



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ

HELLENIC REPUBLIC

Α.ΔΙ.Π.

H.Q.A.

ΑΡΧΗ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ & ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ
ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΑΝΩΤΑΤΗ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗ

HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE
AND ACCREDITATION AGENCY

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF THESSALY



European Union
European Social Fund



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION & RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS, CULTURE & SPORTS
MANAGING AUTHORITY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

The External Evaluation Committee

Introduction

I. The External Evaluation Procedure

- Brief account of documents examined, of the Site Visit, meetings and facilities visited.

II. The Internal Evaluation Procedure

- Comments on the quality and completeness of the documentation provided and on the overall acceptance of and participation in the Quality Assurance procedures by the Department .

A. Curriculum

APPROACH

- Goals and objectives of the Curriculum, structure and content, intended learning outcomes.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Rationality, functionality, effectiveness of the Curriculum.

RESULTS

- Maximizing success and dealing with potential inhibiting factors.

IMPROVEMENT

- Planned improvements.

B. Teaching

APPROACH:

- Pedagogic policy and methodology, means and resources.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Quality and evaluation of teaching procedures, teaching materials and resources, mobility.

RESULTS

- Efficacy of teaching, understanding of positive or negative results.

IMPROVEMENT

- Proposed methods for improvement.

C. Research

APPROACH

- Research policy and main objectives.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Research promotion and assessment, quality of support and infrastructure.

RESULTS

- Research projects and collaborations, scientific publications and applied results.

IMPROVEMENT

- Proposed initiatives aiming at improvement.

D. All Other Services

APPROACH

- Quality and effectiveness of services provided by the Department.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Organization and infrastructure of the Department's administration (e.g. secretariat of the Department).

RESULTS

- Adequateness and functionality of administrative and other services.

IMPROVEMENTS

- Proposed initiatives aiming at improvement.

Collaboration with social, cultural and production organizations***E. Strategic Planning, Perspectives for Improvement and Dealing with Potential Inhibiting Factors***

- Short-, medium- and long-term goals and plans of action proposed by the Department.

F. Final Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC on:

- The development and present situation of the Department, good practices and weaknesses identified through the External Evaluation process, recommendations for improvement.

External Evaluation Committee

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the Department of Special Education of the University of Thessaly consisted of the following four (4) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by the HQA in accordance with Law 3374/2005 :

1. **Professor Panayiotis Angelides**, University of Nicosia, Cyprus
2. **Dr. Lucas Amiras**, University of Education, Weingarten, Germany
3. **Associate Professor Antonis Tsakmakis**
University of Cyprus, Department of Classics and Philosophy, Cyprus
4. **Professor Yiannis Dimitriadis**, University of Valladolid, Spain

Introduction

I. The External Evaluation Procedure

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) visited the Department of Special Education, University of Thessaly during the period of December 9 – 11, 2013. The EEC received the Department's Internal Evaluation Report (IER) on 21st November 2013.

During the first day of our visit, EEC members attended an orientation and briefing at the HQA offices from 9:30-11 am, by Professor Memos, to set the stage and provide contextual information on the role of the committee.

The program of the visit was the following:

Monday, Dec 9th

Meeting with the staff of the Department and the Vice-rector for academic affairs Athanasios Koustelios. The vice-rector presented the history and the structure of the university. The briefing from the vice-rector was followed by constructive discussion with all staff members of the department on a range of issues associated with resources and other administrative issues at the University of Thessaly. This discussion was situated in the general context of the Greek Higher Education landscape, which in recent years has been characterized by severe budget cuts and restructuring due to austerity measures and legislation changes.

Tuesday Dec 10th

Meeting with the department faculty at the main conference room of the Department of Special Education (SED).

EEC attended presentations from the following faculty:

- Philippos Vlachos, Head of SED
- Ch. Karayiannides & E. Gana (Undergraduate programs)
- K. Botsoglou & S. Tzivinikou (Practicum of undergraduate students)
- A. Karapetsas, G. Kleftaras & D. Vavouyios (Laboratories of the department)
- P. Stavrousi & E. Didaskalou (Research and Development)
- S. Paraskeuopoulos (Publications)
- D. Vavouyios & E. Dermitzaki (Teaching)
- V. Argyropoulos & A. Sapountzaki (Teaching methods for the deaf and blind)

- I. Nisiotou & M. Nikolarazi (Mobility-Erasmus)
- M. Nikolarazi & I. Nisiotou (Contribution to the society)
- M. Nikolarazi (Student support)

- Meeting with Students (approximately 20 students)
 - Undergraduate students (primarily in the 4th year of studies)
 - Postgraduate students (Masters and Ph.D.)
 - Recent graduates

- Meetings with SED faculty
- Meeting with the administrative staff
- Meeting with Special Laboratory Personnel

Wednesday Dec 11th

- Visit to the university library, meeting with the library director.
- Visit to the research committee, meeting with the vice-rector of public and international relations, innovation and entrepreneurship Dimitrios Kouretas.

Meeting with the department faculty at the main conference room of the Department of Special Education.

EEC attended presentations from the following faculty:

- G. Andreou (Master's in Special Education)
- G. Kleftaras (Master's in Counseling)
- A. Vlachou (Doctoral Studies)
- S. Tzivinikou (on-line platform)

At the end of the visit the EEC met with the rector of the University Ioannis Messinis.

In addition to the IER, the EEC requested and examined a number of additional documents including the following:

- Faculty CVs
- Program of Study (Study Guide), 2013-2014
- Course syllabi
- Sample student assessments including assessments conducted during school

practicum and field experience.

- PhD proposals
- Master theses
- Student artifacts (e.g., student projects, reports, etc.)
- Copies of slides of all presentations prepared by SED faculty in anticipation of our visit.

We visited some of the Department's facilities including:

- Faculty offices
- Administrative staff offices
- Laboratories

We also attended a seminar and a lecture (around half hour for each)

II. The Internal Evaluation Procedure

The Internal Evaluation Committee (IEC) delivered the updated Internal Evaluation Report (IER) for the academic year 2012-2013, following the guidelines provided by the Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency (HQA). The report included the basic information and evidence required in order to fulfill its objectives and was accompanied by the Study Program Guide of the SED department. The IEC also willingly provided a complete CD with additional information, as well as supporting evidence of qualitative and quantitative nature. Finally, during the review process all SED faculty members willingly provided all information that was required by the EEC.

Overall, the global set of sources and documentation provided was appropriate, containing multiple and complementary types of information. The attitude of the IEC and the complete department was very positive towards providing all necessary information and evidence to the EEC. On the other hand, the internal evaluation process was completed in a satisfactory way according to the guidelines provided by the HQA.

A. Curriculum

Postgraduate Program MSc "Counseling in Special–General Education and Health"

APPROACH

The Program's primary objective is specialization in Counseling Psychology particularly in education, health and special education settings. It provides not only theoretical knowledge but also cultivates high-level professional skills for people working in Counseling Psychology and Counseling.

The Program is subdivided in two specializations: "Counseling in Education/School Counseling" and "Counseling in Psychic Health/Psychotherapy". Both combine theory, methodology, and practice.

The Program is offered since 2009. The evaluation of the Program by students is seriously taken into account for its improvement.

The practicum aims at the development of practical skills for the educational and social support of individuals with special needs.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Program is coherent and functional. It consists of 120 ECTS and has a duration of 4 semesters. It includes 12 courses (1 is a restrictive elective, another is a independent study), a practicum of 14 ECTS and a Masters thesis which is credited with 20 ECTS. Attendance of counseling sessions is also required (1100 hours).

The teaching staff includes 35 members from 8 Universities and 26 experts in various places in Greece, giving the opportunity to students who live in cities other than Volos to do their practice in their home place.

The Program is consistent with the objectives of the Department and meets the whole range of its mission as defined by the law.

RESULTS

The Program is officially recognized by both state authorities and scientific and professional associations and it has an international reputation. An impressive record of conference papers, written by students in collaboration with their professors is a further proof of the Program's importance.

On the other hand, students frequently consider their workload as extremely high, especially the attendance of counseling sessions although they recognize the benefits from systematic training. This amount of workload is not reflected in the ECTS units as officially approved for the Program.

IMPROVEMENT

The Department envisages further improvement of the Program. It has been asked by professional associations to offer the Program in Cyprus.

The Program satisfies high academic requirements and meets acute needs of society. At present the Program admits students every two years, due to the limited staff numbers.