ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
HELLENIC REPUBLIC

Accreditation Report
for the Undergraduate Study Programme of:

Preschool Education
Institution: University of Crete
Date: 18 July 2020

Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the Undergraduate Study Programme of **Preschool Education** of the **University of Crete** 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 Undergraduate Study Programme of **Preschool Education** of the **University of Crete**, comprised the following four (4) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

1. **Assoc. Prof. Petros Gougoulakis** (Chair), Stockholms Universitet, Sweden

2. **Assoc. Prof. Joanna Katsanis**, Banner University Medical Center, Tucson, Arizona, U.S.A.

3. **Prof. Leonidas Kyriakides**, University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus

4. **Assist. Prof. Despina Varnava-Marouchou**, European University Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus

II.   Review Procedure and Documentation

The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel (EEAP) studied the material provided by the Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE) in advance of its review process that was carried out remotely via Zoom on Wednesday 8th of July, 2020. The EEAP had an orientation meeting with the Director General Dr. Christina Besta, where she briefed about HAHE's mission and standards, as well as the guidelines for the accreditation process. After the briefing the EEAP met in private to coordinate its work, tasks and priorities ahead of the scheduled teleconferences with the representatives and stakeholders of the Preschool Education Undergraduate Programme (PEUP) of the University of Crete (UoC).

The EEAP's first teleconference took place on Monday 13 July 2020, with the Vice Rector of Academic Affairs and Head of the University's QA Unit (MODIP), Prof. Ioannis Karakassis, and the Head of the Department, Prof. Andreas Fountoulakis. We were warmly welcomed and informed about the UoC and the Department of Preschool Education. Their presentations were well-structured and informative, emphasizing the University's strong commitment to quality improvement regarding teaching, research and collaboration with the surrounding society, aiming to take a leading academic position nationally and internationally. UoC was very early within the Greek Higher Education context to introduce quality assurance procedures exerting both internal and external evaluation processes. Under MODIP's management, internal quality assurance groups (OMEA) operate to meet the requirements for periodic internal and external evaluations.

In the introductory meeting, a comprehensive account of the University and the Department covering facts and figures, history and current status, academic profile and vision, strengths and possible areas of concern was provided. The conversation following the first presentation was collegial and accommodating to our questions. All our subsequent meetings and conversations with representatives of the PEUP - leadership, faculty members and administrative staff, current students and alumni as well as stakeholders - took place in a very friendly and constructive climate. The presentation of the coordinator of OMEA Prof George Manolitsis was thoroughgoing and virtually covered all the aspects of the undergraduate program relevant to the current accreditation.

As already mentioned, the meetings were conducted over zoom due to travel restrictions because of the current pandemic. Although the video conferencing technology might, in the circumstances, be a relatively tolerable alternative to the canceled visits, both we in the panel and our hosts at PEUP agreed on the value that the in-person meetings could have added to the present accreditation process. Nevertheless, our hosts arranged to guide us 'virtually' around the premises of the Department and the University campus providing us a sense of presence.

III.   Study Programme Profile

The Department of Preschool Education (DPE) was founded in the academic year 1987-88 under the name "Department of Kindergarten Teachers". In 2001 the Department was renamed to Department of Preschool Education but retained the same educational profile and provides a four-year Bachelor program in Education leading to a Teaching Certificate for pre-school teachers (up to the age of 6). Since 1995, DPE and the Department of Primary Education comprise the School of Educational Sciences.

The staff of the Department consists of 25 faculty members, 4 Special Teaching Staff members, 4 contracted / part-time teachers, and 6 members belonging to the Administrative and Technical staff. The undergraduate program has about 1200 students. For every new academic year, and for at least the last 10 years, the Department proposes the admission of 120 students to their undergraduate program based on its personnel capabilities and logistical infrastructure. However, due to a situation that prevails in Greek higher education and which is beyond the authoritative power of the universities, the undergraduate program enrolls many more and reaches to almost 200 students. As a result, the ratio of enrolled students per teacher is very high, about 40:1, burdening the staff and, in the long run, potentially compromising the quality of the program. It must be mentioned that the staff have shown an admirable commitment and ability to work together in order to live up to the high-quality goals and academic expectations of the program.

The Department has a good and satisfactorily maintained infrastructure at the University of Crete in the Gallos-campus and access to all services of the University in the region.

The objectives of the PEUP is to provide graduates with both theoretical, methodological and career-specific knowledge and skills to be able to successfully meet the modern working life's demand for competent educators not only in kindergartens and day-care centers but in any environment where preschool learning activities take place. The program through its research profile qualifies its graduates for further studies at the postgraduate level in subject areas within the field of Educational Sciences and, in general, the Social Sciences and Humanities.

The duration of study of those who successfully complete their studies is about 5 years. Ten (10) years ago, the average duration of study of graduates was 4.5 years but in the last 5 years the duration has been rising. This negative trend can largely be attributed to the protracted economic crisis that the country went through. But, it might also be attributed to the relatively lower academic profile of the students admitted due to political decisions relating to the entry rules in Greek Universities. Another reason could be the decision of the Ministry of Education to abolish the requirement of completion of a University degree course by students within a specific period of time (the so called "eternal students-phenomenon").

Regarding the monitoring of the graduates, efforts are being made by Department committees to investigate their further career development. Based on two studies on the 2015-16 and 2017-18 graduate population, the findings showed that about 80 % were employed and of these 50% worked in jobs related to their studies. Thirty percent of the 2015-16 graduates continued their studies and of those 15% did so outside Greece. Twenty-five percent of the 2017-18 graduates continued their studies and of those 25% did so abroad. Other surveys have shown a high level of student satisfaction with the studies in the Department (more than 90%).

Almost half of the graduates surveyed would consider starting their own business (i.e. running a private pre-primary school) but are hindered by financial considerations.

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

Principle 1: Academic Unit Policy for Quality Assurance

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD APPLY A QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY AS PART OF THEIR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT. THIS POLICY SHOULD EXPAND AND BE AIMED (WITH THE COLLABORATION OF EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS) AT ALL INSTITUTION'S AREAS OF ACTIVITY, AND PARTICULARLY AT THE FULFILMENT OF QUALITY REQUIREMENTS OF UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES. THIS POLICY SHOULD BE PUBLISHED AND IMPLEMENTED BY ALL STAKEHOLDERS.

The quality assurance policy of the academic unit is in line with the Institutional policy on quality, and is included in a published statement that is implemented by all stakeholders. It focuses on the achievement of special objectives related to the quality assurance of study programmes offered by the academic unit.

The quality policy statement of the academic unit includes its commitment to implement a quality policy that will promote the academic profile and orientation of the programme, its purpose and field of study; it will realise the programme's strategic goals and it will determine the means and ways for attaining them; it will implement the appropriate quality procedures, aiming at the programme's continuous improvement.

In particular, in order to carry out this policy, the academic unit commits itself to put into practice quality procedures that will demonstrate:

a) *the suitability of the structure and organization of the curriculum;*
b) *the pursuit of learning outcomes and qualifications in accordance with the European and the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education;*
c) *the promotion of the quality and effectiveness of teaching;*
d) *the appropriateness of the qualifications of the teaching staff;*
e) *the enhancement of the quality and quantity of the research output among faculty members of the academic unit;*
f) *ways for linking teaching and research;*
g) *the level of demand for qualifications acquired by graduates, in the labour market;*
h) *the quality of support services such as the administrative services, the Library, and the student welfare office;*
i) *the conduct of an annual review and an internal audit of the quality assurance system of the undergraduate programme(s) offered, as well as the collaboration of the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) with the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU).*

Study Programme Compliance

The quality policy of the DEP is consistent with that of the UoC, and the quality assurance procedures of the undergraduate program are monitored by the institutions Quality Assurance Unit, MODIP. Ruled on the results of the Internal Evaluation of PEUP, MODIP stated in 2019 that the program meets the basic requirements of quality standards of HAHE and UoC in regards to the implemented quality policy and the way the principles of this policy are integrated in the

design and implementation of the curriculum. MODIP focuses its evaluation on all the parameters of the quality standards, the students' evaluations, and the actions taken by the program in response to the external evaluation recommendations.

The main dimensions of the Department's quality assurance policy, which permeate the structure and the organization of the undergraduate program are as follows:

- the promotion of the quality and the effectiveness of the teaching practice
- the promotion of student-centered learning through participatory, collaborative and active learning processes
- the promotion of the research work produced by the members of the Department
- the connection of theory and research with the teaching practice
- the enhancement of the mobility of students and staff and the strengthening of cooperation with other Departments and Schools at the UoC, as well as with other Universities in Greece and abroad
- the improvement of the working conditions of the teaching, research, administrative and other staff of the Department
- the strengthening of the Department's relations with the local community and the wider society

EEAP finds the action plan exemplary and in compliance with the recommendations of the external evaluation.

The quality assurance processes are coordinated and supervised by OMEA. Decisive for OMEA, in this context and in order to be successful in its quality review work, is the cooperation with and engagement of all the bodies and committees in the Department. In addition to the Internal Evaluation Team OMEA these committees are: the Postgraduate Studies Committee, the Teaching Exercises and Experimental Kindergarten Committee, the Research Quality Assurance Committee, the Department Ethics Committee, the Audit Committee of Special Categories of Supporting Documents, the Study Assimilation and Recognition Committee, the Ranking Committee, the Finance Committee and the Alumni Monitoring Committee.

Based on the discussions with the Program's stakeholders and the documentation presented, the EEAP finds it commendable that the DEP developed action plans to deal with the shortcomings that were brought up during their Internal Evaluation and also the recommendations for improvement brought up by the External Evaluation carried out in 2014.

The OMEA is also responsible for the collection and submission of data to the Integrated National Information Quality System (OPESP) at HAHE. On the basis of the analysis of the collected data, the OMEA makes proposals for possible improvements to the Department's Assembly. Many of the planned improvement measures were carried out consistent with the revision of the Department's study guide. Examples of such are the increase of the number of Special Education courses and by making the natural sciences course obligatory. By so doing they ultimately improved the professional standards of the student graduates. The same applies to the action plan for needed changes that the internal assessment process actualized, such as reducing the average graduation time and improving the teaching practice of students.

The Department's leadership team and its cooperation with the General Assembly is crucial for the implementation of the quality assurance policy. It is, therefore, of great value that the

leadership cultivates transparent preparation processes and provides the assembly with as much information as possible for informed decisions.

The implementation of the UoC's quality policy is posted on the Department's website. Through this website graduates and other interested stakeholders of the department's study programs and activities can sign-up to eventually receive a newsletter. EEAP considers that a newsletter is an excellent way of communication, providing that it is informative and current, published regularly and enabling opportunities for interactivity and networking.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

See recommendations about the newsletter at the end of Principle 8.

Principle 2: Design and Approval of Programmes

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

Academic units develop their programmes following a well-defined procedure. The academic profile and orientation of the programme, the objectives, the subject areas, the structure and organisation, the expected learning outcomes and the intended professional qualifications according to the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education are described at this stage. The approval or revision process for programmes includes a check of compliance with the basic requirements described in the Standards, on behalf of the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU).

Furthermore, the programme design should take into consideration the following:

- *the Institutional strategy*
- *the active participation of students*
- *the experience of external stakeholders from the labour market*
- *the smooth progression of students throughout the stages of the programme*
- *the anticipated student workload according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System*
- *the option to provide work experience to the students*
- *the linking of teaching and research*
- *the relevant regulatory framework and the official procedure for the approval of the programme by the Institution*

Study Programme Compliance

The Department of Preschool Education has developed a clear and transparent framework to operationalize and implement procedures for the revision of the undergraduate curriculum based on evaluations, external and internal. By so doing it keeps up to date with the latest trends in the field of Educational Sciences. The EEAP's conversations with the Department administration, the faculty and the students, revealed a strong desire and ambition to strive to keep their program on a par with comparable programs that are respected nationally and internationally. The Undergraduate Studies Committee is responsible for the annual planning and monitoring of the smooth implementation of the program. Its duty is to assess what changes need to be made and to suggest to the Department Assembly the appropriate actions that need to be taken, whether these concern the replacement of some courses, the introduction of new subjects, or the overall reorganization of the program in regards to the relationship between theoretical courses, seminars, practicum and thesis writing.

In addition to the Undergraduate Studies Committee, even other committees work on proposals within their area of responsibility to be discussed in the DPE's Faculty Assembly, such as the Didactic Exercises and Experimental Kindergarten Committee, the Audit Committee of Special

Categories of Supporting Documents and the Study Assimilation and Recognition Committee. Necessary conditions for the improvement of the PEUP is the participation of teachers and students in the quality assurance and enhancement process. Participation is facilitated through efforts to enhance the mobility of staff and students and their engagement in exchange programs and research projects with other national and international institutions. In this context, efforts are made to involve students in research activities through the mandatory preparation of an examination thesis and their participation in seminars and conferences.

The aim of the undergraduate program is to shape the future teacher-researcher who is constantly informed of the developments in his/her professional field, reflects on his pedagogical work and strives to improve it. To that end, the Department maintains as mandatory the writing of a final examination thesis based on critical investigation and analysis of a topic within a scientific area from the six (out of the eight) Program modules. However, until now, students are not able in many cases to choose the topic they would like to explore. This is usually determined on the subject areas are being offered at a given time and on the number of available supervisors. The current ratio of students to academic staff is 40:1, which limits the number of students per research area.

The main source of feedback for the improvement of the program is the students' evaluations and the monitoring of the professional trajectory of the graduates through questionnaires.

The study program includes 240 ECTS and is divided into 8 semesters during which students attend a total of 52 courses. The study guide clearly describes all the information related to the undergraduate program: its structure, the content of the individual courses and the learning outcomes.

In order to achieve its goals, the program places special emphasis on courses from the Education Sciences and on other scientific areas, such as Philology, Theology, Mathematics, Informatics, Physical Education and Fine Arts.

Internships and practicum training are an integral part of the program. This is something that students especially appreciate, because it provides them with the opportunity to gain teaching experience in the living environment of the preschool classroom.

The courses taught in PEUP are included in three (3) categories and four (4) types. The three categories consist of a body of compulsory courses, a selection of mandatory courses from which the students are obliged to choose, and several other courses where the students are entirely free to choose. By offering the opportunity to choose subjects from other related fields of science, in addition to those that are the common core for all, the program strives to build specialization profiles based on the students' interests. As for the types of courses offered, they consist of lectures, seminars, practical didactic exercises and a final examination thesis. All these usually occur to varying extent every semester. Detailed outlines with the content, learning outcomes, teaching and learning methods, the proposed literature and the form of assessment are available for each of the more than 150 courses of all the above categories and types.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

EEAP fully supports the requirement of having a mandatory examination thesis, as it strengthens the academic character of the program. However, EEAP recommends exploring ways of organizing and coordinating the conduct of examination theses in order to facilitate the timely completion and in a more effective use of the available faculty/supervision resources.

It is also suggested to consider allowing students to larger degree choose on their own their examination thesis topic, after having been informed about the possible restrictions. Based on the students' research proposals supervisors can be assigned accordingly. To ease the workload of the permanent teaching staff, the possibility might be considered for the Department's doctoral candidates to act as supervisors. Furthermore, another possibility could be for students to be allowed to write theses in pairs and encouraged to do so in the context of extended internships and / or during the mobility period of the Erasmus+. It is also important to acquaint and train the students with the academic writing from their first year of study.

EEAP regards the option given to students to choose courses and build their own knowledge profile very positively. However, EEAP believes that the range of courses offered seems to be excessive and may cause confusion and fragmentation of the knowledge areas, since they are usually limited to 4 ECTS. One possible solution could be to discuss the possibility of merging some courses into broader units. At the same time, for greater consistency, a thinning (sort out) among the existing range of courses, along with a more uniform presentation of the course outlines, is recommendable.

Principle 3: Student- centered Learning, Teaching and Assessment

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES ARE DELIVERED IN A WAY THAT ENCOURAGES STUDENTS TO TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN CREATING THE LEARNING PROCESS. THE ASSESSMENT METHODS SHOULD REFLECT THIS APPROACH.

Student-centred learning and teaching plays an important role in stimulating students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in the learning process. The above entail continuous consideration of the programme's delivery and the assessment of the related outcomes.

The student-centred learning and teaching process

- *respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths;*
- *considers and uses different modes of delivery, where appropriate;*
- *flexibly uses a variety of pedagogical methods;*
- *regularly evaluates and adjusts the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods aiming at improvement;*
- *regularly evaluates the quality and effectiveness of teaching, as documented especially through student surveys;*
- *reinforces the student's sense of autonomy, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teaching staff;*
- *promotes mutual respect in the student - teacher relationship;*
- *applies appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints.*

    In addition :
- *the academic staff are familiar with the existing examination system and methods and are supported in developing their own skills in this field;*
- *the assessment criteria and methods are published in advance;*
- *the assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary is linked to advice on the learning process;*
- *student assessment is conducted by more than one examiner, where possible;*
- *the regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances;*
- *assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures;*
- *a formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*

Study Programme Compliance

After two days of online meetings, the EEAP members have concluded that the Student Centre learning principle is being implemented throughout the DPE in most areas of teaching and learning.

The Department uses a variety of teaching methods and students are encouraged to be actively involved. More specifically, the teaching methods include the traditional lecture where a large number of students attend, and Seminars, where students have the opportunity to present their work and be actively involved in discussions, critical analyses of papers and case studies and

feedback. One of the aims of the seminars is to help students develop their academic writing and research skills.

The Teaching Practice in the form of 'Διδακτική Άσκηση' is carried out over 5 semesters and begins in the 2nd year of the Preschool Program. In accordance with the feedback we received from students, graduates and other relevant stakeholders, the Teaching Practice is considered one of the most useful and valuable parts of the Preschool Education Program.

Students have access to their course content and other important information through the Course Outlines and Study Guides, which are provided on the University's website. However, the EEAP noticed that not all Course Outlines are consistent with the course learning outcomes and course bibliography. It could be helpful if the course prerequisites, office hours, emails, and telephone numbers of faculty be included in the Course Outlines. Students can also access information regarding their courses through the e-class and Moodle platforms.

The students have the opportunity to evaluate their courses and faculty, each semester, through an online questionnaire. However, student participation is very low (ca 13%) and the Department needs to consider alternative methods to increase student involvement. One of the reasons of the low participation is perhaps the very large number of questions asked (n=110) and the way students are given access to the questionnaire, which often involves the form of an email send to them by their lecturers.

All new students are given an email account and are assigned to an Academic Advisor who has the responsibility to guide them through the program requirements. The Department applies a variety of student assessment methods, which includes final examinations, written assignments and practical exercises. Through the Student Advisory Centre, the DPE is able to accommodate students with special learning difficulties and disabilities by providing them with alternative methods of evaluation.

As mentioned earlier, the EEAP believes that the final examination thesis should continue to be offered as a compulsory part of the program. However, because of the small number of supervisors and the extra needed resources it is difficult for students to identify, in a timely fashion, a supervisor and someone whose interests matches theirs. The Department should find alternative ways to solve this problem, for example, by involving PhD students in supervision and by so doing giving the latter the opportunity to enhance their academic qualifications.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The Department should find alternative ways to increase the participation of student involvement in the evaluation of their courses and faculty.
- The EEAP strongly recommends that the thesis should remain compulsory in order to enhance the students' academic skills.

Principle 4: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD DEVELOP AND APPLY PUBLISHED REGULATIONS COVERING ALL ASPECTS AND PHASES OF STUDIES (ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION).

Institutions and academic units need to put in place both processes and tools to collect, manage and act on information regarding student progression.

Procedures concerning the award and recognition of higher education degrees, the duration of studies, rules ensuring students progression, terms and conditions for student mobility should be based on the institutional study regulations. Appropriate recognition procedures rely on institutional practice for recognition of credits among various European academic departments and Institutions, in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

Graduation represents the culmination of the students᾽study period. Students need to receive documentation explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed (Diploma Supplement).

Study Programme Compliance

The Department's admission policies and procedures of recognition and certification are regulated by the ministry of Education of Greece and the DPE has little control over the number of students it enrolls each year (see Part A: III).

New students learn about the Preschool Education Program during a 'New Student Welcoming Event', which is organized every year by the Department.

Students are informed about the structure and stages of their studies from a variety of sources: from the Course Outlines, Study Guide, the University's Website and the Undergraduate Study Regulations.

The Undergraduate Study Regulations describes the conditions under which a degree is awarded. Both the Study Guide and the Undergraduate Study Regulations are updated regularly and are made available on the Department's website.

The Department provides several specifically adapted rooms (e.g., Arts and Music room) where students can work in smaller groups. All rooms are equipped with computers and most of them with audio/video devices.

An indication of the students' progress is the number of students who register for the undergraduate thesis at the beginning of the 4th year. Students qualify to register for the thesis providing that they have successfully completed at least half of the courses required to obtain their degree. However, the total number of courses required for the completion of the program amounts to 52 and accounts for 240 ECTS. The large number of required courses could constitute one of the possible reasons that makes it difficult for many students to graduate within the expected four-year period.

Special arrangements have been made to offer some courses in English in order to attract Erasmus students, whose number remains very low.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The Department should consider increasing the number of ECTS per course and/or decrease the number of courses required to complete the program by merging courses with similar subject matter.
- The Department needs to offer more courses either in English or in other European languages if it wishes to enhance its international presence.

Principle 5: Teaching Staff

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ASSURE THEMSELVES OF THE QUALIFICATIONS AND COMPETENCE OF THE TEACHING STAFF. THEY SHOULD APPLY FAIR AND TRANSPARENT PROCESSES FOR THE RECRUITMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEACHING STAFF.

The Institutions and their academic units have a major responsibility as to the standard of their teaching staff providing them with a supportive environment that promotes the advancement of their scientific work. In particular, the academic unit should:

- *set up and follow clear, transparent and fair processes for the recruitment of properly qualified staff and offer them conditions of employment that recognize the importance of teaching and research;*
- *offer opportunities and promote the professional development of the teaching staff;*
- *encourage scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research;*
- *encourage innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies;*
- *promote the increase of the volume and quality of the research output within the academic unit;*
- *follow quality assurance processes for all staff members (with respect to attendance requirements, performance, self-assessment, training etc.);*
- *develop policies to attract highly qualified academic staff.*

Study Programme Compliance

The Department's academic and administrative staff seem to be fully equipped with the resources needed to perform their duties effectively. In particular, the academic staff are fully balanced in terms of their academic ranking and no gender bias has been observed since a similar number of men and women comprise the faculty at the different ranks (except at the level of Professor). It is therefore evident that the members of the Department are in a process of academic development, when compared with past years, where there were few faculty members at the highest academic ranks. However, it is worth noting that apart from the minimum criteria required for promotion or recruitment (i.e. quality of undergraduate and graduate studies, quantity and quality of research work and teaching experience), the faculty members are also evaluated based on the extent that their scientific expertise is related to the subject area of the announced position. The research interests and qualifications of the members of the Department's faculty are, therefore, directly related to the objectives and quality assurance policy of the Undergraduate studies program.

All faculty members of the Department have authored internationally recognized research work and have participated and organized national and international conferences. The research strategy of the Department in the last 10 years has been oriented towards the international promotion of the research efforts of the faculty members and this has resulted in the increase of publications in peer-reviewed journals and especially in international journals. Also, according to the year 2016-17, most indicators of research productivity and recognition of scientific work per faculty member were significant. The ratio of faculty members to undergraduate students is approximately 1 to 40 (see Part A: III). It is much higher to that of the European Union. More specifically, in the European Union the teacher/student ratio is 1 teacher per 15.6 students,

which, comparatively, indicates the disproportionate volume of work that faculty members of the DPE have. Nevertheless, the number of students admitted is constantly increasing and is consistently much higher than the number proposed by the University to the Administration of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education should therefore take into consideration the European ratio and reduce the numbers of students per teaching member accordingly.

All members of the Department actively participate in committees of the Department of Preschool Education, the School of Educational Sciences and the University of Crete (e.g. Research Committee of the University, Senate, Committee of Postgraduate Studies, and Library Committee). The interviews the EEAP had with the faculty made evident that the faculty has excellent relations with one another, a productive work climate and established collaborations amongst them.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The faculty members of the Department published a significant number of books/monographs, papers in peer-reviewed journals, chapters in books and papers in conference-proceedings. This implies that the Department encourages research and supports its faculty members to publish their work. It also appears that during the last five years the percentage of publications in international journals with referee system has increased substantially. Moreover, the Department should also encourage the academic faculty to increase their number of publications in peer reviewed international journals. Furthermore, faculty members should establish close collaboration, undertake common projects, publish their results in academic journals, and reach a wider audience.

International dissemination of research findings should be further encouraged and the publication record of future candidates considered for appointment and promotion should be strongly taken into account (i.e. number of publications, number of citations, quality of papers and journals). In addition, teaching competence should be taken into account when promotion is being considered. The Department should develop procedures to promote and reward teaching competence, in addition to the student ratings. The results of these can be used for faculty development.

Principle 6: Learning Resources and Student Support

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE ADEQUATE FUNDING TO COVER TEACHING AND LEARNING NEEDS. THEY SHOULD –ON THE ONE HAND– PROVIDE SATISFACTORY INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES FOR LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORT AND –ON THE OTHER HAND– FACILITATE DIRECT ACCESS TO THEM BY ESTABLISHING INTERNAL RULES TO THIS END (E.G. LECTURE ROOMS, LABORATORIES, LIBRARIES, NETWORKS, BOARDING, CAREER AND SOCIAL POLICY SERVICES ETC.).

> *Institutions and their academic units must have sufficient funding and means to support learning and academic activity in general, so that they can offer to students the best possible level of studies. The above means could include facilities such as libraries, study rooms, educational and scientific equipment, information and communications services, support or counselling services.*
>
> *When allocating the available resources, the needs of all students must be taken into consideration (e.g. whether they are full-time or part-time students, employed or international students, students with disabilities) and the shift towards student-centered learning and the adoption of flexible modes of learning and teaching. Support activities and facilities may be organized in various ways, depending on the institutional context. However, the internal quality assurance ensures that all resources are appropriate, adequate, and accessible, and that students are informed about the services available to them.*
>
> *In delivering support services the role of support and administrative staff is crucial and therefore they need to be qualified and have opportunities to develop their competences.*

Study Programme Compliance

The University has sufficient resources to effectively support learning and academic activity. In particular, for the implementation of the courses the Department is equipped with two Amphitheatres of large capacity, an Art room, a Music room, three Seminar rooms, a computer lab and several research laboratories. The teaching areas are sufficient to meet the needs of the students who attend classes. However, since attendance is not obligatory, a large number of students do not attend classes. If more - or all – students were to attend the teaching areas would be insufficient to meet the additional capacity needs.

Students have free wireless access to the University's data network (Wi-Fi) which provides them with access to the internal data network and the Internet from the University premises using wireless technology. Students are also given the opportunity to use a remote access service, which enables them to secure access to the Institution's network when not at the University premises. The access to educational software facilitates teaching and the academic development of students. It also enables both students and faculty members to be involved in research projects.

The students indicated that a problem they face when enrolled in the Teaching Practise (Διδακτική Άσκηση) program, is that in some cases they have to buy with their own funds the supplies (e.g. teaching materials, story books, etc.) they need for teaching. Currently, the Department does not provide the needed equipment or cover the student expenses (either fully

or partially through a fixed amount). The Department does not appear to be cognizant of this problem and therefore further inquiry and funds earmarked for such expenses is needed.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

Despite the 'tradition' of low attendance in higher education in Greece, the Department should consider requiring obligatory course attendance by students especially when one considers that learning is multifaceted and also takes place through teacher-student and student-student interactions. This is a policy that should be promoted by this Department since it is in line with the mission of any Education Department and of other University Departments. However, as noted earlier, in order for this to be possible the teaching areas should be expanded and/or adapted to respond to the needs of a larger number of students.

Principle 7: Information Management

INSTITUTIONS BEAR FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR COLLECTING, ANALYSING AND USING INFORMATION, AIMED AT THE EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT OF UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES OF STUDY AND RELATED ACTIVITIES, IN AN INTEGRATED, EFFECTIVE AND EASILY ACCESSIBLE WAY.

Institutions are expected to establish and operate an information system for the management and monitoring of data concerning students, teaching staff, course structure and organization, teaching and provision of services to students as well as to the academic community. Reliable data is essential for accurate information and for decision making, as well as for identifying areas of smooth operation and areas for improvement. Effective procedures for collecting and analyzing information on study programmes and other activities feed data into the internal system of quality assurance.

The information gathered depends, to some extent, on the type and mission of the Institution. The following are of interest:

- *key performance indicators*
- *student population profile*
- *student progression, success and drop-out rates*
- *student satisfaction with their programme(s)*
- *availability of learning resources and student support*
- *career paths of graduates*

A number of methods may be used for collecting information. It is important that students and staff are involved in providing and analyzing information and planning follow-up activities.

Study Programme Compliance

The Department has established various monitoring procedures, which they review annually, and collect data on the student population, teaching staff and the study program. With these data they are able to identify areas where modification of processes is needed for a smooth operation.

The data they collect provide information on performance indicators, the profile of their student body, also the progression of their students through the program and their future employability. There is a wealth of data on incoming students, their quality and progression through the program. In addition, effort has been made to collect data on graduates' employability and career path. The Department has been making attempts to establish contact with alumni to strengthen ties among students and graduates which can potentially expand training possibilities. Overall, the Department is making a good effort to collect data and extract information that they use constructively.

The Department has an informational system in place where student and faculty information can be found. In addition, academic requirements are available and accessible. The ease of this accessibility, however, is reduced by the fact that entire documents in the form of PDFs have been uploaded on the site and one has to go through volumes of information to find answers to simple questions.

Students complete evaluations of the courses and coursework via electronic means. However, the response rate has been low (also see Principal 3). Students indicated that one possible reason that has contributed to low response rate, is their fear of being identified. Other students expressed the opinion that because they have seen little change, despite feedback they had given repeatedly over the years, they see no meaning in completing course evaluations.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The course evaluation is carried out through electronic questionnaires provided to students. The department may consider administering student course evaluations at the end of the last lecture in the form of paper questionnaires as a means of increasing the participation rate. Being able to demonstrate to students how their feedback is taken into account maybe also helpful in increasing participation.

In addition to course evaluations, program satisfaction surveys can also be obtained from teaching and administration staff.

It would be helpful to track and collect information on alumni. Strengthening alumni's ties with the department can increase pathways to careers and success for its future graduates. In addition, the Department can benefit manifold from the engagement and alumni's feedback and suggestions. One method of engaging alumni can involve providing a life-long email account to all graduates which has the benefit to enable better tracking of information and enhancing efforts to maintain connections with alumni.

It is recommended that in order to improve ease of navigation of the Departments' website, a more dynamic and interactive platform should be developed, so that the information presented is better organized and identified.

Principle 8: Public Information

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD PUBLISH INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR TEACHING AND ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES WHICH IS CLEAR, ACCURATE, OBJECTIVE, UP-TO-DATE AND READILY ACCESSIBLE.

Information on Institution's activities is useful for prospective and current students, graduates, other stakeholders and the public.

Therefore, institutions and their academic units provide information about their activities, including the programmes they offer, the intended learning outcomes, the qualifications awarded, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to their students, as well as graduate employment information.

Study Programme Compliance

The Department has a website that displays necessary information for their various programs, and its operations. The website also includes information on its teaching and administrative staff, committees and facilities. It includes offered courses and their learning objectives.

Information on its rules/regulations, evaluative procedures and learning opportunities is published and readily available. The website provides necessary information about the lectures offered, and the content of the various courses.

The information of the faculty members listed on the website about their research/ educational background and CVs should be presented in a more uniform format.

Some links on their website direct viewers to pages that do not exist.

The information available in the English version of the Department website does not correspond well with that of the Greek version. Modifying it accordingly and making it comparable to that of the Greek version, at least for the pertinent information describing the Department, is important given that the English version is accessible to the global community.

The Department indicates that they communicate via social media but the Facebook link on their site does not lead to the department page.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The user friendliness of the website can be improved to increase accessibility, uniformity and ease of information retrieval. Limiting the number of the uploaded documents is recommended,

and also, making compatible the Greek and English version of the website, at least for the pertinent information.

The Department can formulate and follow a communication strategy that will increase contact with the alumni, affiliated members and other stakeholders. For example, the Department should publish a newsletter on a regular basis (e.g. quarterly or semiannually) and use it to update not only current, but also alumni of any educational and research activities. Students and administrative staff can be encouraged to contribute to the newsletter. This will result to greater transparency but also function as a means to continuing the engagement of alumni to the program.

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

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE IN PLACE AN INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM FOR THE AUDIT AND ANNUAL INTERNAL REVIEW OF THEIR PROGRAMMES, SO AS TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES SET FOR THEM, THROUGH MONITORING AND AMENDMENTS, WITH A VIEW TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT. ANY ACTIONS TAKEN IN THE ABOVE CONTEXT SHOULD BE COMMUNICATED TO ALL PARTIES CONCERNED.

Regular monitoring, review and revision of study programmes aim to maintain the level of educational provision and to create a supportive and effective learning environment for students.

The above comprise the evaluation of:

- *the content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up to date;*
- *the changing needs of society;*
- *the students' workload, progression and completion;*
- *the effectiveness of the procedures for the assessment of students;*
- *the students' expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme;*
- *the learning environment, support services and their fitness for purpose for the programme*

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

Study Programme Compliance

The PEUP is regularly reviewed and revised with the participation of students, faculty members and other stakeholders. The information collected is analyzed and the program is modified according to the new data. The revised program is published in the annual Undergraduate Study Guide, which is posted on the Department's website. The Department has been collecting data from relevant stakeholders for the last decade. Particularly, from the years 2015-2016 onward the Department has been systematically analyzing data, in regards to the teaching and research of its faculty members.

The program revises its curriculum based on several criteria that includes: the changing needs of society, the students' expectations, satisfaction and needs, and on the developments of new courses. The Committee of the Undergraduate Study together with OMEA play a central role in the evaluation and monitoring process of the overall performance of the program.

The most significant change of the Preschool Education program took place in the academic years 2013-2014 and resulted in the creation of a new program of study that focused mainly on the professional development of the students. The first students that were admitted under the new program, graduated during the academic year 2017-18.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

None

Principle 10: Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programmes

PROGRAMMES SHOULD REGULARLY UNDERGO EVALUATION BY COMMITTEES OF EXTERNAL EXPERTS SET BY HAHE, AIMING AT ACCREDITATION. 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 committee of independent experts. HAHE grants accreditation of programmes, with a specific term of validity, following to which revision is required. The accreditation of the quality of the programmes acts as a means of verification of the compliance of the programme with the template's requirements, and as a catalyst for improvement, while opening new perspectives towards the international standing of the awarded degrees.

Both academic units and institutions participate in the regular external quality assurance process, while respecting the requirements of the legislative framework in which they operate.

The quality assurance, in this case the accreditation, is an on-going process that does not end with the external feedback, or report or its follow-up process within the Institution. Therefore, Institutions and their academic units ensure that the progress made since the last external quality assurance activity is taken into consideration when preparing for the next one.

Study Programme Compliance

As indicated earlier, the Department has participated in an external evaluation for the first time in December 2013. That evaluation committee identified the Department's strengths and made recommendations especially in relation to the course content of the undergraduate program offered at that time. The report of this committee can be found in the Department's web page. The committee's recommendations were taken into account in the design of the current undergraduate program. More specifically, Special Education courses were added in the curriculum which helped students improve their professional skills in that area.

In addition, the Department took the initiative and participated in the U-multirank which is a multidimensional, user-driven approach to international ranking of higher education institutions. U-multirank uses a multi-dimensional approach in evaluating university performance. It is not only limited to research but takes into account other University functions such as teaching and learning, knowledge transfer, international orientation and regional engagement.

It is commendable that from the six Departments of Education in Greece, that participated in this external evaluation the DPE ranked 1st, and 12th among the European Departments of Education.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

None

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I.   Features of Good Practice

- The Department has a respectful and supportive working atmosphere and members (faculty, students, and administrative staff) feel respected and dedicated to their respective responsibilities. Close collaborations amongst them have been developed and a productive work climate has been established.

- The Department has established procedures for quality assessment and monitoring of performance indicators. This enables them to take corrective action as it pertains to student quality, performance and progression through their academic program.

- An informational system is in place.

- During the last five years a significant increase on the number of publications in peer-reviewed international journals is observed.

- For completion of the program degree a final examination thesis is required.

- The provision of elective courses is very positive and make it possible for the students to build their own knowledge profile.

II.   II. Areas of Weakness

- The Department ends up having to accommodate increasing numbers of students that puts pressure on existing facilities and the ability of academic staff to handle the additional teaching demands. This ultimately threatens the quality of learning that all students end up receiving.

- The Department Web page needs revamping to make it more user friendly, limit unnecessary information, make it more interactive, correct inaccuracies and updated information about faculty and resources.

- The Department should reevaluate the necessity of the number of courses needed for graduation with the goal of reducing the years needed to obtain a degree.

III.   III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

- The Department should further encourage international dissemination of research findings and consider, along with the publication record of future candidates for appointment (i.e., number of publications, number of citations, quality of papers and journals), the demonstration of professional experience in teaching and learning.

- Using a regularly published newsletter that can be emailed to alumni, students and other stakeholders can improve opportunities, and enhance efforts for program improvement. Such collaborations can provide input in program design and development.

- Given the low rates of course attendance, the Department should consider requiring higher course attendance by students especially taking into consideration that learning also takes place through teacher-student and student-student interactions.

- Student participation in the course/faculty evaluations is low. The Department should find alternative ways to increase the participation of student involvement in the evaluation of their courses and faculty.

- The Department is encouraged to develop an Advisory Board compromising of Alumni, local stakeholders, faculty members and fellows from other Departments, to act as a source of information for the improvement of the Program and/or the establishment of relevant activities of mutual interest to the local community and University.

- The writing of a final examination thesis should continue to be offered as a compulsory part of the program. EEAP recommends exploring ways of organizing and coordinating the conduct of examination essays in order to facilitate the timely completion.

IV. IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are:

1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are:

2, 6, 8

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are:

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are:

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

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname   **Signature**

1. **Assoc. Prof. Petros Gougoulakis** (Chair),
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2. **Assoc. Prof. Joanna Katsanis**, Banner
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