EEC recommends the following:

- Standardize to the extent possible the format of Departmental websites to make it easier for external stakeholders to find the information they need from different Departments.
- Make it mandatory for each department to include information about community outreach and student voices in order to inform outsiders about Departmental activities that are of relevance to the public at large and to give students a university vehicle to express themselves in order to potentially attract other students to study at UoC. For example, students may talk about a positive experience they have had in the Department in terms of a class, an event, or some research outcome. Their voice carries more weight with other students who may have not been interested in coming to UoC but may now be attracted because they find the experience worthy, interesting, or suitable to their own needs.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&4.8):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	X
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating:

The EEC found the dissemination initiatives to be highly satisfactory.

4.9 Continuous monitoring and periodic review of the study programmes

Please comment on:

- the procedure followed with regard to assessment and periodic review of the contents of study programmes
- whether this procedure takes into account the changing needs of society
- whether this procedure takes into consideration the findings emanating from monitoring the graduates' career paths
- the procedure with which the reviews take into account the students' work load, the progress rate and completion of studies
- whether this procedure takes into account the cutting edge research activities in that particular discipline
- whether the involvement of students and other stakeholders is secured in the revision of the programmes

In general, the monitoring and periodic review of the Programmes is the responsibility of the departments. In conducting such reviews, the department takes into account (a) student performance, (b) the availability of faculty, and (c) recent developments in the field.

The report documents examples of such revisions.

Further details of processes are discussed in the SIER (pp. 54-56) as well as in the IER. The processes seem to be appropriate and well-designed.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&4.9):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	X
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating:

Departments appear to be highly responsive to their external evaluations.

4.10 Periodic external evaluation

Please comment on:

- the procedure already planned by the Institution in order to deal with the observations of the Institutional External evaluation
- how the anticipated implementation of plans by Departments / Faculties is monitored in response to any comments included in their external evaluation and in the accreditation of their programmes

The EEC found the Central Administration, faculty and departments to be very receptive to the concept of external evaluation and its process. The SIER prepared by the new administration makes the Rector's Office along with MOΔIII-UoC and the departments and schools responsible for the implementation of the recommendations. Monitoring of the progress achieved is to be done by the Senate (in conjunction with the Rector's Office and MOΔIII). As noted earlier, this process should

ensure an efficient mechanism for monitoring progress and facilitating the implementation of changes.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&4.10):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	X
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating:

The process for monitoring the response to the external evaluations is well designed.

4.11 Internal System of Quality Assurance – Conclusions and recommendations

*Please complete the following sections regarding the **internal system of quality assurance**:*

- *Underline specific positive points:*

1. The institution has developed a culture of continuous improvement and views quality assurance as paramount for its continued effort to excel
2. The institution has developed policies and strategies regarding quality assurance that has been communicated to the wider campus community
3. The institution has made available the technical and human resources required for assisting in the process of quality assurance

- *Underline specific negative points:*

UoC has a tradition of using external evaluations to improve quality in its pursuit for excellence. It has had external evaluations before the HQA mandated ones. Presently, it has implemented a robust two-level system (MOΔIII-OMEA) to collect and analyse relevant data and recommendations. However, it is not evident that this system has clear and effective feedback processes that will ensure the implementation of changes and the monitoring improvements.

- *Make your suggestions for further development of the positive points:*

- *Make your suggestions on needed steps for improvement:*

MOΔIII-UoC should develop a system whereby changes in the Programmes of study which result from the data it collects and disseminates are documented (closing-the-loop step).

5. OPERATION OF THE CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE INSTITUTION

5.1 Central Administration Services of the Institution

Please comment on:

- The operation of the central administration services of the Institution in regard to the:
Special Account for Research Funds (SARF)
Financial services
Supplies department
Technical services
IT services
Student support services
Employment and Career Centre (ECC)
Public/ International relations department
Foreign language services
Social and cultural activities
Halls of residence and refectory services
Institution's library

Understaffing is a serious problem that hampers the effectiveness of delivering services (especially technical services involving maintenance) at the desired levels of quality and quantity. Nevertheless, staff morale appears to be high. Given the financial climate within which UoC administration has to operate, the EEC commends the dedication of the staff and their ingenuity in finding solutions to problems under very challenging circumstances. This includes reshuffling staff across offices to support understaffed functions due to retirements, ministry-mandated staff mobility, and other factors as well as working overtime on some occasions without pay in order to complete assigned tasks. Moreover, the library's facilities and services are very good as evidenced by student feedback and the site visit. IT services also serve students and faculty well. Administrators are friendly, accessible, and eager to help.

However, the organizational chart of the university is dated and shows some dysfunctional elements in terms of reporting lines and staff assignments. Administration services have sought solutions to this problem by hiring consultants to identify a more effective organizational structure. Unfortunately, continuous changes in the law governing higher education have hampered this effort because the law also specifies to an extent the structure and specific functions of central administration in each university in Greece. In the absence of a stable legal and institutional system, any internal reform risks becoming irrelevant, ineffective, or even illegal should changes in the law point in a different direction.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&5.1):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	X
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating:

Please see above.

5.2 Operation of the Central Administration of the Institution – Conclusions and recommendations

Please complete the following sections regarding the operation of the Institution's central administration:

- ***Underline specific positive points:***

Dedicated and creative leadership from the Rectorate and from the directors and assistant directors and Research Secretary to maintain and, as much as possible, expand the reach and breadth of services.

- ***Underline specific negative points:***

The reduction in external funding places UoC Administration in a “defensive” posture, trying to sustain the level of achievement, successes and growth in all aspects of academic Programmes and in the delivery of critical services such as the library, research Centre and financial services.

- ***Make your suggestions for further development of the positive points:***

Notwithstanding the problem of diminishing resources, it is incumbent upon the Rectorate to ensure that a clear plan be put into place to monitor and develop creative means to utilize the limited resources and staff that affect a growing number of departments.

- ***Make your suggestions on needed steps for improvement:***

The EEC suggests that the University of Crete refine the central administrative structure to respond better to the needs of the institution and more closely align with the strategic priorities of the institution. As an example, the addition of a Vice Rector for Research will enhance the already high research productivity of the university.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In connection with the

- general operation of the Institution
- development of the Institution to this date and its present situation
- Institution's readiness and capability to change/improve
- Internal system of Quality Assurance of the Institution

please complete the following sections:

- *Underline specific positive points:*

1. The EEC detected a high level of commitment to excellence
2. Strong culture of research
3. Dedicated faculty to the teaching mission
4. Accessible and convivial Administration willing to help faculty and students succeed
5. Strong efforts in internationalization
6. General acceptance of the concept of both internal and external evaluation
7. The institution seems eager, willing and capable to change and improve
8. Well-maintained facilities and infrastructure
9. To this date, the institution has done well and has achieved remarkable progress in international rankings.

- *Underline specific negative points:*

1. The external legal and regulatory framework hampers the ability of the institution to be agile and responsive to the needs of the institution in a changing environment.
2. The university has no control of the number and quality of admitted students.
3. The absence of timetables and in some cases indicators to achieve the deliverables of the strategic goals at both the institutional and departmental levels.

- *Make your suggestions for further development of the positive points:*

1. While there is a general acceptance of both internal and external evaluation, the institution needs to develop "tighter" formal processes for monitoring and recording the progress and implementation of changes.
2. The institution needs to consider introducing mechanisms to further support faculty development.

- *Make your suggestions on needed steps for improvement:*

1. Move expeditiously to further communicate and develop the strategic goals associated with the "200-2025" vision statement.
2. Create robust feedback and accountability mechanisms for implementing the measurable outcomes of the strategic plan.

6.1 Final decision of the EEC

<i>Please decide in respect to the overall Institutional evaluation:</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	X
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating:

Overall, the EEC was impressed by the commitment to excellence permeating all levels of the institution. For a relatively new university, UoC has made remarkable achievements in the Greek academic world and beyond.

The Members of the Committee

UNIVERSITY OF CRETE

Name and Surname

Signature

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