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Accreditation Report **for the Undergraduate Study Programme of:**

Political Science

Institution: University of Crete

Date: 12 December 2020

Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the
Undergraduate Study Programme of **Political Science** 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 **Political Science** of the **University of Crete** comprised the following five (5) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

- 1. Prof. Nikolaos Zahariadis (Chair)**
Rhodes College, USA
- 2. Associate Prof. Petros Vamvakas**
Emmanuel College, USA
- 3. Prof. Neovi Karakatsanis**
Indiana University South Bend, USA
- 4. Prof. George Andreopoulos**
City University of New York, USA
- 5. Prof. Costas Spirou**
Georgia College and State University, USA

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel (EEAP) visited virtually the Department of Political Science of the University of Crete (UoC) in Rethymnon on December 8-9, 2020. The meetings with members of the Department and the University of Crete were preceded by a briefing/orientation meeting with HAHE and other team members on December 7, 2020. The EEAP was provided with documentation by HAHE two weeks before the virtual visit. Typically, the volume of material is too great, and the time given to the EEAP too short for the information to be properly reviewed and digested. However, the EEAP performed its task admirably.

The EEAP was welcomed by the Vice-Rector/President of the Institutional Unit of Quality Assurance (MODIP) and the Department Head on December 8, 2020. Later and throughout the two days, the EEAP met virtually with the MODIP, the Internal Assessment Committee (OMEA), members of the teaching faculty, current Department students, members of the Department's alumni, and internship agencies/external stakeholders. The EEAP also virtually visited the Library, the Computer Lab, classrooms and faculty offices.

This report is based on information made available by the Department directly to the EEAP or through HAHE. Such documentation included the Department's accreditation proposal with supporting documentation, the Department's Verification Report, along with specific information requested by the EEAP. The accreditation visit took place in a professional and cooperative environment. All parties involved conducted themselves admirably well and the process was smooth and effective.

III. Study Programme Profile

The Department of Political Science of the University of Crete (UoC) is relatively young. It was established in 1984 but admitted its first undergraduate students in the academic year 1999-2000. The first degrees were awarded in 2003. During the first two years of its function, teaching was conducted by teaching staff of other Departments of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Crete and by contractual lecturers (407/1980).

The Department underwent an external evaluation in the spring of 2014. It has since incorporated the majority of the external panel's recommendations into its operations and has adjusted itself accordingly in achieving continuous progress. The regular faculty (DEP) of the Department have fluctuated between 14 and 15 in the last few years. It has 14 in 2020-21. Although the number was higher in years past, it has been declining through attrition and because of resource paucity due to the austerity gripping the country since 2010. As in other Greek universities, there are also adjuncts/special teaching faculty enriching curricular offerings. The number of non-DEP faculty currently stands at 8.

The undergraduate curriculum of the Department offers a bachelor's degree in Political Science. Beginning in the academic year 2017-18, degree completion requires 44 courses (245 ECTS) taken over 8 semesters. The curriculum is organized along four layers of course offerings: 21 core courses taken mainly during the first two years of study; 4 required courses in a foreign language (English), which emphasize political science terminology; 1 elective from any department at UoC; 18 electives of which 6 are seminars and 12 lectures. Students may elect to write an undergraduate thesis, in which case they may take 2 fewer electives-seminars; and/or an internship, which is equivalent to 2 electives-lectures.

In the current academic year (2020-21), the Department had 1,260 registered undergraduate students of whom 51.4 % (648 students) are actively enrolled. Graduation rates currently stand at 5.2 years. As a result, the active undergraduate student to teacher ratio is 46.3 students to every faculty DEP (648/14).

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 Department has an established structure of Quality Assurance as described by HAHE. It also has internal structures of OMEA and a committee of undergraduate curricular review. Both work at the departmental level and under the auspices and in collaboration with MODIP, which is at the institutional level. Since its inception in 1984 and its establishment in 1999 the Department

has a set of stated objectives but does not have a stated mission as such. The objectives are more clearly stated in Greek, rather than in English, on the Department's website, which states: "We are [sic] the department we are committed to offering a programme of study that combines a systemic exploration of the various subfields within the discipline (political philosophy and political theory, public policy, comparative and European politics, political sociology, international relations) and the acquisition of personal and transferable skills (including the systemic training in foreign languages, IT skills, qualitative and quantitative methods.)" As is clear from the presentation to AP, the Department has an ambitious set of objectives that it honestly attempts to meet. There is a lack of clarity though as to the specifics of a mission and a vision. Overall, the Department has heeded and acted on the recommendations of their first external review of 2014, having implemented most of the recommendations (up to 85%, according to the presentation made by the members of OMEA).

The Department has a clearly organized curricular structure, with a fairly rigid course selection for incoming students, which becomes more flexible in the last two years of study. The curricular structure and the number of credits appear to be in full compliance with similar institutions worldwide and also with the prescribed credit structures of National and European qualifications for Higher Education (4 years, 8 semesters, 245 ECTS).

Teaching appears to be a main focus within the Department and that is reflected in the quality and effectiveness of teaching, as the Department has established mechanisms for the introduction and review of courses and programmes that include the input of faculty and students. There is also an established annual process of review in April/May, which evaluates the curriculum annually. A structure of student evaluation course by course also exists. However, the effectiveness of this approach is unclear as the number of students participating is extremely low. OMEA members stated that student response was less than 10%. This is certainly an area that has to be reviewed and ameliorated, by promoting different ways and means to enhance student participation in the process.

The teaching staff of the Department is highly qualified and has a track record of quality teaching and research. The current structure of the Department has 14 tenured or tenure-track faculty (DEP), which corresponds to approximately 61% of the overall faculty. The Department had a recent retirement and is hoping to fill the position immediately and to also fill the additional 7 openings for which funding was originally approved in 2010. The Department has suffered a number of departures and the effects of the recent economic crisis, which have limited its ability to hire new faculty.

There certainly seems to be a breadth of research being conducted in the Department, which is impressive, especially since it is primarily an undergraduate department. As a result, the prospects for systematic research are constrained. Members of OMEA indicated that in the last

fiscal year there were €23,000 from the ministry and €75,000 from grants which the faculty have secured. The small number of faculty is already strained with teaching, advising and mentoring for any substantive and in-depth research to be conducted.

Although there is stated emphasis by the faculty on research, the Department's strength is in teaching and mentoring, especially since the student body tends to have needs in both of these areas. The existence of the seminar-type upper-level courses allows the faculty to enhance their teaching with their personal research, which is of tremendous benefit for the students. This was a point made by faculty, students as well as alumni. Every group identifies the seminars as distinctive to the department and as an extremely positive experience.

Based on the AP's meeting with alumni and stakeholders of the Department, it appears that the graduates of the programme have been very successful in making the transition to the Greek labour market for a number of reasons, including effective teaching, seminar exposure and internship experience. Although this is a Department with a 20-year history, the alumni have been able to achieve success in public office, media, NGOs and academia. This is a very impressive accomplishment and reflects well on the Department.

Due to the virtual nature of this visit, we did not get a chance to review the facilities. However, from the presentations it appears that the library and other support services are available and of high quality. Physical and Cyber facilities and networks appear to be in place, and the members of OMEA indicated that they were able to make the transition to online teaching in a matter of two weeks last spring when Covid-19 lockdowns occurred. There are support services for students, such as faculty advising, administrative support, technical support and mental health counselling.

The Department has established mechanisms that align the work of OMEA at the department level to MODIP at the institutional level. There seems to be great collaboration among the two groups and the office of the Vice-Rector. A strong commitment and acceptance of the assessment process is evident. There are extensive quality indicators of the programme, which were provided to EEAP, but EEAP could not verify that they are readily available elsewhere. The Department has the quality assurance mechanisms in place and appears to be in compliance with the relevant HAHE Principles.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The Department needs to develop mission and vision statements that are clear and consistent with its declared objectives.
- The objectives should be consistently phrased in Greek and English on the Department's website.

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 has currently 14 full-time faculty members. According to the Department's Guide of Studies, the Bachelor's degree in Political Science is a four-year degree (8 semesters) and requires the successful completion of 44 semester-length courses. The breakdown of these courses is as follows: 21 are required (6 ECTS each); 12 are required electives (5 ECTS each); 6 are seminars (6 ECTS each); 4 are required foreign language courses (English-5 ECTS each); and 1 is a free elective that can be taken in one of the other Departments of the University. A senior thesis option is also available to students during the fourth year of studies and is conducted under the supervision of a faculty member. In order to qualify for the thesis option, a student must have taken and completed 20 of the 21 required courses. The successful completion of the thesis carries 12 ECTS. In addition, students who have successfully completed the required courses have the option to pursue an internship during their 3rd or 4th year. This programme gives students the opportunity to acquire much valued practical experience by working for two months in a variety of institutions in the public and private sectors.

The programme emphasizes that it exposes students to teaching and research and it strives to ensure that research generated by individual professors and by the 5 Research Laboratories feeds into classroom instruction and assignments. From the discussions held with faculty members, students, alumni and employers, it appears that graduates of the programme acquire a set of valuable skills that include solid writing and analytical skills, familiarity with qualitative and quantitative methods and critical thinking. The emphasis that the Department places on its seminars, internships and senior thesis options are clearly contributing factors in this development, and the Department should be encouraged to maintain and deepen its commitment to these policies.

Having noted this, it is the view of the Panel that this commitment would be better served with some changes in the curriculum and in the interplay between teaching and research: (1) Taking into consideration the growing interdisciplinarity in political science research (for example, the influence of sociological institutionalism in both international relations and comparative politics, psychologically-based perspectives on decision-making, law and society approaches etc.), students should be encouraged to take more than one free elective in other departments in the University. This can be done by reducing the number of required courses and required electives; (2) While the teaching of the English language is welcome, devoting 4 courses on the terminology and concepts is too much. The Panel feels that one course would be sufficient, and the effort should be devoted to developing Political Science Courses in English: Introduction to Public Policy, Theories and Concepts in International Relations and Basic Concepts in Comparative Politics are among the courses that the Department should seriously consider; (3) The interaction between teaching and the research work produced by the Laboratories merits a re-examination. While it appears that certain advance undergraduate students do avail themselves of the opportunities provided by the Laboratories (we were told that in one of the Labs-Social Statistics-undergraduate students are brought in to do sampling work), it is not clear what research opportunities the other Labs offer beyond the occasional engagement of students in literature reviews. In this context, it is important to rethink how first- and second-year students can be incentivized to engage in research-related tasks.

The Department is on the right track, but it needs to do more in this direction so as to build on its key distinct features that privilege the integration of research into teaching and the development of strong conceptual and analytical skills among its students.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The Department should encourage interdisciplinarity in its teaching.
- There should be a reduction in distinct English language courses and a consequent creation of political science courses taught in English.
- More emphasis should be placed on integrating undergraduate students in research projects undertaken by individual faculty and the Research Labs.

Principle 3: Student- centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment

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

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

The student-centred learning and teaching process

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

In addition :

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

Study Programme Compliance

The Department delivers its undergraduate programme in a manner that encourages students to take an active role in their own learning, particularly in years three and four of their studies. It does so by using a multi-method approach to pedagogy that encourages the participation and engagement of students in course material through the integration of active-learning principles. Thus, in addition to lectures, emphasis has been increasingly placed on a student-centered classroom—one in which collaborative work is encouraged and courses become truly interactive, integrating discussion, group work, debates, and other participatory pedagogical

techniques. Seminars in the last two years of study are a manifestation of such student-centered pedagogy.

In addition to excellent seminars, as reported by both students and graduates of the programme, the EEAP also wishes to draw attention to the Department's efforts to grow the number and types of internships, particularly by increasing the number of private institutions that participate in the internship programme. As graduates of the programme made abundantly clear to the evaluators, such internships are highly valued by students, as they provide them with professional and practical experience that contributes to future employment opportunities. The rapidly growing popularity of internships reflects student awareness of their importance in skill acquisition and in networking with professionals in their field.

The EEAP commends the department for its emphasis on such "high impact teaching practices" (HIPs), which have been shown to benefit students through greater gains in learning and retention compared to more traditional instruction. Through the integration of HIPs, students are encouraged to develop transferable skills, including critical thinking, scientific writing, collaborative, and other practical skills that directly prepare them for the labour market and/or post-graduate education. In this regard, the department's special emphasis on its internship programme and the requirement that students engage in research (particularly through its mandatory seminar in scientific writing and other seminars) are among the HIPs that should be further strengthened and extended (in modified form) to the first two years of its curriculum.

Further contributing to student-centered learning is the personalized attention that students receive from their professors, not only within the classroom but during regular office hours as well. Research has shown that such contact between students and their instructors *outside of the classroom* is one of the greatest contributing factors to student success and retention. Both current students as well as alumni of the programme with whom the EEAP met confirmed that faculty members are readily accessible to students as academic advisors, internship directors, research coordinators, etc. Students expressed their appreciation for the open-door policy of faculty and spoke highly of faculty willingness to mentor students engaged in research in the seminars. The EEAP finds this to be a major departmental strength.

In terms of student assessment, the vast majority of course syllabi are posted on the department's website. However, the criteria and methods of student assessment are not published uniformly in all of them, as would-be best practice. While such information is not published uniformly in the syllabi, the Department indicated that instructors share the information verbally with students on the first day of class. According to the Department, instructors also share handouts with holidays and breaks. It was noted also that, in most cases, the assessment of students takes place through a final examination that is given during the

examination period at the end of the semester. The Department indicates that alternative methods of assessment are also in place, including midterm examinations, writing assignments, as well as survey and other work in lab courses. Students with whom the EEAP met spoke highly of such a multi-method approach to assessment, which they confirmed is in place during the final two years of study. The EEAP would suggest further incorporating such alternative methods of assessment in years one and two of the programme. If incorporated properly, such methods would be of greatest benefit to students in their early years when they are at their most vulnerable.

Finally, to measure the effectiveness of teaching, it was reported that anonymous course evaluations are conducted every semester in each class. As noted previously, response rates are low, however. Student evaluations, then, while generally positive, are not as meaningful as they could be in assessing the effectiveness of teaching. Students who have grievances, however, do have additional recourse, including through the constitution of a special departmental committee that can be appointed to test those who have failed three times in a course. It was also reported that the university can provide a student advocate to mediate between students, faculty, staff and administrators should the need arise.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The Department's high impact practices (such as the integration of research, travel, internships, laboratory experiences, and others) should be further integrated into the first and second years of the programme of study.
- All syllabi should be posted on the Department's website, with the criteria and methods of assessment clearly articulated in each syllabus. Syllabi should provide students with a detailed course outline, including readings, assignments and due dates.
- Response rates to student course evaluations should be raised. Evaluations should be administered during the last week (or two) of the semester. To increase student response rates, faculty members should encourage students to access the online evaluation system on their laptops or phones during the last fifteen minutes of class, with the faculty member excusing him/herself from the room.

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 strives for transparency in its admission, progression, recognition and certification policies. The undergraduate programme of study is posted on its website, as are the course schedules for each semester and most course syllabi. According to faculty members with whom the EEAP met, to facilitate student orientation, the Department hosts a day-long session at the beginning of each academic year that provides incoming students with necessary information.

Importantly, faculty members also share information with students. For example, each faculty member in the Department serves as an academic advisor, and students with whom the EEAP met indicated that faculty advisors serve as mentors who are instrumental in their progression towards graduation. In addition, students are served by an Erasmus Coordinator and by academic officers who function as appointed representatives of the large number of universities with which the Department has formalized exchanges. These individuals provide students with information regarding Erasmus and other programmes. Such information includes details about scholarships, which make it possible for students to study abroad.

In its presentation to the AP, OMEA shared various statistics, including data on student progress, degrees awarded, graduation rates, students' duration of studies, and the distribution of grades earned by graduates. This demonstrates that the Department systematically collects such information. However, it is unclear how the data are used to monitor and support student progress towards graduation. Research shows that effective student support strategies help to improve student retention rates. There is a general lack of clarity in determining the percentage

of students that are progressing at various points throughout the undergraduate program (i.e., first to second year; second to third year; third to fourth year, etc.).

Finally, upon completion of the programme of study, in addition to being awarded a diploma, students also receive a “Diploma Supplement” that outlines in greater detail the achievements and competencies acquired during their undergraduate studies.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The data collected should be used more systematically to monitor and promote student progress throughout their course of study.
- The Department, in cooperation with the UoC, should conduct a needs assessment that may lead to the identification of strategies to increase student retention and, subsequently, graduation.

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 faculty are professionally active, authoring and publishing research in both Greek and English-speaking academic outlets. These include scholarship in books, refereed/non-refereed journals, edited volumes, reports and proceedings. The faculty accomplish this work by collaborating with colleagues within the unit, across other universities in Greece, as well as with international scholars. Even though the degree of professional productivity varies by faculty member, the collective output is in line with the level expected for an undergraduate programme in political science.

The faculty publication programme and associated professional activities have been supported by limited operating funds which have generally remained unchanged in recent years. However, the Department has been successful in pursuing and securing some external funding from private sources as well as other national and EU sources. According to the records provided, during the last four years, the external funds have ranged between €75,000 and €150,000 annually.

The faculty are also active by sponsoring symposia, conferences, and lectures. This is an additional sign of an interest in encouraging professional development opportunities.

Faculty have earned sabbatical leaves and have participated in activities sponsored by ERASMUS. These engagements recognize the importance of internationalization in career development. This is not surprising since many have studied abroad. Additionally, such teaching staff mobility raises institutional awareness. Through ERASMUS, the Department maintains relationships with many universities.

The faculty-student ratio is an essential component to successfully furthering academic quality and student success. The departmental ratio continues to be very high in comparison to general standards and has not fundamentally changed in recent years. The Department is currently planning to hire an additional colleague in the near future. Each faculty spends a minimum of 6 teaching hours per week and a maximum of 9, averaging approximately 7.5 teaching hours. These, in-classroom responsibilities, are deemed favourable. Though they face the significant challenge of serving a large number of students, the faculty are able to productively engage in research activities.

A review of the academic background, reveals that the faculty are highly qualified, possessing appropriate credentials. While there is no direct, identifiable connection between research and teaching effectiveness, it is anticipated that when faculty maintain an active research agenda, these pursuits help to improve teaching methods, strengthen the student experience and subsequently contribute to the programme's overall success.

A new programme of study was approved by the Department in 2017 and went into effect with the start of the 2017-2018 academic year. According to the information provided, curricular offerings include a large number of elective courses and seminars. This allows for opportunities for faculty to further develop their research agendas in the process integrating their scholarship into the classroom. The presence of curricular flexibility also encourages, when appropriate, the introduction of innovative and timely courses that can be responsive to topical issues and global events.

There is a clearly established instructional evaluation process, with an approved instrument, which provides students with an opportunity to offer teaching faculty constructive feedback. The Department utilizes the data to improve instructional practices while meeting course outcomes. They have recently transitioned to electronic instructional evaluations which are distributed to students as a link via an email communication. However, the student participation rate in evaluating courses is extremely low and should be an area of major concern.

At this time, no clear direction exists regarding a defined research strategy within the Department. Current academic strengths are in Political Theory and Public Policy and Administration and are largely due to the robust number of faculty in these areas and to the well-established teaching and productive research programme on these subjects. The Department should begin having more deliberate conversations regarding this topic, something that can also inform future faculty hiring decisions. Additionally, the presence of the following research centres is a source of potential strength and can make positive contributions to conceptualizing and executing a forthcoming research strategy. However, more information on their activities is necessary before any assessment can be made as to their potential contribution. Specifically, the Centres/Laboratories include:

- Centre for Political Research and Documentation
- Centre for Human Rights
- Laboratory of Social Statistics

- Public Policy and Administration Research Laboratory
- Centre of European Policy and Regional Development

Another way to enrich the curriculum is to attract Fulbright and other Visiting Scholars or other faculty from abroad. These colleagues will contribute to diversifying the culture of the department by delivering lectures and by collaborating with the existing faculty and students on research projects. These scholars would prove especially beneficial if, in the future, courses in English became part of the curriculum. Such a strategy would also expand the students' academic experiences and strengthen the international reputation of the Department.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- Given the high student-faculty ratio, the Department can explore ways to attract Fulbright Visiting Scholars or other faculty from abroad who are searching for professional leaves and/or sabbatical appointments.
- The academic leadership of the Department and its faculty members should explore ways to improve the student feedback in instructional evaluations. Some best practices for advancing student evaluations that could be explored, if applicable, include (1) making access effortless (easy access via Learning Management System), (2) maintain a consistent instrument (allows for programme-wide trends), (3) device access (mobile phone or iPad), (4) multiple direct entry points (automated reminders), (5) no survey/no grade (consider making the survey mandatory), (6) feedback matters (identify ways that student feedback is shown to inform change), and (7) reserve time (allocate specific time at end of course for students to complete this task).
- The Department could benefit from the creation of a Centre for Teaching and Learning at the institutional level that strengthens teaching practices while providing essential support to faculty.

Principle 6: Learning Resources and Student Support

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

Institutions and their academic units must have sufficient funding and means to support learning and academic activity in general, so that they can offer to students the best possible level of studies. The above means could include facilities such as libraries, study rooms, educational and scientific equipment, information and communications services, support or counselling services.

When allocating the available resources, the needs of all students must be taken into consideration (e.g. whether they are full-time or part-time students, employed or international students, students with disabilities) and the shift towards student-centred learning and the adoption of flexible modes of learning and teaching. Support activities and facilities may be organised in various ways, depending on the institutional context. However, the internal quality assurance ensures that all resources are appropriate, adequate, and accessible, and that students are informed about the services available to them.

In delivering support services the role of support and administrative staff is crucial and therefore they need to be qualified and have opportunities to develop their competences.

Study Programme Compliance

The campus environment provides the Department with exceptional access to facilities as conveyed in the reports provided by the university. Specifically, the Department has been allocated dedicated classrooms with access to additional classrooms for common use. The Department is also the recipient of dedicated computer lab space with access to similar facilities for common use. Classrooms and labs are appropriate in supporting the teaching and learning environment.

Classrooms are also equipped with appropriate technology, and IT support is provided (most recently with a HelpDesk). Students have reliable WIFI access, and statistical software is readily available to students, which is necessary for the successful completion of the methodological courses. A number of other tools complement the teaching and learning environments including elearn.uoc.gr, a tool employed as a Learning Management System; student.cc.uoc.gr, a site focusing on students for registration/grade review; and Classweb, employed by faculty to submit grades and review student records.

The distribution of existing facilities is rational, and the process works appropriately to support the academic mission. The staff ensure exceptional management of these resources. Neither the students nor the faculty reported any concerns in this area.

Due to the presence of a comprehensive campus infrastructure, both students and faculty expressed strong satisfaction with the available range of support services. Health and

counselling services, cafeteria, dormitories, and study spaces are easily accessible. The Library resources are outstanding, well utilized and can be accessed from anywhere via VPN. Furthermore, faculty are engaged in academic advising and are present to meet with students regularly for four hours per week. These times are publicly posted on their office doors. The faculty often make themselves available to students beyond the noted times. Students identify their advisors based on their academic interests.

The Department utilizes its website extensively to communicate with students who report high levels of satisfaction with the flow and timeliness of information. In that regard the services provided are functional and easily accessed by the students.

The Department also supports students by making available key educational materials, e.g., Kant, Hobbes, Marx, Locke, Rousseau, Hegel, and others.

The administrative staff are experienced and provide competent, dedicated support to students.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The Department should expand the limited hours its staff is available to assist students requiring assistance (currently a total of only six hours a week).
- Given that courses are offered in the evening hours, the Department could also consider expanding its administrative services to students during those times.

Principle 7: Information Management

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

Institutions are expected to establish and operate an information system for the management and monitoring of data concerning students, teaching staff, course structure and organisation, teaching and provision of services to students as well as to the academic community.

Reliable data is essential for accurate information and for decision making, as well as for identifying areas of smooth operation and areas for improvement. Effective procedures for collecting and analysing information on study programmes and other activities feed data into the internal system of quality assurance.

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

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

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

Study Programme Compliance

The Department has established procedures for electronic collection of data and has established a student evaluation of courses process, but the lack of response on the part of the students makes the findings not truly representative. From the charts and figures provided, there is a great deal of student satisfaction for the courses and the programmes. However, it is very difficult to assess due to the low numbers of respondents.

There is limited or unclear information that is publicly available or made available to AP, as to the demographic data, retention and graduation rates, as well as a robust alumni network. This seems to be mostly an issue of staffing as each one of these tasks would require a more deliberate structure and process. The Department and the faculty have a good personal connection with the students, and there is great camaraderie, which enhances the communication toward reaching better outcomes, but this is an area of needed institutional improvement. The Department has an impressive group of current students and recent alumni and would be well served to enhance the established structures and build institutional, rather than personal, means of connectivity.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The Department should conduct an exit survey of graduating seniors that assesses satisfaction with the programme.
- The Department should conduct, in conjunction with UoC, a career survey of the programme's graduating seniors regarding their post-graduation plans.
- The Department should solicit student input regarding their internship experience.
- The Department should compile a databank with student key performance indicators and student profiles.
- The Department should urgently institutionalize an alumni network and association.

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 website of the Department publishes information about the curriculum at all three levels of offerings (undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral), information about faculty and their research activities, announcements, Erasmus mobility, Laboratories and Research Centres affiliated with the Department, and, in general, activities including the study programme, the expected learning outcomes, learning and teaching processes and quality assessment policy.

Many syllabi of the offered courses contain the expected learning results- outcomes and are published on the website of the Department at the beginning of each academic semester (see https://9b9ec758578b3ee0d46b-305404f9eb35eaf4130aa2d106c6a91c.ssl.cf3.rackcdn.com/636/course_page_banner_documents/9/132/56/Y345BNAYDwd8S17PggmVvz2PB8kv72.pdf)

The website of the Department provides data and information regarding aspects of the organization (including all the relevant regulations), structure and operation and contributes decisively to the goal of promoting the Department and providing substantial information for those interested (see <http://political.soc.uoc.gr/el>).

Although the website clearly aims to inform visitors in Greek, it is not user-friendly and does not contain equivalent information in English. Information regarding the programme (structure, semester schedule, etc.) is available online in Greek, but the various buttons in English contain unevenly shortened information and labels that mix Greek and English. For example, the English version under the button “Department” contains labels such as Objectives (which is a shortened version of the one in Greek) and labels such as Ασφάλεια και Υγιεινή, Πολιτική Ποιότητας ΠΠΣ, etc. The latter do not contain any information. The website includes information for those wanting to know more about the curriculum, but it does not give focused information about strengths of the programme that could potentially appeal to prospective students. The policy for quality assurance is available only in Greek – there is an equivalent label in the English version that contains a blank page.

Staff CVs and contact information are available in Greek but in condensed form in English. What is available online is useful information about faculty specialization and selected publications but not full and complete CVs in the English version of the website. This could be problematic for international visibility of the programme.

Announcements in English inform only about course offerings while the English button about Centres and Laboratories is in Greek and contains no information.

Information about Centre activity is uneven in Greek. Three of the Centre pages contain very useful information about Centre activities, including the Centres' own websites, but two Centre pages are blank.

No graduate employment information is available on the website.

One of the strengths of the Department are its teaching and faculty concern for students. Student opinion counts for prospective or other current students in ways that no other information source can. A few short stories/opinions by current or former students will go a long way toward advertising the many skills with which the Department equips its students and the strong links it has created with the community and employers, including graduate employment prospects. There should also be stories by alumni speaking about the Department. These stories may serve as the start of the effort to put together an alumni association.

In general, information about the Department is not optimized. There is a lot of good information, but it is not presented in a user-friendly way, especially when it comes to prospective students.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- Reconceptualize the website to make it more informative and visually appealing to prospective audiences/visitors.

- Such reconceptualization may include in the initial page a welcome letter by the Department Chair. EEAP has witnessed the friendly and collaborative relations among faculty and believes such a spirit needs to be communicated upfront to all visitors.
- A button may be added titled “Why Study with Us?” This is where the Department gives information about its comparative advantages, some useful statistics, and student stories.
- The button “Department” needs to begin with a brief profile of the Department. It is imperative that visitors have a brief but substantive picture of the Department - its history, size, strengths, and aspirations. This information needs to be informal and visually appealing to attract visitors to proceed to other areas of interest within the website.
- The button “Erasmus” for now may be included as a subset of “Studies” equivalent to the existing labels, such as Master’s, doctoral, etc. Once the Department engages in significant activities of internationalization, all that information may be fruitfully subsumed in a button separate from “Studies” called “Internationalization.”
- The button “Research Units” needs to be updated and enriched with information about activities, staff, research, and ways students may get involved with research. Three Centres already do this; the rest should follow with information fully included in the English version of the website as well.
- Faculty may place photos of themselves on the website under the label “Teaching Staff.”

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

From the material provided to the AP, as well as from our exchanges with faculty members, it is clear that the strengths of the Department lie in the areas of Political Theory and Public Policy and Administration. These strengths are reflected both in the research undertaken by the faculty and in the teaching of these subjects. A review of the syllabi indicates that, overall, the Department is doing a good job in exposing students to the latest scholarly developments and debates.

An issue that merits further attention on this front is the need to expand course offerings, not to cover better the existing ones. For example, almost all course offerings in comparative politics relate to EU issues. The University's critical geographic location provides the Department with an opportunity to develop more courses on the politics of the Middle East and North Africa, as part of redefining its commitment to "looking outwards" (εξωστρέφεια). This is a term that was repeatedly featured in the 2014 External Evaluation Report as expressing "an active interest in multiplying activities...both in Europe and beyond." Given the current budgetary constraints, the Department can partially address this issue by attracting Fulbright and other Visiting Scholars to offer courses and mentor students in the politics of these pivotal regions. Such a course of action will further raise the Department's academic profile and enhance the internationalization of the campus. It should also constitute part of the Department's ongoing conversation on its strategic plan.

An internal assessment mechanism (OMEA) is in place and annually evaluates the programme of study and related departmental activities. Data are annually collected and reported to the curriculum committee along with any student association proposals.

The different aspects of student assessment were addressed during the AP's meetings with faculty members and with representatives of the student body. The impression from the conversations and supporting documentation (including samples of senior theses) is that the Department is doing a solid job monitoring progress and completion of students who are engaged in their studies and have a clear sense of direction. It is difficult to ascertain how the Department is addressing the challenges posed by those students who fall behind. In this context, it is worth noting that while OMEA provided the EEAP with a lot of information on students, including data on the length of studies and graduation rates, questions remain on whether and how the information collected is used to monitor progress towards degree completion. In a similar vein, it is difficult to ascertain the degree of students' overall satisfaction with the programme. Not surprisingly, the groups of students and alumni with whom the EEAP met expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the programme, and this was indeed a reaffirmation of the programme's capacity to nurture excellence among those committed to their academic studies.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- Redefining outward-looking orientation (εξωστρέφεια) to include areas and activities beyond the EU region should constitute an integral part of the Department's ongoing conversations on its strategic plan.
- The Department should improve its mechanisms and processes for monitoring student progress towards degree completion.

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 administering 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

The Department is currently undergoing its first undergraduate programme accreditation review and has already undergone an external evaluation review in 2014. The latter's recommendations resulted in the drafting of an action plan, which has been adopted and implemented. Information about this draft was made available to AP. In this case, EEAP notes with satisfaction that the Department takes the evaluation process seriously and most importantly is willing to act and has acted on the majority of the recommendations. The faculty, administrative staff, and the students are intimately involved and understand the importance of the review process. They appear to be enthusiastic supporters.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The Department should engage systematically external stakeholders. This could entail regular semester meetings with the entire Department.

- The Department may wish to include on its website under “Assessments” (in both the Greek and English versions) a direct link to the Quality Assurance Unit’s/MODIP’s website so that the evaluation process at the Departmental and programmatic levels may be linked more closely to the broader goals and evaluation process at the institutional level.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

- The programme successfully engages in highly effective teaching practices and integrates research into the classroom experience (students and graduates spoke in glowing terms about the seminars and internship opportunities).
- The EEAP also noted very collegial relations among faculty and between faculty and students.
- The programme makes good use of the existing technological infrastructure and support services.
- The programme offers good employment prospects to students through its relationships with a voluminous and diverse number of public and private employers.

II. Areas of Weakness

- The programme does not appear to have a strong identity and sense of comparative advantage.
- The Department's/programme's website is not user-friendly. It contains voluminous information, but it is neither visually appealing nor does it aim to attract prospective students.
- The programme does not adequately take advantage or engage in activities to internationalize the curriculum and expand student horizons.
- The programme does not adequately address the issue of students who are falling behind in their studies. It is unclear what mentoring and support services the Department provides for these students.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

- The Department should develop a strategic plan with clearly defined priorities and courses of action. They may be a function of current strengths, perceptions of future direction of the discipline and student skill development and employment prospects.
- Engage in significant internationalization of the curriculum and programmatic activities to give students more opportunities to explore the broader community beyond Europe.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: **5, 6, 10**

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: **1, 2, 3, 4, 9**

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are: **7, 8**

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

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

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname

Signature

- 1. Prof. Nikolaos Zahariadis (Chair)**
Rhodes College, USA
- 2. Associate Prof. Petros Vamvakas**
Emmanuel College, USA
- 3. Prof. Neovi Karakatsanis**
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- 4. Prof. George Andreopoulos**
City University of New York, USA
- 5. Prof. Costas Spirou**
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