



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ

**Α.ΔΙ.Π.**

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ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΑΝΩΤΑΤΗ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗ

HELLENIC REPUBLIC

**H.Q.A.**

HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE  
AND ACCREDITATION AGENCY

## EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

SCHOOL OF PRIMARY EDUCATION

ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY OF THESSALONIKI

OCTOBER 2013



**European Union**  
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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION & RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS, CULTURE & SPORTS  
MANAGING AUTHORITY

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## **External Evaluation Committee**

### **External Evaluation Committee**

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the School of Primary Education of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki consisted of the following three (3) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by the HQA in accordance with Law 3374/2005 :

1. Dr Madeleine Voga, Maître de Conférences (Coordinator)  
Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier III
  
2. Dr Gina Ioannitou, Maître de Conférences  
Université du Maine
  
3. Dr Andreas Philaretou, Associate Professor  
European University Cyprus

**N.B.** The structure of the “Template” proposed for the External Evaluation Report mirrors the requirements of Law 3374/2005 and corresponds overall to the structure of the Internal Evaluation Report submitted by the Department.

The length of text in each box is free. Questions included in each box are not exclusive nor should they always be answered separately; they are meant to provide a general outline of matters that should be addressed by the Committee when formulating its comments.

## **Introduction**

### I. The External Evaluation Procedure

The external evaluation process took place during the week of September 29-4 October, 2013. The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) met in Athens for a brief orientation at the HQAA offices, then travelled to Thessaloniki for the site visit at the Department of Primary Education. The site visit started with a meeting with the new (since September 1st) department head Mrs Tressou and another member of the department. On the first evening the EEC had an informal meeting with the Vice-Rector for Quality Assurance and the Head of Department, together with two other members of the teaching staff.

The next day (Tuesday morning) the EEC went to the department in order to meet all the faculty members who had already gathered there and were awaiting our arrival. However, on our way to this meeting, we were stopped by a group of demonstrating students, opposed to the evaluation process. These students had just voted a motion that prohibited the evaluation process given that the students were against the principles and the whole philosophy of the evaluation process. Even though the attendant faculty members attempted to reason with the students in order to allow the EEC committee to attend the staff presentation, their efforts proved futile. Shortly afterwards and given the prevailing tension of the environment, the department head made arrangements to meet at another location, unknown to the students.

Having reached the new location (outside the Campus) the presentation was able to commence. During this presentation, the EEC was exposed to an in-depth analysis of each of the three teaching domains (divisions - τμήμα): 1) the division of Social and Cultural studies; 2) Sciences and New Technologies and 3) Pedagogy and Social Exclusion, as well as extended presentations for the Research and Community Service activities as well as a presentation of a study concerning students’ satisfaction via questionnaires (who gave their opinion on individual modules).

All presentations were attended by the overwhelming majority of the teaching staff (25 members out of the 29 permanent teaching staff, plus one teaching fellow and

one special technical personnel.

On the second day, despite the ongoing strike, the EEC visited the library facilities, the secretariat, as well as a selected number of teaching staff in their offices. In addition, the EEC were given access to student dissertations.

The members of the department were exceptionally cooperative and reacted very promptly to requests for additional documents or other information, despite the adversity of the student demonstration mentioned above, which unfortunately prevented us from the detailed interviewing of the department's students. At this point we would like to note that the very positive attitude of our colleagues constitutes a somewhat positive surprise given that their internal evaluation report particularly in its introductory note (pages 1 – 3) reflected a very critical attitude towards the principles of the evaluation process. Throughout the entire process, from the beginning of their internal evaluation to the recent visit of the EEC, it is easy for one to see that there has been a considerable progress in their understanding of the eventual benefits of the evaluation process.

Needless to say, the EEC was impressed by the congenial and collegiate atmosphere which prevails in the Department, which is impressive indeed given the economic hardships that both the administrative and teaching staff have had to endure for the past several years. In particular, it is saddening to see the salaries of colleagues, especially those of higher academic ranks, slashed by up to 40% by the recent extreme budget cuts. For example, the EEC was surprised to hear that a full professor's net salary (after 37 years of academic service) hovers around 1900 euros. This, in turn, raises the question of motivation, especially those of the lower rankings, who in their struggle to progress professionally, have to face such extreme financial hardships.

## II. The Internal Evaluation Procedure

The Internal Evaluation Report provided comprehensive information on all aspects of the Department's teaching research and service (communal events) activities, and proved to be detailed, accurate and extremely useful. The report was clearly the result of considerable efforts of all faculty members especially those who comprised the internal evaluation committee. We of the EEC would particularly like to thank everyone who facilitated our task through the drafting of the report. The EEC also made use of the Department's well constructed and user-friendly website. At this point, we would like to note that anything that was not included in the internal report or was not up to date, was quickly and swiftly provided by the appropriate faculty member. The EEC can therefore confirm that the objectives of the internal evaluation process were fully met by the Department.

The only criticism we can express towards the internal evaluation report is the fact

that the introductory comment, emanating from ideological positions on what evaluation process is and what it should be, was overly lengthy and outside the scope of the evaluation process. To quote, (p. 1-2, introduction) phrases such as “on the basis of a particular fetishism of the evaluation, general dispositions are imposed, ignoring the particularities of the different academic units [.....] attempting to identify evaluation processes with processes of individual as well as collective self-guilt and punishment”, are not necessary nor do they contribute to demonstrate the particularities and originality of the evaluated department.

## **A. Curriculum**

*To be filled separately for each undergraduate, graduate and doctoral programme.*

### APPROACH

#### Undergraduate

The goals of the undergraduate program are twofold: first, to prepare primary education teachers with a democratic awareness, teachers who are sensitized to the complexity, particularities and idiosyncrasies of modern day schooling and societal settings. Second, to provide future teachers with a solid background on psychological, sociological and philosophical theories as well as their practical applications relative to teaching. In addition, it is the purpose of the program to train teachers to be emotionally and psychologically sensitive to their fellow human beings as well as to their natural environment in general.

These goals take into account current expectations in Europe that primary school curricula should integrate political correctness concerning gender, racial, cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds. This is a domain where Greek society is somewhat lacking. Consequently, the importance given by the evaluated department on this point corresponds to a real need in Greek schools and society in general, and is something that is already extensively practiced by the department as evidenced by the wide array of relevant courses.

The broad outlines of the curriculum are decided by the department through its General Assembly. The curriculum aims to achieve these goals through offering a) a series of compulsory modules taught within the department itself (20 modules); b) one compulsory elective course and c) 19 elective courses as well as a language course (English or French).

#### Postgraduate

There is a single postgraduate taught program which offers specialization in one of the following areas: a) Education and social exclusion; b) Didactics of Hard Sciences and c) Didactics of Social Sciences.

The purpose of the postgraduate program is ultimately to promote the specialist study of the three main areas of primary education taught by the Department and to produce graduates able to hold administrative positions in various school and governmental settings as well as to continue research at higher levels.

The taught postgraduate program is coordinated by the Postgraduate Board of Studies, under the leadership of a Program Director. There is also a doctoral program, for which there are no taught classes.

### IMPLEMENTATION

The structure of the curriculum is clearly articulated and communicated to students in an excellent and informative Guide to Undergraduate Studies, which is available in electronic form. Five members of staff also act as Academic Advisors and do an excellent job in providing students with all the necessary assistance in their academic



endeavors. The results of the questionnaire survey (the EEC were given access to the raw data of the study) reflected the considerable satisfaction of the students with the overall effectiveness of the curriculum.

Teaching staff are very qualified to deliver the program. During the presentation we were given the opportunity to discuss with our colleagues the content of some of the courses and we were overall quite impressed with their scholarly ability.

The post graduate program aims to achieve these goals by offering a number of postgraduate modules, plus individual supervision on a dissertation. The program was interrupted in 2011 and is going to restart in the academic year 2013-2014. The competitiveness of the program is attested to by the high number of candidates applying (more than 500) to those accepted (currently 24).

## RESULTS

The curriculum appears to work very well both in providing a solid theoretical background in pedagogy, in particular areas such as social, psychological and those relevant to hard sciences. Additionally it is fortified with considerable opportunities for practical training. It appears to achieve its goal of providing students with grounded knowledge in school pedagogy quite well.

It is both concise and complete and course content does not overlap and is not repeated in different year groups, given that the introductory courses are all taught at the beginning of the curriculum and there is a satisfactory progression in the complexity of the subjects. Concerning the distribution of the compulsory courses, the curriculum offers theoretical courses dealing with current psychological, linguistic and socio-cultural issues during the first two years, and practical aspects of such issues in the last two years.

At this point, we would like to note the considerable importance of the practical training of students, in their preparation for their future roles as primary education teachers. It should be pointed out that there is mandatory work placements in the last semester, as well as several optional work placements before the last semester, during which the students acquire actual practical skills. These placements require considerable supervision by staff members, both for purely practical (organization, accompaniment) as well as other reasons (drafting of reports). Such placements thus constitute an essential element at the heart of forming adequately prepared teachers, even though they present an extra burden for the staff (see also teaching section).

As far as the postgraduate program is concerned, its competitiveness is attested by the high number of candidates applying (more than 500) to those accepted (currently 24).

### **Post graduate**

The postgraduate curriculum is very well organized and gives a large degree of choice in terms of specialization. Nevertheless, it is difficult to see how a postgraduate student will be able to work effectively and efficiently if he/she cannot have access to electronic resources (journals, periodicals, etc). This is a consequence of severe University-wide budgetary cuts that have considerably undermined library budgets.

#### IMPROVEMENT

Even though the curriculum provides 5 compulsory courses (out of 20) on specific didactics (literature, Modern Greek, history, mathematics and natural sciences) starting from the third year, we think it would be a good idea to develop a course on general didactics during the first semesters. In this way, students will integrate basic principles of the theory and be able to apply them to all specific didactic domains.

We would like to point out that some very interesting courses (e.g. social and cultural construction of gender identity forms of family organization in contemporary society) are not provided regularly due to the leave of absence of some members of staff who are not replaced.

The Department is aware of a pressing problem that may inhibit the effectiveness of the undergraduate curriculum, having to do primarily with the shortage of teaching staff, which is particularly evident in the domain of laboratory courses as well as supervising the work placements of students in schools (mandatory and optional alike).

Final point, the department presents a particularity which should be taken into account regarding the implementation of a 4-year training program for the education of the Thrace Muslim minority teachers (as stipulated by the Lausanne treaty of 1923). The department has asked the Ministry to approve their proposed new domain (division) of Minority education, but the latter failed to do so. This problem should be resolved so that the future teachers of the Thrace Muslim minority will be provided with a regular 4-year training (as all teachers of primary education) instead of a limiting 2-year one. In addition this will provide the Greek University with an up-to-date domain of Minority Primary education.

Moreover, in the department there are already 38 students (enrolment for the academic years 2011-12, 2012-13, and 2013-14) of the Muslim minority community following courses in the Minority education division. If the domain is not officially approved by the Ministry, it will not be possible for these students to be placed in the schools which they have been prepared for.

## ***B. Teaching***

### APPROACH:

Undergraduate modules are delivered in the following three ways: as lecture modules (including large, introductory modules), as “laboratories” (*εργαστήρια*) and as “seminars” for the practical training. Lecture modules and laboratories (*εργαστήρια*) are assessed either by written examination, individual and team work, production of educational material, presentations of different subjects, etc.

Undergraduate students can choose modules from lower terms but not from upper terms. In this way, the students acquire first the prerequisites of a given domain/course during the first semesters and are able to follow the more complex developments during the last semesters.

Postgraduate modules are taught in all of the ways mentioned in the undergraduate program [see above]. A very positive point is that students with special needs can be examined not only through “classic” written exams but also through alternative protocols, as for example oral examination, Braille, etc. This characteristic of the department renders it especially attractive for students with special needs, which is the reason why there are many transfers from other equivalent departments.

### IMPLEMENTATION

Teaching is facilitated by the availability of the excellent university library, as well as the teaching platform Blackboard which supports communication between students and teaching staff, and allows students to download handouts and other materials distributed in class.

The extensive research activity also enriches teaching. The organization of the department in divisions (Social and Cultural studies, Sciences and New Technologies, Pedagogy and Social exclusion) each one with several well versed on their academic duties members, provides students with specialized knowledge on the three main subjects. The department presented us a very detailed study (via questionnaires) on student satisfaction with courses and teaching methods.

The Department participates in the Erasmus program, which allows students to study in universities outside Greece and to transfer their marks and credits so earned to their degree at the Aristotle University. The countries participating in the Erasmus program present an interesting variety (e.g. Sweden, Portugal, Turkey: for the Thrace minority students – 2 per year) and the number of outgoing students is satisfactory (25 per year). There is a small number of incoming students due to a lack of knowledge of the Greek language. This is a difficulty that the staff tries to overcome by teaching small groups of Erasmus students in English or other languages and by directing them towards the Greek language school of the Aristotle university. This is

a very positive initiative and proves that the faculty members are willing to increase their workload.

Furthermore the faculty members teach postgraduate students approximately 3 hours per week outside their normal service (6 hours per week), without being paid overtime. This is another element proving that our colleagues from the PTDE are truly devoted to their academic duties.

## RESULTS

There is no doubt that both undergraduate and graduate teaching in the Department of Pedagogy of the Aristotle University is excellent. Following our personal meetings with the faculty members during the third day we are convinced that their academic excellency and their modern teaching approaches guarantee a very high teaching level.

Due to the ongoing strike we did not manage to meet students who were invited and willing to meet us. Given the particular context created by student union protests (mentioned in the site visit description) they were not able to meet us.

Moreover, most of the faculty members have participated or are currently involved in numerous training programs, such as those involving:

- The academic and professional upgrading of the teaching skills of primary education teachers in Greece.
- The initiation of special teaching sociological/psychological seminars for different groups of interested primary education teachers.
- The revamping of current teaching curricula in various schools of primary education.
- The stressing of the importance of female educators in schools.
- The outlining of the European initiatives and directives concerning primary education in general.
- The importance of the introduction of new digital technologies in the primary school classroom.
- The special education needs of various minorities, primarily those of the Roma and Thrace Muslim communities.

## IMPROVEMENT

The EEC has a few minor suggestions to make in the domain of teaching.

- Limiting the number of PhD students to 5 per faculty member is not recommended for the development of the research and teaching purposes, especially given the latest evolutions in the Greek University, which has seen massive departures of experienced faculty staff. Given that all faculty members are not equally predisposed to follow and invest their time in PhD

students, we think that those who are interested should be given the opportunity to do so.

- PhD students might also be encouraged to consider attendance at departmental research seminars and lectures as a core part of their program.
- Currently the department has 174 PhD students; a large proportion of them inactive, according to faculty members. We highly recommend an upheaval of PhD students, so that faculty members can keep only the active students. It seems that the procedure to expel a PhD student –even though after many years he has presented no work- is quite discouraging. We believe that this procedure must change, so that each PhD student has a maximum of five years to complete his/her thesis, while guaranteeing that the student will not be thrown out for (at least) the first five years after his inscription.
- The situation is currently characterized by a severe lack of detached members whose role is to supervise the work placements. This lack has severe consequences on the preparation of the students for this training. We suggest that recruiting staff (407, or PhD students, or detached teachers) would be helpful for faculty members (who are currently obliged to cover this lack), will assist students in practical exercises and help them to prepare their lessons and teaching. The student to faculty ratio is disproportionate; it seems that it is the highest throughout Greece 78:1 (according to the internal evaluation report).

## **C. Research**

*For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate level, if necessary.*

### **APPROACH**

The members of the department, either individually and/or collaboratively, attempt to establish a solid line of research (determined by their specific research interests and activities) through national/international journal, book, book chapter, and monograph publications and presentations as well as funded/unfunded research grants. Even though there is no built-in mechanism in the Department for assessing research, except through the procedures for appointment and promotion, their research endeavours abide by international standards of excellence in all its areas and domains. At this point, however, it should be noted that currently, all faculty members are overburdened in their teaching endeavours due to fact that there is a disproportionate number of faculty to student ratio (31 to 1706 for the 2012-2013 academic year). In addition, the number of detached staff from primary education is presently reduced to zero and this constitutes a considerable problem for the Department as a whole due to the fact that these detached individuals are assigned the important task of supervising students in their in-classroom practical training (work placements) at various schools in the greater Thessaloniki metropolitan area.

Collectively, the faculty of the Department have:

- Published more than 100 monographs.
- Edited or translated more than 50 books.
- Published more than 1230 manuscripts in various peer/non-peer reviewed magazines, periodicals, and conference proceedings.
- Served as editors and reviewers in the editorial boards of various national and international magazines as well as conference boards.
- Participated in hundreds of national/international conferences.
- Served as members of various scientific institutions and companies.
- Initiated bilateral agreements with various international universities, such as: Kent State University, University of Canakkale, University of Belgrade, Lomonosov State University, University of Cyprus, etc.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

With the exception of funded research grants, that have built-in budgets for travel, presentation, and dissemination of results, Departmental funding for national/international conferences is presently non-existent. Despite all difficulties and obstacles, however, most members of the Department, as previously mentioned, are actively involved in a wide range of research activities, conferences, seminars and special events.

The Department's research and teaching environment also benefits from the bilateral exchanges between its faculty members and those of the aforementioned foreign universities through the mutual incorporation of various plans, practices, and policies that end up benefiting both parties involved by broadening their academic horizons.

At this point, it should be noted that all in all, both the research and teaching are oriented towards subjects

with a social interest (as for example, the role of gender in education, antiracist educational practices and social exclusion) which have placed the Department in the unique, fortuitous, and envious position compared to other academic institutions.

## RESULTS

The Department has managed to attain a high level of success in its research endeavours. This is confirmed by the fact that the department managed to secure 8 funded research grants, with the three most important of them applying to particularly sensitive domains (e.g. Romà, Muslims of Thrace, foreigner and Greek diaspora). The site visit demonstrated to the EEC members that there is constant progress in these programs.

As can be seen in Table 1, there is a steady and considerable output of publications in monograph and article form, as well as book chapters, edited books, conferences, and conference proceedings.

**Table 1 : Scientific Publications of the Faculty of the Department of Primary Education**

	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>J</b>
Academic Year 2012-2013	6	29	3	57	6	18	5	16	19	2
<b>Total</b>	6	29	3	57	6	18	5	16	19	2

- A = Books/Monographs  
 B = Publications in Peer-Reviewed Scientific Journals  
 C = Publications in Non-Peer Reviewed Scientific Journals  
 D = Publications in Peer-Reviewed Conference Proceedings  
 E = Publications in Non-Peer Reviewed Conference Proceedings  
 F = Chapters in Books and Edited Volumes  
 G = Edited Volumes  
 H = Other Publications  
 I = Peer-Reviewed Conferences without Proceedings  
 J = Book Reviews

## IMPROVEMENT

The EEC feels that the Department would welcome the following improvements in its future strategic research planning:

- The creation of funded postdoctoral research positions.
- Restoring library funding, which has recently been slashed resulting in cancelled journal subscriptions as well as delays in the purchasing of books.

A very positive impression of the EEC concerns the connection between research and teaching, something that the faculty members are doing in a very natural and spontaneous way. A possible improvement would be to emphasize, to an even greater extent than is currently the case, the praiseworthy link between fundamental and applied research that the department has and is developing.

### ***D. All Other Services***

*For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate level, if necessary.*

#### **APPROACH**

The Department enjoys a generally excellent university infrastructure, the Tower, with nice offices and well equipped secretary services. The EEC felt a weakness concerning classrooms, which are insufficient or not big enough for the number of students attending some courses.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION**

University infrastructure and student services

The University has a centralized electronic registration system for students, which manages all aspects of their records. It is supplemented by physical files only for legally required documents and more particularly for grade purposes. Each module instructor submits grades on paper to the secretary department. The personnel then put grades into the system. The system by all accounts works very well.

Facilities

Campus and buildings are of good quality, generally well maintained, and more are being constructed to meet the needs of the staff and the students. The campus and its central location are among the strengths of the University.

The offices are of very good quality and are generally well maintained, all accessible to persons with mobility restrictions. The student cafeteria is pleasant and the food more than satisfactory.

During the EEC visit the campus was not populated by students because of the strike.

The library is an outstanding facility with a good collection of books and periodicals. It also serves as a work and study environment for the students. It has fairly long opening hours. The library is well utilized by instructors for the provision of reading materials, and has effective procedures (e.g. “course shelves”) to support this function. The quality of the library has the effect that students spend time there for their research. Due to budget cuts the Healink system (i.e. providing access to digital resources) is not currently working and this negatively affects all research activities. The EEC was impressed with the website of both the Department and of the University generally. It was exceptionally clear and informative, and the fact that it was available in English as well as Greek is testimony to the international outlook of both department and university.



#### Organization of the department

The main decision-making body of the Department is the General Assembly, which consists of the teaching staff.

Individual leadership is vested in the Department chair and the chairs of the four Divisions. There are a number of permanent and ad hoc committees tasked with specific duties, and a few tasks which are assigned to individuals (Erasmus responsible etc).

The teaching staff is supported by a chief secretary and four staff members; all of them perform administrative/secretarial duties and are responsible for undergraduate, postgraduate and Erasmus students.

The responsibilities of the administrative staff include the following major areas: internal secretarial support, including communication with internal and external bodies, legal compliance, course planning (scheduling of modules and exams); support for student needs (enrolment, guidance, graduation procedures); financial administration; and technical support for equipment. Student registration is handled electronically in the university's centralized system. Other tasks, and in particular grades are handled essentially by hand (with the use only of excel processing software). The EEC visited the secretary's offices during the strike and was not able to discuss with the staff – not present except for one person, plus the head who came especially for the committee.

#### RESULTS

The EEC felt that the Department's staff, both academic and administrative, maintains the good functioning of the department at the cost of considerable personal effort.

#### IMPROVEMENTS

The EEC feels that there is an effort to be done from the University in order to provide some bigger classes, where all students could be seated while attending the class.

#### **Collaboration with social, cultural and production organizations**

Members of the Department are highly active in the scientific and cultural life of Thessaloniki, and Greece more generally. This is reflected in publications in magazines with a general readership, and in lectures and publications whose intended audience is not limited to the academic community. They participate in television and radio shows, present articles in the newspapers and Internet. It is also reflected in the various cultural manifestations taken place in public areas of Thessaloniki, in schools, libraries, theatres etc. As an example we could cite the “*Sym-viosis : panigiri of Romà*” where Thessaloniki people met during 2-3 days, in the center of Thessaloniki, the Romà people and culture.

The department also develops learning materials for teachers and produces books in many languages for primary school purposes. The department is sensitive to the cultural and linguistic plurality of the city and serves an important social need linked to growing number of residents in Greece whose home language is not Greek.

Through work placements, students placed in local classrooms also participate in the very important community service that the department provides.

The work the department has done for the upgrading program (*εξομοίωση*) of the teachers is highly impressive (from 1996 to 2006 total number of graduated teachers 7,500; internal evaluation report). The department also had for several years the responsibility of the *Peiramatiko* and was able for many years to develop innovating programs of teaching.

The EEC is highly impressed by the implementation of the department in the social and cultural life of the city and the community service it provides.

### ***E. Strategic Planning, Perspectives for Improvement and Dealing with Potential Inhibiting Factors***

*For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate level, if necessary.*

Given the considerable uncertainty and severe budgetary problems that permeate all Greek universities (and the Greek nation in general), it is quite impressive that the Greek university is doing so well. At the same time, however, these are challenging times not only because of the difficult economic conditions but also because the university system is in the midst of far-reaching transitional changes dictated by law 4009/2011, whose exact implementation and consequences remain unknown.

Despite all this, the EEC feels that overall, the Department has been focusing on keeping things going and on doing its very best, admittedly at the expense of developing a solid long-term strategic vision. For this reason, the EEC feels that the Department should proceed with its planning process and should not wait until a clearer budgetary scenario emerges. In practice, this entails coming up with a plan which will enable it to carry out its mission with significantly reduced resources, a formidable task indeed.

However, a major responsibility must fall on the University itself, since the strategic plan of one Department cannot be isolated from the overall strategy of the institution, which, in turn, has to deal with the severity of the challenges it faces from the

government in general. In other words, any strategic plan, no matter how ambitious and well-structured and intended it is, cannot be implemented without the appropriation of the necessary budgets. And undoubtedly, the severity of budgetary cuts is the crux of the matter.

### ***F. Final Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC***

*For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate level, if necessary.*

Overall, the Department of Primary Education considerably fulfils its educational and research goals, meeting international standards of excellence in almost all aspects of its activities and engaging fully with the national and international academic community. It enjoys an excellent reputation within and outside Greece and has established strong collaborations with other universities abroad. These are the conclusions reached by the EEC after carrying out the required external evaluation procedure.

The recommendations which follow must be seen in this very positive context.

The EEC makes the following suggestions, which are described in more detail in the preceding sections of this document:

1. That both the University and the Department develop a general strategic plan in order to meet the challenges presented by current and future circumstances. At this point the EEC recommends that a more budgetary appropriate strategic plan ought to be developed by both the Department and the University, one that takes into consideration the severe cuts to all types of academic budgets.
2. That the Department institutes a review for its PhD students and develops seminars for them. The EEC also recommends that consideration should be given to a more general and theoretical curriculum concerning didactics in the first two years for a clearer system of student progression.
3. That the University assists the Department in all its teaching and research missions by improving all departmentally related services such as, classroom and other building facilities, library and digital services.
4. That there has to be a reinstating of the minority education section in the Department which although originally supported by the Ministry of Education, has not yet been implemented.
5. That there has to be an overall improvement in the communication channels between the Department, the University, and the Ministry of Education in terms of faster feedback among them, concerning a number of proposals and suggestions.

## The Members of the Committee

	Name and Surname	Signature
1.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____