



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
HELLENIC REPUBLIC



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Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of:

Primary Education
Institution: University of Crete
Date: 20 March 2021



Επιχειρησιακό Πρόγραμμα
Ανάπτυξη Ανθρώπινου Δυναμικού,
Εκπαίδευση και Διά Βίου Μάθηση
Με τη συγχρηματοδότηση της Ελλάδας και της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης



Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the Undergraduate Study Programme of **Primary 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 **Primary Education** of the **University of Crete** comprised the following three (3) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

- 1. Prof. Leonidas Kyriakides (Chair)**
University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus
- 2. Prof. Athanasios Gagatsis**
University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus
- 3. Prof. Mary Ioannidou-Koutselini**
University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

Due to travel restrictions and lockdowns, the accreditation of the Primary Education Programme at the University of Crete was conducted fully in a remote mode, using the Zoom teleconferencing tool. The Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE) provided the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel (EEAP) members with a packet of materials ahead of the review process that included: The Department's Accreditation Proposal, a Quality Assurance Policy Document, Quality Assurance Goals, and Quality Data, as well as a wealth of supportive material and appendices. The Department further provided the EEAP the accreditation file and appendices for easy access, as well as additional supportive material including videos, sample of student work, course assignments, Practicum assignments, student Theses, and faculty scholarship samples. The Panel was also provided with HAHE's accreditation guidelines and was invited to attend an orientation session before the accreditation visit.

The EEAP met as a group before the accreditation teleconferences to plan ahead, coordinate division of work and process to be followed, and discuss issues that emerged from the preliminary study of the material at that point.

The virtual accreditation visit extended over two days, starting on March 15th, 2021. We first met with Prof. Georgios Kossioris, Vice Rector of Academic Affairs and Head of MODIP, and Prof. Aspasia Chatzidaki, Head of the Department and OMEA coordinator. We then met with OMEA and MODIP representatives. On the second day of our visit, we met with DEP, EDIP and special teaching staff members (EEP), administrative staff members, current students at different points in their degrees, employers/social partners, graduates. This second day was concluded with debriefing meetings with OMEA and MODIP representatives, the Vice-Rector/President of MODIP, and the Head of the Department. For the evaluation of facilities and material infrastructure we were given an online tour containing short videos from select sites. From the very beginning, the Department welcomed us with warmth, collegiality and openness and they were all eager to answer our questions and address our concerns. Their presentations were informative, emphasizing the University's commitment to quality improvement in teaching, research and community outreach. A good number of faculty attended our meetings, a sign of involvement in departmental affairs.

From our interactions and conversations with representatives of the department, leadership, faculty members and administrative staff, current students and alumni as well as community partners we recognized that the Department takes its commitment to quality assurance seriously and are constantly working towards more compliance to the HAHE quality standards.

In closing, the EEAP would like to note the challenges of conducting an accreditation virtually. Despite the flawless and truly exemplary organization of the virtual visit on the part of our hosts, we feel that an on-site visit would have given us a much better sense of the work that is taking place, would have done justice to the Department's achievements, and would have given the Panel more formal and informal opportunities to inquire about different aspects of the accreditation and the proposal.

III. Study Programme Profile

The development of the programme follows a well-defined procedure that corresponds to the policy for quality assurance established by the University and the Department.

The academic profile and orientation of the programme, the objectives, subject areas, structure and organization, expected learning outcomes, and intended professional qualifications align with the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and the guidelines of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The revision complies with the basic requirements described in the Standards, on behalf of the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP) taking into consideration the following:

- The Institutional strategy- MODIP
- The courses evaluation by the students
- The experience of external stakeholders from schools and Associations
- The smooth progression of students throughout the stages of the programme
- The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
- The provision of School Internship to the students during their studies
- The linking of teaching and research
- The relevant regulatory framework and the official procedure for the approval of the programme by the Institution.

The relevant information provided to the EEAP, the interviews and meetings with staff, students, MODIP, Department's internal evaluation Committee (OMEA) and stakeholders, along with the published documentation, confirm the compliance with the above considerations and verify that the development, the content, and the allocated ECTS are appropriate for the fulfilment of the programme's aims and the expected learning outcomes.

The programme is regularly evaluated by student surveys and the results indicate students' satisfaction. Their positive attitudes towards the programme and the teaching staff have been confirmed during the Panel's meetings with students and graduates. Students have favourably referred to the support of their studies by the teaching staff and their mentors and advisors. The collaborative climate during teaching and learning promotes mutual respect of students' diversity and fulfilment of their individual needs. Assessment and feedback are regularly and properly applied to all students.

The Department applies the published regulations covering students' admission criteria, progression, and recognition. Students receive documentation (Diploma Supplement) explaining the qualification earned, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.

Regular monitoring, review and revision of the programme is conducted, based on the external evaluation reports and the internal students' and staff evaluation and needs, to ensure that the content and the learning outcomes are up to date in light of the latest Education research data. The last revision of the programme took place during the academic year 2014-15 and it was based on the 2013 External Evaluation Report.

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 Undergraduate Study Programme of Primary Education of the University of Crete is in line with that of the University's. The programme's quality assurance procedures are monitored by the University's Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP). In general, the Quality Assurance Policy aims to support the academic content and scientific orientation of the undergraduate programme in accordance with international academic standards and the

current national legislation. To that extent, there is a policy in place for improving the educational experience of undergraduate students, the quality and quantity of the overall research output of the department, as well as the introduction of innovative teaching and practical training techniques. Furthermore, such policy extends to the continual monitoring and improvement of human resources, the overall structure of the organization, extroversion and mobility and promotion-recognition.

The main dimensions of the Department’s quality assurance policy concern the following:

- Promoting the quality of teaching and research work, linking teaching to research and disseminating innovative practices.
- The active participation of students in the teaching-learning process.
- Enhancing staff and student mobility.
- Promoting cooperation with other university departments and research centres (at a national and international level).
- Strengthening of its relations and interactions with the local and wider community.
- Supporting the continuous improvement of the working conditions of the teaching, research and administrative staff.

Overall, the EEAP finds the quality assurance action plan of the department satisfactory and in compliance with the recommendations of the external evaluation. In particular, the quality assurance processes are coordinated and supervised by OMEA in collaboration with the MODIP of the institution. The various tasks of OMEA are brought about through its collaboration with various academic, student, and external bodies. In particular, valuable feedback is being obtained on a continual basis from the programme studies committee, the department meetings, the analysis of student evaluation reports, as well as the engagement of various stakeholders from the local school system.

The EEAP also found the quality assurance policy of the Department of Primary Education, as well-focused on all aspects mentioned above.

Panel Judgement

Principle 1: Academic Unit Policy for Quality Assurance	
Fully compliant	✓
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

None.

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 Primary Education of the University of Crete follows a well-defined procedure for implementing the University's mission. The Department has designed a course of study that is appropriate and meets universally accepted standards for teacher preparation. The Department offers a four-year Bachelor programme in Education for primary school teachers. The programme was revised during the academic year 2014-15 according to the official procedures for the approval of the programme by the institution and to the recommendations included in the External Evaluation Report. Annual revisions are also made based on course evaluations conducted by the students, staff's feedback, and the views of different stakeholders.

The main aim of the department is to provide graduates with the appropriate equipment to successfully work in the field as competent teachers and educators with broad pedagogical knowledge and sensitivity towards contemporary educational issues that affect students' well-being. Publications of teaching staff are used for teaching purposes. There is also a strong link between the research work conducted by the members of the department with the courses of the programme of study. The internal quality assurance board successfully promotes its objectives and the smooth progression of students throughout the stages of the programme.

The structure of the programme consists of 5 sectors:

- Educational Science and Sociology of Education
- Educational Psychology and Research Methods
- Curriculum Development, Teaching Methodology, and Educational Technology
- Humanities and Social Studies
- Pure Sciences

A total of 842 students are enrolled in the programme. The student workload is in compliance with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). The studies are structured in 8 semesters with workload of approximately 30 ECTS per semester and up to 60 courses needed for graduation or 57 courses plus an undergraduate thesis. Twenty-two courses, two semesters of School Internship and four courses of English language are mandatory consisting of a total of 28 compulsory courses for graduating. The courses dedicated to Music and Art are not compulsory. The remaining courses are either restricted elective or free elective courses. Additional compulsory courses on teaching Maths and Language should be offered in order to provide a better balance among the compulsory courses of the programme.

Students have the option of completing an undergraduate thesis, which is equivalent to three elective courses (=12 ECTS). There are also some general and specific criteria that are required for the acceptance of students' application for the development of a thesis, as well as a number of prerequisites for the submission of such an application.

The programme design allows students to develop their own structure of studies and it is characterized by flexibility that supports a student – centred curriculum. Thus, the programme has been designed so as to satisfy different career orientations. However, the EEAP notes that additional opportunities can be offered to the students of the Department regarding their participation in research courses. For example, elective courses on quantitative and qualitative research could be offered by the Department apart from the compulsory course on research. In addition, there are some concerns about the equivalence of the students' degrees due to the large percentage of the elective courses in their programme guide. Therefore, it is recommended that the number of the core and obligatory courses should be significantly increased.

The School Internship is mandatory for all students and is organized in two overlapping levels corresponding to the 7th and 8th semester of study. It aims at providing practical skills that are necessary for students to undertake their future role as teachers at schools. It gives the opportunity to students to conduct small scale investigations, to develop teaching plans and to teach cooperatively. However, the time allocated to School Internship (=2 semesters) and the students' workload (=12 ECTS) are not sufficient in comparison to the European and international duration standards. Moreover, the limited time of the internship negatively affects the fulfilment of the programme's learning outcomes. It is worth mentioning that students and graduates have suggested an increase of the number of semesters allocated to the school internship and they have expressed their disappointment for the pandemic lockdown that forced students to stay out of schools. The EEAP has been informed by the president of the departmental work experience committee that the staff is working on simulations that should allow the students to be actively involved in realistic classroom environment, especially during this semester.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- Additional opportunities can be offered to the students of the Department regarding their participation in research courses. For example, elective courses on quantitative and qualitative research could be offered by the Department apart from the compulsory course on research.
- The number of the core and obligatory courses should be significantly increased and obligatory seminars in teaching Maths and Greek Language should be added.
- The time allocated to School Internship should be increased.

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 play 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 structure of the programme favours student-centred teaching, learning, and assessment. Specifically, the Department uses a variety of teaching methods that are student centred. Although the specific methods are within the purview of each instructor, students are encouraged to actively participate in the learning process. Instructors try to stir away from facts and procedural knowledge during lectures, focusing more on conceptual understanding. In addition, there are enrichment opportunities through invited speakers, presentations, and student participation in faculty research and conferences. Furthermore, students are able to choose from a series of elective courses thus cultivating their own individual interests through the programme. Individualized and cooperative learning (which is a necessary condition of a

student-centred class organization), facilitates differentiation of teaching and learning. Meetings and work in the laboratories can provide further support to all students and individualized support to those who need it more. Moreover, students are given feedback and advice on their work and they have the opportunity to interact with their tutors. Although the follow-up of teaching in small groups in the laboratories is an effective practice, lessons in the amphitheatres with very big audiences should be avoided as they do not comply with student-centred learning.

Faculty also makes extensive use of new technologies and course management systems, including e-class and Moodle, to support both content delivery and student interaction. Furthermore, all students have an advisor who is regularly available and who has the responsibility to guide students through the programme requirements.

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Assessment is consistent despite the staff shortage and the increasing numbers of students. Therefore, appropriate feedback is provided to the students. Enhanced and differentiated support is also provided to students with disabilities.

Students were thankful for the supportive and encouraging learning environment of the department, the opportunities for personal support as well as the opportunities offered to them for participating in rewarding extra-curricular activities. The staff members care about the quality and effectiveness of their teaching, and they seriously take into account the results of the students' evaluation through student surveys which are regularly analysed and discussed.

Finally, it is worth noting that there is a remarkably high student/faculty ratio which tends to seriously undermine student-centred learning opportunities for all students.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- Lessons in the amphitheatres with very big audiences should be avoided as they do not comply with student-centred learning practices.
- The high student/faculty ratio should be discussed in the Department and appropriate solutions should be searched.

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 Undergraduate Study Programme of Primary Education of the University of Crete is governed by clear regulations related to student admission, duration of studies, student progression, and student mobility. First of all, admission to Higher Education Institutions in Greece, is granted on the basis of scores achieved on the National Entrance Examination. Moreover, there are also alternative ways of admission such as examinations in specific categories for foreign and expatriate scholars, people with special needs, distinguished athletes, transfer students etc. The Department of Primary Education grants a single degree which enables the holder to be appointed as an educator in primary schools or to provide pedagogical services outside the school. The minimum number of semesters required to obtain the degree is eight (8).

The courses cover all the important aspects of modern trends in Education Sciences. In order to facilitate their students, they are given a Degree Plan, which they gradually complete. The department requires a completion of 240 ECTS over a minimum of a 4-year study. The department applies the ECTS system across the curriculum, which allows easy transfer among European universities. Further, the Department offers to the students the Diploma Supplement.

The students and graduates of the department expressed with very flattering comments about the excellent climate of cooperation with the academic staff of the department as well as about their curriculum regarding the wide variety of courses offered and the graduate thesis.

Student mobility is encouraged via the ERASMUS project. The students usually take advantage of this opportunity between the 6th and the 8th semester of their studies. More specifically, the Department has developed partnerships with 31 universities from 14 countries (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Denmark, Italy, Iceland, Spain, Cyprus, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Turkey, Czech Republic).

Department's undergraduate programme works sufficiently well, and indeed produces a relatively large body of excellent students. This fact is reflected by successful careers of the

Alumni in a wide range of professions; for example, the acceptance of students to top graduate schools all over the world for PhD studies.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- Students should be encouraged to participate in the Erasmus Project. The Department could offer extra support (including financial) to students who like to participate.

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 Undergraduate Programme of Primary Education comprises 19 DEP members, 9 EDIP members and 3 special teaching staff (EEP) members. Also, the programme is implemented with the assistance of a small number of contractor teachers hired each academic year. Their number depends on the total number of credits/positions that the University of Crete will receive from the Ministry of Education, as well as their distribution to the Departments by the Senate.

It should be noted that the number of faculty members in the Department has been significantly decreased during the last years due to retirement and non-replacement of faculty members. More specifically, during the period 2007-2018, 14 faculty members have retired and only 4 new members have been appointed.

The faculty members bring diverse expertise and research interests to the Programme and its curriculum. All faculty members have numerous publications in international scientific journals, and participation in national and international conferences. They also have very good relations with one another and have established collaborations amongst them. One category of teaching staff that has seen a large increase in the Department is the one of the EDIP. Most of them are engaged in the School Internship of the students and in addition they teach courses (as independent teaching) according to the provisions of the law. EDIP members reported very positive experiences with senior faculty, both in terms of support and department climate. Faculty also reported a fair division of labour in terms of service to the Department. However, the Department does not have a formal mentoring process. It would be beneficial to start working on a specific mentoring system due to the increasing number of EDIP members who will benefit from such a specific system.

The EEAP also noted the lack of a specialized DEP member in educational research. Since the EEAP was informed about two positions received by the Department, it is recommended that one of them should be placed regarding the appointment of such a member.

The Department has a disciplined and transparent approach for recruitment and promotion. Faculty members are recruited and promoted based on meritocratic methods of evaluation. The composition of the electorate is carried out with special care, so that the members have a formal and substantial academic relevance with the subject matter of the announced position. For this reason, the register of internal and external electors of the Department is utilized, which is as well updated every six months, approved by the Senate of the University, and then posted on the University's website.

Lastly, faculty seem to be on board with innovative teaching approaches and the use of technology, as evidenced in their extensive online teacher training modules and their preparedness and efficacy in moving to a remote and online environment due to the Covid-19.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- It would be beneficial for the Department to develop mentoring and monitoring mechanisms of the EDIP members.
- Since there is a lack of a specialized DEP member in educational research, one of the positions received by the Department must be placed for the appointment of a DEP members with expertise in educational research and strong publication record.

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 Panel was unable to inspect the facilities in person due to the pandemic. A YouTube video was made available for review where the buildings, laboratories, lecture halls and administrative offices were shown. The fact that the YouTube video has been produced by students, indicates their active involvement and another aspect of student-centred learning.

The department's resources are sufficient and adequately support learning and academic activity. Museums established by the departments' staff, and laboratories facilitate the accomplishment of the department's and students' objectives. It is important to mention the guidance that the IT laboratory and its staff gave to the Department and the University for the Smooth Replacement of the face-to-face teaching to distance learning during the pandemic.

The Department of Primary Education has the necessary facilities and large rooms/amphitheatres for academic learning, where students can attend classes. These rooms are equipped with adequate computers, and audio-visual devices for power point and video presentations.

The two permanent administrative faculty members make their best to support the department, and they are emotionally dedicated to their work which is expanded beyond the regular timetable. The discussion that the EEAP had with the students revealed that when they are in the first year of their studies, they need extra guidance in order to construct their programme. Although the administrative faculty members have been described as friendly and accessible, it is not possible to serve hundreds of students adequately and without a personal cost. Therefore,

the EEAP has noticed that the administrative support of the department is insufficient for the smooth progression of students throughout the stages of their studies.

The Department is greatly appreciated by the external stakeholders in the community, who believe that the students are well trained, and that the department is a valuable partner in the community.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The EEAP has noticed that the administrative support of the department is insufficient. Therefore, the Department should find ways to employ additional administrative staff.

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 analysing information and planning follow-up activities.

Study Programme Compliance

The Department of Primary Education aims at providing students with the theoretical knowledge, research and critical thinking skills, and practical training in Primary education in accordance with the European and the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education. The EEAP has determined that the Department has established procedures and collects adequate data concerning students, faculty, course organization and structure. In fact, the Department has developed several indicators of student response to the requirements of the undergraduate programme:

- Structure and organization of the programme: Curriculum content, courses statistics, description of course syllabus, and allocated ECTS.
- Students' numbers in the Department and gender balance, duration of studying, and statistics on duration of studies and students' mobility. For example, data on average duration of study and number of graduates from the academic year 2015-16 to the year 2019-20 were presented with an average duration of study in years from 4.17 to 4.59 respectively and a number of graduates from 177 to 141 respectively. It should be stressed that the average duration of the fourth-year courses at the University of Crete is nine months longer. On the other hand, student mobility is very restricted.

- Teaching staff: percentages of permanent and non-permanent staff and gender balance, staff recruitment per year, staff mobility, participation in collaborative projects (i.e., Erasmus, Leonardo) per year, number of doctoral theses per staff.
- Teaching staff: percentages of permanent and non-permanent staff and gender balance, staff recruitment per year, staff mobility, participation in collaborative projects (i.e., Erasmus) per year, number of doctoral theses per staff.
- Financial information- funding: internal funding of research, research with European co-funding, Department's funding through the Government and University's budget.
- Research activities- production and recognition of research: publications in refereed journal, books, presentations in conferences, citations, prizes and distinctions.

Internal evaluations take place and students are asked to provide feedback of their courses and teaching staff. Specifically, information is collected and examined on a variety of quality indicators, including the aforementioned. Further, this information is directly shared with the information system of MODIP and HAHE.

The students gave feedback to the EEAP indicating that they value and rate all courses highly. They feel that the courses prepare them well for the job force and provide a good connection between practice and research. They are very satisfied by the variety of the teaching topics. In addition, students believe that they are well prepared to be engaged in research in particular via the completion of the thesis and the seminars offered by the programme.

Alumni feel connected with the Department and are welcomed to participate in educational opportunities (e.g., symposia, conferences, seminars, PhD programmes). This is important since it increases the bond among students, as well as faculty and graduates. This increases potential for future collaborations, teaching opportunities and availability of practical experiences. However, the Department does not seem to collect data on student employability and the career path of graduates. This is helpful data regarding the Department's ability to provide positions to its graduates, and also to foster future connections and collaborations.

Overall, the EEAP believes that the frequency of satisfaction surveys and the decisions being made following the analysis of these data is sufficient.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The Department should consider more systematic collection and analysis of alumni data. More specifically, the Department should consider establishing methods for gathering information related to job placements and academic careers of the Department's graduates.

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

It is obvious that the University of Crete and the Department of Primary Education have put in place a comprehensive public information system as we deduced through interviews with the Vice Rector of the University, the Chair of the Department, members of MODIP, OMEA, faculty, secretarial staff and students. The EEAP examined materials provided that exhibited evidence of critical information sharing with students, faculty members, external partners and the community at large. Faculty and students repeated that the DPE courses, goals, activities and expectations are clearly delineated and available to all students. Moreover, the department website is user friendly, and it contains a variety of information about the Department's facilities, its history, the human resources and its administrative bodies; about the teaching and laboratory staff and the research activities of the members of the Department; about topics of undergraduate and postgraduate studies such as regulations, outline, and courses offered; about the calendar and the timetable and infrastructures of the University of Crete. Finally, the *External Evaluation Report of the Department* and the *Department Quality Policy* are also presented on the website.

Overall, the departmental website provides students and visitors with a wealth of information and resources that are easily accessible. The Greek version of the website is updated regularly and contains useful information needed by the students including extra guidance on how to construct their programme of studies. There is also an English version of the Department's website with abridged information and some operational errors/issues. It would be worth putting the effort and time to add more content in the English version and make it as appealing as the Greek version in order to reach an international audience and make it accessible to the global academic community.

Some other sources-ways of information about the latest announcements concerning the teaching calendar, seminars etc. are presented both on the website and on the Student *Web*. On the other hand, communication between teachers and students is realized via e-class and e-learn and between administrative staff and students via e-mail.

In addition, another public information action which is organized by the Department entitled "*Days of getting to know the University of Crete*" oriented the future candidates for the national entrance examinations to Greek Universities and in particular to the students of classes B and C of Greek Lyceum.

The EEAP also noticed that there is an e-publishing activity of the University of Crete consisting of the publication of the e-Newsletter and the electronic journal "Triton". Various articles are

published in the Newsletter and in the journal Triton on various national research topics or on educational policy issues concerning not only the University of Crete but also the wider Greek and European area. However, it would be helpful if the Department offered a Quarterly or monthly newsletter where they can present news on seminars and research or teaching activities and events. News and accomplishments of graduates, alumni and faculty can be included. This could function as a conduit between the community and Department.

It is also important to mention that the academic members of the Department have issued a peer review journal entitled “Epistimes tis agogis” (Educational Sciences).

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- Consider offering a Quarterly or monthly newsletter where the Department can present news on seminars, research or teaching activities and events. This will enable opportunities for interactivity and networking with alumni and the community. It could also function as a means to continuing the engagement of alumni to the programme.
- The EEAP encourages the Department to invest onto adding more content to the English version of their website and making sure it is edited for clarity and correctness.

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 Department of Primary Education has adopted a strategic development plan based on the external evaluation report on 2013. The 2013 committee expressed a positive image for the high motivation of students to learn; for the quality of the services provided by the department and in particular for the fact that both teaching and administrative staff worked consistently and several times beyond their official working hours to address the serious challenges that were beyond their control. Some of the committee's recommendations concern the limited number of faculty members (such as the administrative staff), the need for finding funds to appoint extra teaching personnel, the use of ICT and e-learning and the finding of resources through the provision of services (training seminars with fees, self-financed seminars courses). The committee had also proposed the creation of a Doctoral Studies Regulation with clear criteria for acceptance, supervision and support.

A core component of the Department's plan is the self-evaluation and review system of key programme structures that reflects a fidelity to the EU "quality assurance guidelines" for institutions of higher education. These activities were in place for the internal evaluations and have continued as was apparent during the interviews with the faculty and internal evaluation committee (MODIP and OMEA) members. As part of the system of compliance with required guidelines, the Department re-examines its programme objectives, curricula and activities to assure they are in accordance with the UC's strategic goals and mission. As is the case with other universities, there is an economic crisis as well as a discordance between the number of faculty and the number of students that has led the department to analyse and attempt to remedy such problems. Team-teaching and small groups in the laboratories and in the seminars are some of the methods applied.

Courses reflecting new instructional design elements and resources were recently added to the curriculum; a sequence of coursework specializing in digital competence and digital literacy pedagogy that clearly respond to new social realities notwithstanding the axiomatic educational imperatives of a pandemic. The quality assurance system has resulted in revised pedagogy emphasis and expanded clinical and field experiences of the students. The interviews conducted with the faculty, students, alumni especially made clear that there was a very high degree of satisfaction with the programme as implemented, but also with the faculty-student involvement and the rich “clinical experiences” that the students were offered through the Department’s work with ERASMUS internships and local scholarship/internship programmes.

Faculty members, including Research laboratory faculty, have continued collaborating with external global university partners and providing teaching practice opportunities at local and global agencies, including agency community programmes for refugees.

The student evaluations are also a major part of the monitoring system, and the results are collected, analysed and shared with, and discussed as appropriate among, Department’s faculty members.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The Department should gather formative feedback from recent alumni who can be engaged in the evaluation of the programme of study and offer recommendations.

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

The Department participated in an external evaluation between 16 and 18 December 2013. The report of this external evaluation was made public through the Department's website. The Department has managed to address all the recommendations made by the HAHE Committee. It is worth noting that the Department has introduced several prerequisite courses to ensure that students have acquired the required background before enrolling and attending courses that require specialization. Also, the framework for the initiation, conduct and completion of doctoral dissertations in the Department was amended (always within the framework defined by the relevant legislation). Measures were also taken for PhD candidates who were well over the five years to complete their work in a reasonable time. The technical infrastructure of the Department has been greatly improved during the last years, either with the funding of the University of Crete centrally from the Public Investment Programme or with resources that the Department received from the fees of the postgraduate programmes. The Department acknowledged that the external evaluation process can provide valuable recommendations for growth and improvement. Therefore, they may consider participating in additional external evaluation procedures such as the Shanghai Ranking's: Academic Ranking of World Universities and the Global Ranking of Academic Subjects – Education.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

None.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

- The Department has designed a course of study that is appropriate and meets universally accepted standards for teacher preparation.
- Academic faculty are devoted to teaching and to their students. They provide guidance and support, as well as assistance with career orientation. Moreover, they have an open-door policy and foster a friendly teaching environment.
- Excellent relations exist between the Department and external stakeholders from the private and the public sector.
- There is a high degree of satisfaction, support and enthusiasm for the Department among students, graduates, and external stakeholders, which serves as a testament to the Department's reputation and effectiveness.
- The Department has established great quality assurance procedures and collects adequate data on students, teaching staff, organization and curriculum structure. The Department uses internal evaluation and data collection for formative programme review and improvement.

II. Areas of Weakness

- The high student/faculty ratio should be discussed between the Department and the University (MODIP).
- The relatively small number of the compulsory courses and the high number of elective courses creates concerns about the equivalence of the students' degrees.
- The absence of a mentoring and monitoring system of the EDIP members.
- There is a lack of a specialized DEP member in educational research.
- The limited time allocation to School internship.
- The insufficient administrative support of the department.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

- By considering the mission of the Department, the EEAP believes that additional opportunities should be offered to the students of the Department to further develop their research skills. For example, elective courses on quantitative and qualitative research could be offered by the Department apart from the compulsory course on research methods.
- The number of the core and obligatory courses as well as the time allocated to School Internship must be increased.
- It would be beneficial for the Department to start working on a specific mentoring and monitoring system of EDIP members.

- Since there is a lack of a specialized DEP member in educational research, it is recommended that one of the positions received by the Department should be placed for the appointment of such a member.
- The Department should consider more systematic collection and analysis of alumni data. In addition, the Department should produce a Quarterly or monthly newsletter where they can present news on seminars, research or teaching activities and events.
- The EEAP encourages the Department to invest onto adding more content to the English version of their website and making sure it is edited for clarity and correctness.
- The Department may enforce formative feedback from recent alumni who can be engaged in the examination of the curriculum and offer recommendations.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: **1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10.**

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: **2.**

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

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

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

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname

Signature

- 1. Prof. Leonidas Kyriakides (Chair)**
University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus
- 2. Prof. Athanasios Gagatsis**
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- 3. Prof. Mary Ioannidou-Koutselini**
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