

**EUA (European University Association)  
Institutional Evaluation Programme**

**THE UNIVERSITY OF CRETE**  
***EUA REVIEWERS'REPORT.***

*August 2001*

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# **INTRODUCTION TO THE EUA INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION**

## **1. The EUA evaluation programme**

Following two successful conferences on the theme of quality and evaluation, the Permanent Committee of the Association of European Universities (CRE, now renamed the European University Association, the EUA), decided in 1993 to offer its member universities throughout Europe the opportunity to be reviewed, so that their strengths and weaknesses in the areas relating to their quality management strategy could be assessed by a peer review team.

The EUA offers an external evaluation from experienced university leaders coming from different higher education systems in Europe. This evaluation critically explores the quality strategy of the University and the responsibilities in that strategy of the main actors in the University's daily decision-making process. It is intended that the evaluation should be a tool for institutional leadership preparing for change. It is emphasised however that the EUA evaluation does not provide the university with a blueprint for its development, but rather it offers a peer assessment of its academic quality performance in a consultative and external supportive role.

By evaluating institutions in different countries, the EUA hopes to disseminate examples of good practice, validate common concepts of strategic thinking, and elaborate shared references of quality that will help member universities to re-orient strategic development while strengthening a quality structure in European higher education. During the evaluation the University is helped to examine:

- how it defines and implements its long- and medium-term aims,
- how it manages its external and internal constraints and opportunities shaping its academic development and
- how it develops and implements its quality enhancement strategies

## **2. The aim of the institutional evaluation**

The aim of the EUA programme is to assist the university in its academic quality strategy. The emphasis of the programme is on self-evaluation which allows the institution to understand better its strengths and weaknesses. By means of this programme the EUA hopes to contribute to the promotion of a culture of quality among its members, and to disseminate examples of effective strategic management throughout the European universities. In this way, the universities may help one another to face the substantial academic challenges of the contemporary world.

The EUA Team does not assess the academic quality of the university as such, but is rather concerned with the assessment and the improvement of the existing mechanisms and processes for strategic academic management and quality assurance.



### 3. The evaluation process

The EUA institutional evaluation process consisted of four phases.

- The University of Crete prepared a self-evaluation report. This report was informative and included a thorough description of the University and some critical analyses of its strengths and weaknesses.
- The EUA Team made a preliminary visit to the University on 4-5 April, 2001 to get to know the university and its national and regional working conditions and in particular the academic community of both staff and students. This preliminary visit led to some requests from the Team for additional information for the purposes of the final review visit. The answers were prepared and sent by the University to the members of the evaluation team.
- The main visit of the EUA Team took place between 29 May and 1 June in both Heraklion and Rethymnom. This evaluation report is a result of the received written information and of the evaluation team's discussions and experiences during these two visits. During the visits the Team had a comprehensive schedule of meetings with members of the University Senate, the Rectorate, academic staff, and university administrators.

The Team also had discussions with student delegations and with representatives of external stakeholders, which included the President of Merchant's Union of Heraklion and the Deputy Mayor of Rethymnom.

On the final day of the main visit the chairman of the Team, Professor John Kelly, presented the team's oral report on the most significant observations and general impressions of the Team to an audience which consisted of the Rector, the Vice-Rectors and a number of academic staff and students.

- The final and fourth phase of the process is the preparation and submission of the Team's Report, which is this Report. This Report is the property of the University and may not be released without its permission.

The timing of the Team's main visit coincided with a period of intense and difficult student protest where a section of the student body was objecting to a recent government act that gave university status to the higher education technical schools throughout Greece. A number of the buildings of the University were still occupied by students during the Team's main visit, including the Rectorate in Heraklion, which made the scheduling of the meeting venues somewhat difficult. In this special situation co-operation between the Team and the staff and students was nevertheless very efficient and at all times friendly and co-operative. It seemed that the majority of students which the Team met with were unenthusiastic about the strike action and did not support the actions of their elected representatives. It was an experience which each member of the Team was familiar with, and they had every sympathy with the Rector, and were impressed with his handling of that difficult situation.

#### 4. The EUA Team

The evaluation team consisted of

Professor John Kelly, former Registrar, National University of Ireland, Dublin

Prof. György Bazsa, proRector University of Debrecen, Hungary

Prof. Sergio Machado dos Santos, former Rector, University of Minho, Portugal

Dr. Kauko Hämäläinen, Secretary General of the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council,  
(Secretary) Finland

In this report the Team identifies the University's current strengths and weaknesses in its quality management structures and presents its analyses and recommendations for the consideration of the University in the ongoing development of its academic quality strategy.

The Team acknowledges that its views were formed over a very brief association with the University and are totally dependant on the documentation it received and the discussions with the persons it met with. Nevertheless it is confident that its assessments are quite accurate and is hopeful that its recommendations are helpful. This report should be read in conjunction with the self-evaluation report of the University and with the associated appendices and additional information provided to the Team.



## THE UNIVERSITY OF CRETE

The University of Crete was founded in 1973 and it admitted its first students in 1977. The University has developed very rapidly over a relatively short period. It has currently over 7000 undergraduate students and 1400 postgraduate students. It has just over 500 full time teaching staff and thus has an overall student:staff ration of 17.0 : 1.0. The recent accelerated increase in student numbers has put an enormous strain on the academic and administrative infrastructure of the university.

The University is located centrally on the northern shore of the island of Crete. The University has two campus sites in attractive tourist areas with rich cultural historic heritage. In Rethymnon there are the Schools of Philosophy, of Social Sciences and of Education. The Schools of Natural Sciences and Health Sciences (including the Medical School and the University Hospital) are in Heraklion which is the fourth largest city in Greece with a population approaching 200 000. Both campuses have separate administrations which function relatively independently under the control of the Rectorate. The Institute of Archaeology and the Institute of Plasma Physics belong to the University as independent institutes.

The University collaborates closely with the Foundation of Research and Technology (FORTH), which is one of the two main national independent research centres in Greece. Its headquarters are in Heraklion and its seven Institutes throughout Greece are devoted to advanced, basic and applied research, to technology, to training and to the development of new products and services. It has also strong inter-active links with the Institute of Marine Biology of Crete, the IMBC, which was established by the Greek Ministry of Development. The IMBC concentrates its research on local marine topics relating principally to the Mediterranean Sea. Emphasis is put upon advances in aquaculture, fisheries research and maritime environmental research.

It was obvious to the Team that these two outside research centres are of great assistance to the academic mission of the university. They create excellent research facilities for the University staff, support the research conducted by the students, and bring a much needed flexibility to the funding system. They provide a regional role in the research programme of the University. It is commendable that the number of graduate students working on their doctoral thesis in FORTH is about 175. Furthermore, these Institutes run summer courses and continuing education and training programme in informatics, grant hundreds of scholarships annually, involve the different schools of the University and their staff in multidisciplinary work and provide good facilities for researchers. In short, they provide an ideal high level complement to the University.

The Libraries of the University contain more than 350 000 titles with additional titles in Department Libraries, 1 400 journal subscriptions and access to 3 000 titles of electronic journals and databases. The University Library has one of the largest collections in Greece in many fields, e.g. in literary studies, linguistics, theatre, film studies and musicology. The Crete University Press has published more than 70 book titles. It is an independent non-profit academic institution. The obvious difficulties of having both departmental libraries and a central library were not examined in detail but this situation did not seem to present a problem.

The highest administrative body is the Senate, presided over by the Rector. The Rectorship consists of the Rector and two Vice-Rectors, who are selected for three years. One Vice-rector is responsible for Academic Affairs and Personnel and the other for Financial Affairs and Planning. The Schools (5) consists of Departments (now 17) each headed by a Chair and a Deputy Chair, who are elected bi-annually. The Dean is the executive officer of the School. He is elected for three years by the faculty and representatives of the students, and is responsible for academic affairs and the overall management of the School. Specific committees support the Departments' specific and University general activities such as the Committees for Undergraduate Studies, Graduate Studies, Library, International Student Exchanges, Student Employment and Cultural Activities.

The administrative Board of each School consists of the Dean, the Chair of each Department and student representatives. The Board makes decisions on current issues, co-ordinates the activities of the School and some common activities of the different Departments within the School and student affairs. Both faculty and students are represented in the General Assembly of the School.

# INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION

## 1. Strengths of the University

Whilst it is not the role of the Team to judge the academic standards of the University, it recognised the very high level of basic and fundamental research activity in the University despite being a relatively young university. This impression was also received during the visits. The amount of externally funded research is high and the large number of research staff have been very effective in obtaining funding from different sources, especially from the ministry and the EU. The flexible co-operation with outside research institutes, in particular FORTH as discussed above, has helped to create a very healthy research ethos, especially for the scientific laboratory departments in the Heraklion campus

On the international scene, the University is participating in a range of multinational research projects and academic mobility programmes. A number of departments have good research links with universities in Europe and the United States. In general, its level of publication activity in international refereed journals is impressive. It was noted also that many of the professors are participating in executive boards, administrative committees and councils of European Union or global scientific associations and professional organisations.

The Team understands from its many discussions with staff and students that the arrangements whereby a number of teaching professors on temporary contracts commute from Athens is most unsatisfactory. Such appointments permit the professor to be on campus for as little as one day per week and this situation is not helpful for student contact (but anyway the students are not complaining) or for the development of the campus academic ethos. It is noted however that the quality of teaching has been greatly enhanced by the substantial number of visiting professors from overseas, as well as quite good staff - student ratio.

The team was greatly impressed by the excellent atmosphere pervading the University, despite the student protests which were in progress during the visit. The academic community was genuinely proud of their university and was very happy to be a member of it - whether as staff or student members. In particular the students the Team met held their university in high esteem, even those who had put the University of Crete at a low preference in the Greek student allocation system.

In addition it was noted that there were very good relations between the teaching staff and the students right across the University. Both undergraduate and postgraduate students were satisfied with their courses. Students spoke highly about the easy access to the professors, or most of them, even during the abnormal situation in the campus with strikes and occupations.



## 2. University Autonomy and State Control

The predominant topic in the many meetings which the Team had with both academics and administrators in the University during both visits was the high degree of state control in all the key areas of university management. The view was put repeatedly that this situation not only resulted in a debilitating high degree of bureaucracy in the day to day academic operation of the University but that it also seriously damaged its ability to respond in its academic development programme to the fast changing needs of the contemporary Greek and international societies. The Team had hoped to meet with representatives of the Ministry to discuss this matter but unfortunately it could not be arranged.

Some examples of the state control, which were brought to the Team's attention, are given below:

### *financial control:*

all funding is earmarked and no flexibility is allowed between cost centers; furthermore the system is highly bureaucratic and makes rational and effective planning difficult;

### *academic curriculum development:*

the details of new academic curricula and subsequent changes have to be approved in Athens with the result that the bureaucracy of initiating new academic programmes is in practice very discouraging;

(The team was informed that when the Rector spoke to the Minister for Education about a new programme, the Minister said that there was some 300 applications ahead of him, and that there was no way he could jump the queue )

### *academic prerequisites:*

departments may not specify academic admission prerequisites for their degree courses which often results in getting unsuitable and unqualified students into their programmes; whilst no data was available on the student drop-out or non-completion rate, this system must account for a substantial number of students terminating their studies;

### *student enrolment:*

as discussed above, all student enrolment, in both numbers and assessment, is controlled by the Ministry in Athens. Whilst central control of student enrolment is not uncommon in European university systems, the Greek procedures, which give no authority to the Universities in relation to numbers or quality, are quite unique, and, in the judgement of the Team, they are seriously damaging to the academic operation of the University. In particular the procedure whereby the number of students admitted to each academic programme is not controlled by the University, but by the Ministry in Athens, has often resulted in too high numbers admitted for the facilities available;

### *lack of internal student mobility:*

the University has no authority to transfer a student from one course to another within the University. The student has to reapply to the Ministry in Athens and start again at the beginning. Students sometimes find that they are unsuited to the course that they enrolled in and it is normal practice elsewhere for the University, with strict and sensible controls under the authority of the Dean of the Faculty concerned, to permit such internal transfers.

The Team urges the University to seek more flexibility in the student systems which will allow sensible transfers between academic programmes.

***university staffing arrangements:***

all professorial recruitment and employment procedures are managed by the Ministry. In particular, the arrangements for adjunct staffing appears to have many difficulties and the University has no authority to amend them.

***the perpetual student:***

the Greek system whereby students can stay in the University as long as they like, however often they fail examinations, is difficult to justify either financially or academically. Such systems which operated in many other countries have long been discarded. In addition, text books are free, accommodation is subsidised and there are no registration or tuition fees, so that for some students, there is no incentive to complete their academic programme, they are having a great time. It appears too that Greek students are highly politicised and it was noted here that a number of the student representatives had poor academic records and where one such student leader was in the system for ten years.

***Student representation:***

The student representation on the University's Governing Body and all other committees is defined in Greek legislation. Some staff representatives suggested that students are over represented in university committees and have too much power in selecting the Rector, for instance. Students disagreed and said that the decision-making process now guarantees that they are taken seriously. Academic cynics would say that academics as a race split 50:50 on all proposals, whereas students vote as one voice, thus in effect giving all power to the student representatives. There is no doubt however that with some 40% representation on the Governing Body of the Universities, that the students have very substantial power in all important decisions.

Finally, it is appreciated that all of the above issues relate to the Greek university system and are not unique to the University of Crete. The Team also appreciates that the University has no power to amend these arrangements and that they are matters for the Ministry in Athens. However the Team feels incumbent in commenting critically on this situation when they are convinced that such arrangements militate seriously against the academic quality of the University programmes.

The Team also appreciates that there may be an inclination to blame all academic ills on "those bureaucrats in Athens", and use this as an excuse for doing nothing. The Team wishes to emphasise however that they did not directly come across such an attitude. It is, of course, not an unusual stance in all universities everywhere to blame the government for all problems. There must always be someone else to blame when things are not perfect.

### 3. Financial matters

The Greek universities are funded mainly by the State, which provides funding for research, education, personnel salaries, a lump sum for running expenses and finally earmarked resources to cover capital expenditures. Greece support for higher education is low compared to other OECD countries (ref.: expenses per student and the whole budget of higher education, in "Education at a Glance 2001"). The Team was informed in all its meetings that the university was under financed which resulted in:

- shortage of lecture space;
- shortage of computer hardware and classes, and
- shortage of library copies and journals.

The national framework gives little room for the Rector or the Deans to exercise influence in allocating money as they deem appropriate to best meet the students' or academic needs. The two separate administration system in the two campuses in Heraklion and Rethymnon makes the situation somewhat more complex. It is possible that this situation imposes additional internal bureaucratic procedures.

In times of financial hardship, the search for alternative sources of income and the internal reallocation of the available resources are essential strategies for the development of new projects and activities. It is therefore important for the University to try to diversify its sources of funding and, whenever possible, to adjust its allocation procedures in order to set aside some resources for specific strategic projects.

### 4. Quality management

The Team's principal mission was to look at the academic quality management procedures which are in use. Systematic quality assurance procedures are not yet developed in Greece and there is not normally formal mechanisms of quality management in the universities. There is a high level of autonomy of faculties and departments in research and teaching. There is a high degree of decentralisation in the academic management of the University so that each faculty makes its own priorities and thus it is very difficult for the University to act as an entity.

The same is true also with the departments. Some departments have established their own quality assurance procedures and whilst in general the academic quality appears to be high, there are no set procedures. Accordingly, as would be expected, some departments have no quality assurance procedures. Thus it seems that there is no institutional approach to quality assurance in the University - there is no central office for quality assurance, nor a faculty representative committee for that function. There is a clear need for a institutional policy on quality assurance. The establishment and implementation of such a University policy will ensure that the quality of education and research training it provides is under continuous review and that the standards it sets are appropriate and are being met. The University needs the means by which the institutions confirm that the conditions are in place for students to achieve the set standards.



An effective quality assurance and control system is characterised by agreement on purpose and methods and the collection of acceptable evidence. Processes and procedures must include a feedback loop to inform and improve the quality of educational provision. To be effective it must be underpinned by wide participation, the acceptance by the staff for accountability for its work, and a commitment in time and effort to contribute to processes which aim to monitor, review and evaluate the quality of activities and the products of such activities,

Methods for systematic self-assessment are needed. For instance, there is a strong need for better statistical monitoring and analysis to support management. The statistics which were provided for the Team were sparse and not up to date. It was clear too that they were not in use in the day-to-day management of the University. The Bologna Agreement recently reviewed in Prague, lays heavy emphasis on the need for quality assurance in European higher education.

As has been noted above, the academic standards of the University are clearly very high and its research output is outstanding so that the University may question why such additional bureaucracy is necessary. In the increasingly competitive world of higher education, it is essential however that such systems of quality assurance are in place. With the current high academic standing of the University, it is appropriate that the University takes the lead in this area in Greece. In doing so it will undoubtedly raise its academic standards across all departments of the University, and establish itself more firmly, both nationally and internationally, as the leading research university in Greece.

While developing the quality system of teaching and learning, an analysis could be made about the essential elements for learning, how to measure these (e.g. with the help of questionnaires) and how to use gathered information. It is important to connect the evaluation results to the staff development programme. If the results of the evaluation of teaching procedures are not adequately exploited, if they are not analysed properly and integrated into the continuous improvement of the content and the methods of teaching and learning and if they remain without actual consequences, then it is probable that the teaching evaluation process will degenerate to a bureaucratic and meaningless operation.

## **5. The university and the society**

Because of the growing needs of the society and its very substantial investment in higher education, it has become urgent to make common plans for providing relevant and appropriate education and training as well as research in response to local and national needs whilst, of course, maintaining its international academic standards. The universities everywhere are now required to meet the needs of a more diverse client population than ever before. This situation requires more flexible structures for such matters as lifelong learning created by changing skill demands, more locally based adult education, greater links between research and teaching and between research and industry, and more engagement with the end users of research.

The University has already some links to its social and economic environment, for example in medicine and in teacher training. This is an important issue to this university and the Team supports fully the many efforts of the Rector and other staff to improve this situation. The self-evaluation report acknowledges that the situation could be improved in commenting on: " ---the relative absence of partnership with industry and society at large, regional, national or international, that affects both technology transfer and funding of research conducted at the University".

The university is, of course, independent of the markets in its academic decision-making whether in teaching or research, but it must take cognisance of the needs of the marketplace. It is however an established fact of academic life that universities everywhere have become the driving force for economic development in place of their traditional role in producing the philosophers and intellectuals for society. Education for its own sake seems to be taking a secondary role and students are entering courses which will give them marketable skills and who's to blame them. It is, of course, a matter of balance as noted by the Rector in his correspondence to the Team:

" The University should strike a balance between it's role as an institutional locus for theoretical knowledge and basic research, and its role as a locus for the cultivation of applied fields and the meeting of vocational demands."

In wholeheartedly supporting this, the Team was of the view that the academic development strategy of the University should relate more directly to the local environment of the island of Crete. Initiatives which arose in the discussions included the following:

- the development of an MBA programme, with emphasis on the principal industries of the island such as maritime studies, tourism or shipping;
- the establishment of an extra mural programme where a wide range of non-credit courses would be offered for the general population of Crete - in subjects such as Cretan archaeology, introduction to computer science, antiques or maritime sciences.
- the establishment of an advisory board to the Rectorate made up of the leading industrials and professionals in Crete, which would assist the University in meeting its challenges over the entire range of topics such as student accommodation, fund-raising, alumni development, industry related curriculum development and others.
- the recognition of both academic and commercial achievement by Cretan citizens and others, from both at home and abroad, by the annual awards of honorary degrees.
- the establishment of a development office which would, inter alia, seek support for the University from charitable foundations and individual philanthropists, possibly alumni.

The University and the private sector can be expected to make a joint effort to identify new growth areas and promote their systematic development. Developing high-standard expert services and promoting the dissemination of knowledge and know-how is central to the regional role of higher education institutions. Technology parks, knowledge centres, incubators for start-up companies and various development activities as well as consulting and training of higher education personnel are already common in Europe.

The contribution the University makes to civil society through the extra-mural activities of individual staff (e.g. in the media, politics, the arts, advising governmental bodies, socio-economic and technological analyses) can be very important. Also providing liberal adult education, evening classes, access to facilities such as libraries, theatres and museums and through public lectures are also important, where humanistic subjects can also have an important role. At this moment the mapping of regional links in terms of teaching, research and participation in regional public affairs could be useful. This can form a bases to create a more systematic plan for the future. Documenting the present linkages and publicising them within the region will be an important step in raising the profile of the University.

It is fully acknowledged that the Rector has many good ideas already in progress, which include the Friends of Crete University Association recently established, as well as the formalised partnership with the local municipalities which has been recently signed bringing the local world of business together with the University in a range of projects. It is also appreciated that individual activities at the departments, such as the Department of Biology and the Medical School, which were brought to the Team's attention, relate directly to the Cretan society.

## **6. The Island of Crete**

It was stressed in almost every discussion with the Team that most of the University's problems derive from its remote location and being an island. In particular it suffered from a relatively low level of academic ability of the entering students. A high percentage of the students enrolling each year had put the University of Crete at a low priority in the national student allocation system, as discussed above, and as places are awarded on merit, the University comes off badly in this lottery system. Nobody mentioned any positive ideas about the location of the island. There is clearly an institutional inferiority complex. Yet almost all the students which the Team met with were very content with the University and had overcome their initial disappointment at being allocated to the University of their third or fourth choice. It would seem that the marketing of the University to the candidates in the Greek high schools is less than satisfactory.

The Team believes that the University could reverse this situation and broadcast the great attractiveness of Crete and the international reputation of its University. Many of the great universities in the world today are in remote locations yet the students apply in their multitudes for entry.

In discussing this situation, the following is suggested for consideration by the University:

- The establishment of a PR Information Office which will promote the University in Crete, in Greece and when appropriate internationally. The activities listed below are the normal ones of such an office.
- Production of a promotional video which should be sent to every school in Greece; get a Cretan international celebrity, maybe even a pop star ( singer or film star) to present it.



- Organisation of open days with an emphasis on the high school students from Crete so that they visit the campus, see the facilities and meet the friendly professors and contented students.
- Develop departmental and University homepages with interactive e-mail links.
- Produce a university Newsletter 2 or 3 times a year with profiles of students from mainland who speak of their great experiences at the University.
- Arrange for representatives from industry and the professions to visit the campus to interview students for both summer work and employment on graduation

Student accommodation has come up at almost every meeting and it is clearly a major problem. The Team suggests that consideration be given to the arrangement of a partnership with a commercial partner who would construct student dormitories which would be available in the summer months to tourists and to the students during the academic year. There are many models of such arrangements in other universities where often the tourist attractions would not compete with Crete. The student influx to both Heraklion and Rethymnon brings very substantial income to these cities and in discussions with the Deputy-Mayor of Rethymnon the possibility of the municipality becoming a partner in such an enterprise was warmly received.

## 7. Mission of the University

It does not seem to be common practice in Greek universities to specify institutional or mission statements which could be internalised in different faculties and departments. However it is crucial for universities to work out their own profile and set the institutional policies for its development. The Team suggests that a co-ordinated action across all departments and schools be initiated to debate and agree on the "Mission of the University". It can include specific targets on such matters as curriculum development, student facilities (accommodation), building programme and quality system. The University could prioritise the discussion on what its mission statements mean in terms of pedagogic approach, practical teaching, evaluation and examination methodology or staff development programmes in a way that would further the learning process of the students.

Also the relationship of the University to outside research organisations such as FORTH should be defined more precisely as regards mutual duties and benefits, whilst at the same time maintaining a degree of flexibility in academic matters. For example many researchers are working in both institutions, but if at least part of the academic work is paid for by the University, e.g. salary, workplace, library facilities, secretarial support, teaching courses in which the material can be tested etc, it is arguable that it should retain some claim to the University (e.g. patenting material, copyright on software and books, overhead of the projects).

A clear policy of international co-operation does not seem to be explicitly defined. Such a policy could include plans for many activities: credit transfer and recognition, curricular reform, discipline-based networks or associations, international research co-operation, institutional partnerships across borders, international work placements, learning across borders and multi-lingualism as well as student and staff mobility. The strategy for international activities should reflect the University's policy rather than historic ties and contacts established by individual units or professors. The mobility of staff could be higher but there are no incentives for the staff for career development abroad. The number of exchange students is at normal European level, even though it could be a little higher in some departments. There is no official target for future numbers.

Even though there already are some links with industry and other external organisations, this should be more systematic. There could be a central unit to monitor all such activities, act as a 'one stop shop' for potential customers and to actively market the University's skills base.

A strategy for student recruitment is also needed, as said above. It is already difficult enough to get good Greek students but more so with foreign students because of the language policy in Greece, where it is required to study the Greek language for six months before commencing a study programme.

Balanced development of both Humanistic studies in Rethymnon and the Medical and Science studies in Heraklion must be taken care of. Both have important local and national roles. It is easy to agree to the Rectors statement: "The University should aim at research and educational excellence in the humanities. The latter are particularly related to values that sustain and promote the quality of social life and culture as a whole. They shape democratic consciousness and reproduce the intellectual and cultural self-understanding necessary for social cohesion in a changing Europe." How these principals can be put into practice and what does they mean in the daily life of the University is really worth analysing.

Also important is the following Rector's idea: "... the arts subjects have a new and vital role to play in a changing world that sets rules for prestige and influence". This is very true now when technical development is dominating the changes taking place in society.

During the visit, it was noted that the schedule of academic programmes between the two campuses raises problems of gender balance, because the concentration of Humanities in Rethymnon attracts mainly female students. Future plans for the development of the University should take this situation into account, so that by creating new programmes synergies between the areas of Humanities and the Sciences will be established.

## SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The University of Crete has developed in a short time to a university with a very credible reputation in both the national and international arenas. In particular its research output is at a very high level. The self-evaluation analysis, which the University undertook for this particular project was excellent, and the Team suggests that the momentum which it generated should be maintained with interdepartmental discussions on academic targets of the university in the coming decade.

The staff have excellent academic skills and for the most part is very motivated. The number of visiting staff is very high as well as the number of different research projects. The students are very content satisfied with their courses, with the easy access to their teachers, and with the good relations between them. Also relations with the local society itself are developing very satisfactorily.

It is evident that the University leadership is actively committed to the promotion of their institution, and at the same time is aware of the constraints which have to be overcome. More flexible ways of working should be tried to find under the legal restrictions, and indeed efforts should be made to have these amended. University regulations give normally more freedom to the University than it actually uses.

### *Leadership and management*

- The University could further clarify its mission and vision with more emphasis on how it will respond to local, national and international needs. This will involve defining main policies on such matters as strategic planning, research policy, staff development, international activities and its regional role in the long and medium term)
- A quality system including a statistical follow-up is needed to fulfil the demands of management, to increase the academic visibility and to follow how the University is achieving its objectives. This includes a continuous and systematic gathering of coherent data about core activities, the systematic development of activities aimed at building a common quality culture and a clear definition of responsibilities. The University should consider the establishment of a Quality Committee, representative of the different schools with an executive officer and staff. This office should report directly to the Rector and its regular reports should be a matter for consideration by the University Senate.
- Staff development of the administrative and academic staff can be a key to maintaining the high level of the University and enhance the level of it.
- The University needs strong stakeholders. A more systematic way to analyse and cultivate new forms of co-operation with external stakeholders could be useful to complement the contacts that individual members already have in order to improve the capacity for planning educational programmes, continuing education and research to meet regional needs. The appointment of an advisory committee comprising the leaders of the Cretan society is suggested.



### ***Students and teaching***

- Closer co-operation between departments and schools is needed to create new possibilities for students and also to create more effective ways to organise student support systems (e.g. access to computers, use of lecturer rooms, language teaching).
- More flexibility of the courses and degree programmes inside the University is needed, including the development of interdisciplinary programmes, which would allow for the adaptation of its curricula to the changing demands of the regional, national and international academic and labour markets.
- Recruitment of high level students should become a prime target and more effective ways of promoting the University in Crete and in the whole of Greece should be engaged.
- The problems of student accommodation should also become a top priority with consideration of commercial partnership in dormitories examined.

### ***Academic matters***

- The University should consider its profile in its search for a balance between pure and applied research and its capacity in fulfilling regional and international needs and qualifications. More academic activities are suggested which have a potential role to create co-operation with the local industry and other social organisations.
- The equal development of the programmes in Heraklion and Rethymnon is needed.
- The excellence in research could be acknowledged by a "Rectors Annual Award".
- Creative ways of bringing on young talented researchers is needed also in the future.

### ***and Finally***

The University of Crete is thanked, again, for its generous and friendly hospitality and the flexible arrangements that made the our work possible in a very abnormal situation. The clarity and quality of the self-evaluation report as well as of the supplementary information provided are gratefully acknowledged here.

The Team wishes to express its warm thanks and appreciation to Rector Christos Nikolau for his exemplary co-operation throughout the two visits. The Team is also grateful to both Dr Athanassios Pheidas and Dr Euripides Stephanou (liaison persons between the University of Crete and the Evaluation Committee) for their thoughtful attention to all details before and during our visits. It was a pleasure working with them.

The Team's appreciation goes also to the community of the university, academic staff, administration, students and external stakeholders for their full and enthusiastic co-operation during both of our visits. The frank and open atmosphere during the interviews was of great assistance to the Team. Throughout the discussions were lively and all presented their views with great vigour concerning the quality management structures and ethos within the University and also in relation to the Greek higher education system.

The evaluation team has received a positive impression of an institution with a high level of research and which enjoys great support by its students, staff and many stakeholders. In spite of some actual difficulties mentioned in this report, the University clearly has excellent foundations for future developments both locally and in the international academic marketplace. The team wishes it every success.