



NATIONAL & KAPODISTRIAN UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS

SELF-EVALUATION REPORT OF THE INSTITUTION

(Abridged English Version)

September 2015

Foreword

This document is to be understood as an abridged English version of the University's Self-Evaluation Report submitted to and approved (finally in summer 2015) by the ΑΔΙΠ (ADIP), where various conclusions and assessments of the external evaluators' findings on the Departments of the University of Athens have been integrated. It is especially the result of a long team work by Kostas Bourletidis, Sophia Krousaniotaki and Kostas Buraselis, with the precious assistance of Victoria Kasviki concerning the formulation in English.

1. Introduction –Historical Overview

The National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA), the University with the widest presence and authority in the country, has established its own tradition of science and creative participation in Greek society.

It is the oldest University in the country, founded by the Royal Decree of 22 April 1837 under the name “University of Otto”. After a further decree of October 20 1862 issued by the ‘Interim Government’ (October 10-November 27, 1862) that name has changed to: “National University”. Initially it was composed of four (4) Faculties with a total of 52 students. As it was the first university in the newly established modern Greek state, as well as in the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean region, its role has been decisive, in historical and social respect, for the production of special knowledge and the promotion of cultural life in the country.

In 1841 administrative and educational facilities were transferred to the edifice currently and widely known as the “main building” of the University of Athens, the middle part of the famous “neoclassical trilogy” in the center of Athens. In accordance with the will of the important donor Ioannis Dombolis (dating from 4 February 1849) and to implement that donation, a law was issued on July 17, 1911

with which the ‘Kapodistrian University’ was founded: the latter was composed of the theoretical Faculties of the ‘National University’ and was placed under common administration with the latter, sharing Senate and Rector with it. Since 1932 the “National University” and the “Kapodistrian University” were also formally united (Article 1 of Law 5343/1932): the final result was the “National and Kapodistrian University of Athens”, a fully self-governed legal person of public law.

Up to the early 20th century the NKUA was the only University which provided Greek society with scientists receiving diplomas in medical, natural and social sciences, Law and Economy , Theology, Literature, History, Archaeology. Thus the staff needs of the country regarding administrative personnel, education and clergy have been competently served. In its many years of operation, the University of Athens has offered the country a centre of intellectual production, stimulating various relevant circles functioning inside and outside its premises.

Nowadays it still offers important social services, producing academic and scientific personnel, in addition to the exercise of closer scientific tasks: through its members, it often participates in national and international committees, it carries out educational and other research projects, organizes and participates in seminars for various social groups (often alongside with its members’ full employment at the University). One of the most important contributions of the University of Athens concerns the area of national health. An additional point in this request is that students of health sciences perform their first practice period offering their medical services to the public under the supervision of professors.

Since 2009, applying the existing legislating framework (Laws 3374/2005 and 4009/2011), and the instructions of the ADIP, the University of Athens applied successively the process of internal self-evaluation and then external evaluation in all its Departments after an overall plan. Through the work of the University’s Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP, ΜΟΔΙΠ in Greek) there is a current collection

and systematic processing of data relating to all academic units and administrative services. The procedure of the internal evaluation of most Departments has been completed in 2013, while in the first months of 2014 the thirty-three (33) external evaluations of the Departments have been followed.

Within a pressing timeframe (from early September to the beginnings of December 2014), and in constant contact and cooperation with the above thirty-three (33) Departments, the process of the whole internal self-evaluation of the University has been completed and formulated. The resulting extensive report has been submitted to the ADIP. At the same time a blueprint of the University's Internal Quality Assurance System has been drafted, which should then become a subject of further consultation, through the coordinating work of the MODIP, with the various Departments and the academic community of the University.

2. Academic Structure Development and Presentation of the University's image

2.1. Basic Structure (Schools and Departments)

There are now eight schools operating at the NKUA: 1) School of Theology, 2) the Law School, 3) The School of Economics and Political Sciences, 4) the School of Education, 5) The School of Natural Sciences, 6) the School of Physical Education and Sport Science, 7) The School of Health Sciences and 8) The School of Philosophy

Within these eight faculties/schools of the University are allocated thirty three academic departments. Each academic department offers and implements an undergraduate study program.

The structuring of these faculties/schools into specific Departments and separate sectors of the Departments is at present as follows:

1. **Theological School.** It comprises two Departments: the Department of Theology and that of Social Theology.

2. **The Law School** includes only the Law Department
3. **The School of Economics and Political Sciences** includes four Departments: the Department of Political Science and Public Administration, the Department of Economics, the Department of Communication and Media, and the Department of Turkish and Modern Asian Studies.
4. **The Philosophy School** comprises twelve Departments: the Department of Literature (Greek and Latin), the Department of History and Archaeology, the Department of Philosophy, Education and Psychology, the Department of Psychology, the Department of English Language and Literature, the Department of French Language and Literature, the Department of German Language and Literature, the Department of Italian Language and Literature, the Department of Spanish Language and Literature, the Music Department, the Department of Theatre Studies and the Department of Russian and Slavic Studies.
5. **The School of Natural Sciences** has seven departments: the Department of Physics, the Department of Chemistry, the Department of Mathematics, the Department of Biology, the Department of Geology and Paleontology, the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunication, and the Department of History and Philosophy of Sciences (until very recently titled: Methodology, History and Philosophy of Science).
6. **The School of Health Sciences** includes four departments the Department of Medicine, the Department of Dentistry, the Department of Pharmacy and the Department of Nursing
7. **The School of Education** consists of two departments: the Department of Education and the Department of Education and Early Childhood.
8. **The School of Science and Physical Education and Sport** includes the Department of Physical Education and Sport

This structure of the faculties/schools and departments is recent, mainly being a consequence of the Project ATHENA and new relevant legislation (Law

4009/2011, Law 4076/2012). Therefore it would be premature to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the current structure. It is certain that this organizational arrangement has not solved the problems that Schools/Faculties and Departments faced before the implementation of the plan ATHENA. The practical utility of this structure has been/is being seriously impaired by the governmental measures on the ‘availability of administrative staff’ (that is, the drastic restriction in the latter’s strength), but also the conditions of prolonged underfunding of the University in recent years.

2.2 An image of the University based on statistics and census data

The synthetic table below offers among other data an overview of the undergraduate students of the University in the period 2008-2013. As it is mentioned in the case of the figures on the table for the year 2012-2013, the active students were 38% of all registered students at the University of Athens. The corresponding figure for the year 2008-2009 was 42.3%. In most parts the delay in completion rate and low graduation rates are clear. The failure/retardation in the completion of students’ studies can be attributed mainly to two important factors:

(1st) The large number of students with minimum qualifications admitted to the University. The process of Nationwide Examination unfortunately fails to check a range of cognitive, research and social skills, which are necessary for beginning academic studies, but simply the sterile memorizing of some schoolbook pages. As a result, many young students cannot cope with the high level of education at the University and unofficially interrupt their studies. In some cases university schools are selected as options and, without any real correspondence, fitted into the computerized file of applications for specific directions of university studies. Thus candidates can get into a school, the curriculum of which includes courses unrelated to any examination content considered in the preceding Nationwide Examinations. The result of this situation is that the students often have significant gaps of basic knowledge and cannot understand fundamental concepts and curriculum subjects in which they finally succeeded in achieving a place of university study. In order to face this problem,

the external evaluators have suggested that a course structure based on prerequisites be implemented as soon as possible, where there is such a possibility. In the same sense, the enrichment of the first year of university studies with more general courses seems to be an appropriate measure for enhancing the knowledge and skills of students in view of the specialized courses in subsequent years.

Especially in the Departments of Foreign Languages both the important base of general knowledge (mirrored in a level of below 10.000 points in the preceding introductory examinations) and as well the proficiency level in foreign languages are relatively low. This undoubtedly results in large student groups with a major risk of non-completion of studies.

(2nd) In the last five years the prolonged economic crisis has had a serious negative effect on the effort of students to complete their studies. Many of them abandon their studies because their families can no longer assist them. They remain at best underemployed, often in jobs unrelated to their studies, in order to gain an income and continue as students. They sometimes refrain from taking an examination because of the extra cost of residence and travel (if their home is in a province). The result is a more frequent retardation in the completion of studies or even the abandonment of the latter.

TABLE1: Epitome of the University

<i>Academic year</i>	<i>2013-2014</i>	<i>2012-2013</i>	<i>2011-2012</i>	<i>2010-2011</i>	<i>2009-2010</i>
1. Total number of permanent faculty	1.923	1.953	2.001	2.047	3.000
2. Total number of other teaching staff (full-time employment)	41	49	72	178	153
3. Total number of administrative staff	761	1.312	1.350	1.361	1.362
4. Total number of laboratory and	362	253	271	301	329

other technical staff					
5. Total number of undergraduate students in normal duration of study (n+2)	40.652	38.566	38.755	40.708	40.972
6. Places of study offered at the University on the basis of the annual Panhellenic Examinations (total number)	5.200	5.420	5.360	5.825	5.860
7. Total number of students newly admitted into the University (all categories)	8.204	7.396	7.011	8.628	8.016
8. Total number of registered students	103.972	100.694	100.324	100.957	98.837
9. Total number of graduates of the University	6.149	6.482	6.526	6.470	6.870
10. Study places offered to postgraduate students at the University in the specific academic year (total number)	2.475	2.903	3.075	2.665	2.969
11. Total number of new applications for places in the postgraduate programs of study	6.251	8.135	8.514	8.432	8.400
12. Total number of postgraduate students registered	10.502	9.778	9.739	9.722	9.233
13. Total number of PHD students	13.936	14.708	16.695	16.744	16.438
14. Total budget size (€)	25.981.354,75	29.942.375,00	33.881.675,00	36.256.391,9	51.949.235,00
15. Total size of Public Investments Program (€)	4.655.062,40	7.570.214,8	12.288.327,75	9.291.280,79	16.026.340,73
16. Total budget size of the Special Account for Research Grants (SARG) (€)	41.4788.76,48	67.499.624,91	77.552.554,82	92.884.319,68	47.958.820,69
17. Total Research and Development Funds	30.612.731,93 UNTIL 30/09/2014	55.762.594,23	66.502.353,73	54.674.463,99	39.393.112,64

* The current year is the most recent full academic year (two successive six-month academic semesters).

a) **Understaffing**

The fact of inadequate academic staffing is usual in the Departments of the NKUA. This problem has been aggravated in the last four years, both due to non-replenishment of academic staff positions after retirements and to the considerable limitation of sums and ‘Special Researchers’ positions (Presidential Decree 407/80) granted to the University by the Greek state.

As shown by the available data, the administrative personnel of the University has been significantly reduced in recent years. Especially in the crucial year 2013-2014, we can speak of a “depopulation” of the administrative staff of the University as a result of the Law on ‘staff availability’.

It may be referred indicatively that:

- Between 2009 and 2014 there was a decrease in the total number of faculty members by 5% (177 fewer faculty members), without taking account of the additional faculty members on sabbatical leave, who cannot contribute to teaching and administration in their Departments. In this period the total number of faculty members has increased in seven departments, remained the same in four and fell in twenty-one Departments.
- According to the data provided by the Administrative Services of the University over the next few years the number of “outgoing” faculty members will constantly increase. This is due to the fact that a significant number of faculty members in various Departments is approaching retirement. It is estimated that in 2016 20% of the number of Faculty Members of the University of Athens (reference year 2010) will have left.
- As shown by the data of the Departments the number of teaching ‘Special Researchers’ (Pres. D. 407/80) has been reduced by 80%, due to the lack of funds.
- In 2010 officials with permanent posts and employees with ‘undetermined period of service’ (ΙΑΑΧ) amounted together to 1362. In September 2014 according to available data the number has decreased to 761. Thus, a decrease of 44% has taken place. A part of the reduction is due to

retirements, the largest part to the continued 'availability' of personnel (approximately 400 people), while ca. 100 of the administrative staff changed status to the category of Laboratory Teaching Staff (LTS), without their original positions having been replenished.

- The ratio of students to administrative staff also reflects the problem. Considering only the total of active undergraduate students (n + 2) and dividing by the number of administrative staff one reaches the estimate that 50 students correspond to one administrative official at the University of Athens. The relevant average of Greek universities is 30: 1. The British Universities record, on average, a **lower** proportion of students to administrative staff of around 12,5. The US record an **even lower** ratio of no more than **11 students per staff member**.

b) Underfunding

According to data from the Financial Services of the University for the period 2009-2013 the reduction in the total budget (regular + public investment) reached 52% (from 77,582,062.26 € in 2009 to 37,512,589.8 € in 2013). It is noteworthy that the decrease between 2013-2014 is even greater (14 million € having become the total budget). The initial forecast for 2014-2015 refers to an amount of around 11 million euros, of which until the middle of 2015 (early July) nothing has been disbursed. This money is intended to cover the University's key operational needs (security, cleaning, maintenance and replacement of office equipment, laboratories, clinics, utilities, oil, expenses of student welfare, general and laboratory supplies, supply of inks and copier papers, Foreign Language and Teaching Textbooks, test papers, supplies of computers, binding, printing, management of toxic waste, nitrogen, fire extinguishers, etc.)

It is estimated that only the expenditure for the University's utilities services amounts annually to ca. 9 million €. The apposition of these financial data discloses the strong viability problem and weakness of operation for the University in the coming years. The problem of underfunding becomes even more acute because of the insufficient absorption of funds and from the NSRF and other

regional operational programs, resulting in the loss of valuable resources for the NKUA. The problem was intensified due to the 'availability', in particular concerning key services that manage these projects (Finance Department, ELKE etc.). There, administrative staff with considerable expertise found themselves for several months suspended so that it was impossible for a long time to execute a series of administrative actions and operations.

c) Social Environment

In social terms, the economic crisis has been directly affecting the available income of many households (and therefore current and tomorrow's students), the ability of students to complete their studies, also any vocational guidance and planning of the future of the next generation. There has also been a consequent medium-term impact on the operation of higher education institutions. The choices of candidates in national exams to enter a university suggest that schools and university departments which are close to the candidates' residences are preferred so that families may cope with the costs of "student life" for their children. Thus the scientific content or the professional perspectives offered by a school become secondary. At the same time, in case of success in a provincial university, a significant number of admittees try to achieve moving their places of study to a University of their homecity. The result is that a large number of students, who transferred from regional Universities to the Departments of NKUA, is added to the rest, while the burden on the demand for Universities' services increases.

2. Evaluation of Curriculum and conclusions based on the findings of the external assessments of NKUA Departments

2.1 Introduction

Undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral programs of the Departments of the University of Athens are all corresponding to the academic level and the qualification awarded. This assertion may be supported by (a) the reports of the external evaluators, (b) the detailed information on objectives set and learning results, as they are reflected in the study guides of the Departments, (c) the full alignment with European and International Standards (ECTS system), (d) the acceptance of graduates in postgraduate and doctoral studies not only in Greece but also abroad, and finally (e) their professional success and social advancement.

2.2 Programs of Undergraduate Studies

As it was mentioned in the preceding section, at the NKUA there are implemented thirty-three (33) undergraduate programs (one for each Department)

Strong/ Positive points

- The findings of external evaluations confirmed a very positive, matching relation of the level of education provided by the Departments on the basis of their Curricula to the academic level they target and the degree they grant. According to the external evaluations, which have been completed in 2014, many undergraduate programs are higher “than expected”. In cases where there have been proposals for improvements of the curricula, the Departments have already taken necessary steps to adopt the proposals in practice as far as they are consistent with the objectives, practices and academic policy they aspire to.
- The courses, laboratories, clinics that make up the respective undergraduate programs (UPs), offer with their contents and activities a versatile and effective scientific training to students. They cover a wide range of knowledge that runs through both the theoretical side of scientific knowledge, and its applications. In many cases, the courses and their content are equivalent to those of leading Universities abroad. Thus, the UPs cover the demands of society for high level education - in theory

subjects, in laboratory exercises, in simulations with ‘exemplary teaching’ in the classroom and the needs of applications in matters of science.

- As to learning outcomes and competences sought, the external evaluators have found that in most Curricula the following points apply:
 - The learning outcomes are connected with the objectives of the Curriculum
 - The learning outcomes correspond with the type and level of the respective qualification sought, as defined in the European and National Qualifications Framework
 - The objectives of the curricula and learning outcomes meet the academic and professional requirements, the needs of society and labor market
 - The titles of the curricula, their content and learning outcomes are mutually compatible.

- In several cases the Undergraduate Degree Programs are based on the common standards of European universities: they namely lead to the development of specific professional skills, which the graduate should be able to exercise in any EU country where he/she comes to apply those skills. The value and adequacy of curricula to prepare professionals able to work abroad is confirmed by the assessments and the comments of the External Evaluation of the Departments, where the following notes have been presented:
 - Proper design, construction and implementation of the curriculum as a whole.
 - Rooted positive perception of society for the historical dimension and the high level of the curriculum.
 - The high academic level exhibited by the UPs of the Departments is proved by the fact that their graduates excel in their postgraduate studies, and not infrequently in top foreign universities.

Weak/Negative Points

- Limited funding and limited infrastructure in relation to the very large number of students.
- Teaching courses in several undergraduate programs take place in front of big audiences. Thus teamwork and educational activities that require the separation of students in small classes cannot be applied but exceptionally.
- The disappointingly low level of educational infrastructure presented by a number of students. This is especially true of those who had not placed their final study among their main options, but had to succumb to the existing requirements for entering a university study at all.
- Excessive workload for students that is captured in a large number of courses leading to a degree and in many-hours of attendance for each series of lessons.
- The low level of specific language proficiency as a condition for entering the foreign language departments, is combined with the inadequate numbers of teaching staff for supporting language courses in some of those departments.
- A large number of inactive (so called: 'eternal') students
- Too high annual number of incoming students in relation to infrastructure and the real possibilities of certain Departments.

Further opportunities Offered by the Strong/ Positive Points –Possibilities of their expansion

- The implementation of the prerequisite courses system.
- Encouragement of students to participate in student exchange programs with foreign universities.
- Enrichment of the interactive material used in lecture-form teaching.
- Further improvement of the use of e-class; fuller description of the courses both there and in the website of certain Departments.
- Lightening curricula so that they better correspond to the actual needs of modern undergraduate university studies.

- Some UPs are either unique in Greece (e.g. Spanish Language and Literature) and/or have strategic importance because they connect the country academically and culturally with a wider cultural area (e.g. Russian and Slavic Studies), and should therefore be strengthened.

Risks because of Weak/ Negative Points

- The ever decreasing budget, which is unpredictable and creates problems in planning and proper functioning of the Departments.
- Inadequate infrastructure and funding hampers increasingly the achieved high quality of educational work. One foreseeable result would be the further increase in the number of students who find it difficult to complete their studies or drop them out.
- The working environment for academic staff members (ΔΕΠ) seems to get worse, as wages are constantly reduced and the opportunities for participation in educational activities and research become more restricted. Therefore there is an ever more apparent risk that a significant number of those members choose to give up their present positions and accept employment in other (especially foreign) Universities, or to accelerate their processes of retirement. It is understandable that such phenomena create further problems concerning the implementation of teaching assignments because of the gaps created, without any near prospect of replacements.
- The defective conditions for the acceptance of students into the Foreign Language Departments, already noted above, and the demands of their proper University study also increase the number of inactive students, while they alter the actual yield potential of foreign language curricula.
- Serious administrative barriers and bureaucracy sometimes hinder the Departments' various processes, such as recruitment of new staff and allocation of the budget.

- Funding for participation in conferences, workshops and seminars abroad and within Greece remains limited.

2.3 Postgraduate Courses

In the period when the report was mainly drafted (October 2014), there were at the NKUA in all 110 registered Postgraduate Programs (PP). Of those, 102 operated normally, while 5 are considered inactive, and 3 terminated or merged as specializations in another PP of the same Department. Of those 102 programs, 6 are international, 12 Interuniversity, 11 Interdepartmental, 18 Interinstitutional and the others are run by single Departments of the NKUA. Therefore 43% of postgraduate curricula are based on domestic and international partnerships that promote openness and further collaborative and interdisciplinary approach to scientific subjects.

The PP of NKUA aim at promoting knowledge, research development and satisfaction of educational needs in the country. They are characterized by scientific consistency, they concern specialties related to the disciplines of the undergraduate curriculum and meet conditions that guarantee a high level of studies.

Each PP (Master's Program) contains:

(a) the titles of compulsory, compulsory after choice from a list and optional courses, their content, and the weekly hours of their teaching, where are also included all specifications about the latter and the chronological sequence or interdependence of courses.

(b) the qualifications and skills of teachers needed for the implementation of the PP and for achieving the learning objectives.

(c) learning results and qualifications acquired through the entire curriculum and each individual course or educational activity or practical exercise included in it, the credits and the level of acquired qualifications, orientated towards matching those of the Frameworks of Qualifications for Higher Education, where these exist.

(d) the categories of graduates to be accepted, their entry requirements and the selection of candidates for participation in the program. The choice must be borne by objective

criteria, which follow the principles of equality and meritocracy (concerning exams, previous title notes, foreign languages, research activities etc.)

Monitoring of postgraduate courses is mandatory for students. The methods of evaluation of a student's progress are determined by the teacher, who can organize, at his discretion, written or oral examinations or to rely on interim tests, essays or laboratory exercises.

Strong/ Positive Points

- The majority of PP are harmonized with the content of courses offered by respective PP abroad. They further emphasize effective communication, understanding and cooperation of scientists with different backgrounds for the common good of the group and preparing postgraduates to follow further research plans if they wish.
- The interest of society for PP of various disciplines at NKUA is extremely high and the positions announced are filled by applicants.
- Teaching is based on strong involvement of students in it as their presentation of work in seminars requires parallel work during their semester.
- There is frequent use of modern teaching aids (projector, powerpoint, wi-fi etc)
- The diversity of the composition of the students involved in different but very close specialties and the wide range of age, that is to say recent graduates of the university and already practicing teachers of secondary and primary education.
- Targeted teaching of specialized knowledge in relation to the professional direction of graduate students.
- The small number of students, the compulsory attendance of lessons.
- The written synthesis (and possibly presentation) on the specific final diplomatic subject, which enables students to be trained in the writing of quality texts. The latter are often published in Greek and international journals and presented at national or international conferences.
- The existence of consistency between curricula and objectives of graduate programs
- The curriculum of a PP is similar with that of a corresponding PP in Greece or abroad
- Laboratory instructions are well-structured and in line with the theoretical lessons.
- The quality of the lectures is high. Most courses contain revised and updated content.
- Good ratio teacher- taught at postgraduate level.

- Multiple methods of examinations.
- Updated books
- Research and teaching connection. Intensive laboratory, scientific and research activity.

Weak /Negative Points

- The PP in some Departments face a sustainability problem because the economic crisis and the lack of the proper subvention for the Departments results in the latter not covering the costs that they generate.
- The Technology infrastructure in some Departments is rudimentary; as a result one meets the incomplete utilization of information and communication technologies in the educational process.
- Many libraries are underfunded whereas in some there are no (or not updated) electronic databases, while the subscription to electronic journals, etc. is at least uncertain. As access to such bibliography is absolutely necessary for the research work of faculty members, serious consequences for the scientific development must follow.
- The limited legislative flexibility and thriving bureaucracy in terms of economic management.
- Failure to support financially the best or engage them officially in University teaching
- Some PP- labeled material overlaps with the undergraduate curriculum
- Lack of means to support students with scholarships, so that they need to accept too much parallel jobs and fail to devote themselves sufficiently to their studies.

Opportunities of utilization of Strong/ Positive Points

- Further development of external relations and internationalization of PP to involve foreign students who are interested in any particular object of study.

- Strengthening international cooperation and exploring the possibility to organize further PP in partnership with foreign universities.
- Further development and promotion of the content of PP diploma studies (Master's)
- Development and implementation of educational visits of postgraduate students in educational institutions abroad.
- Improvement of the connection and communication of PP Graduates who continued their studies at universities abroad (at doctoral level) with students registered in the current PP.

Potential risks due to Weak/ Negative points

- The decrease of applications and registrations as a result of the economic crisis can endanger the sustainability of some PP.
- The enforcement of 'availability' and parallel measures concerning the number of the administrative staff created significant problems in the implementation of PP.
- The very low funding and excessive bureaucracy will cause restrictions in logistics, lack of resources and inability to invite internationally renowned researchers for talks at PP seminars or to support distinguished students through scholarships or some form of salaried participation in University teaching.

2.4 Common Points concerning both Undergraduate and Postgraduate Study Programmes

The courses of the curricula are structured in many categories: core courses, mandatory and elective mandatory (from a list), free selections from wider thematic cycles, workshops, seminars, outdoor activities (e.g. inspection of sites of scientific interest), clinics etc. All these sorts of educational activities try to follow a rational general structure so that students may choose the ones suiting best their inclinations and scientific interests.

Thus the revised UP and PP of the University provide respectively undergraduate and postgraduate students with the opportunity to create gradually their individual profile according to their special interests, abilities and skills as applied in the courses offered and selected. At the same time, and in addition to more or less theoretical training, these programs try to cultivate the practical dimension through specialized work, internships, exemplary teaching, workshops, clinics, production and exhibition of artistic results (where appropriate). Infrastructure, laboratory and elective courses run parallel to each other, although in some Departments there do exist prerequisite courses.

The institutionalized existence inside or the close link with the University of an important number of Laboratories, Clinics and Museums, and other supportive structures (e.g. Experimental School, School of Foreign Languages, Astreroskopeio etc.) are further assets. All these ‘affiliated branches’ of the University possess good logistics and are staffed with high-level education personnel so that they can significantly contribute to the educational process, research and connection with the society for the University.

Several courses are based on the interaction and collaboration between the Departments of a Faculty/School. This cooperation is expressed through the mutual offering of courses between the curricula of Departments.

The cooperation between some Departments may even exceed the limits of one School as a Department may support courses in other Departments which lead to the development of horizontal skills (e.g. Educational Adequacy). These courses - programs can be attended by students or postgraduates of other departments. There is also a considerable number of interdepartmental postgraduate programs promoting interdisciplinarity and guaranteeing through their combination of personnel and facilities the academic level and the specific qualification awarded by their joint degree.

The structure of the curricula at NKUA follows the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System of Units (ECTS). All Departments offer degrees or postgraduate degrees that correspond to the 6th, 7th and 8th level of the National and European Qualifications Framework. These degrees are recognized internationally and guarantee their graduates respective acceptance into postgraduate or doctoral degree programs in all countries of the European Union. The admission of the ECTS-system both in undergraduate and postgraduate studies facilitates the alignment with the study programs of other Universities, and the movement of students to and from a Department on the basis of the Erasmus Program. The current curriculum offers the necessary European Credits (ECTS) as all respective degrees of the member states of the European Union.

2.5 Programs of Doctoral Studies (PDS)

The NKUA is firmly oriented to the promotion of Research and Excellence. Therefore the University supports by its Departments and faculty members the preparation of a significant number of doctoral theses.

There were 14 708 doctoral candidates in the academic year 2012-2013. It should be clarified, however, that 68% of them are PhD students of the Medical School (10.044), a fact that is explained by the latter's scale, range of objects and infrastructure (laboratories, clinics, etc.).

Strong/ Positive points

- PDS are inextricably linked with the research activities of the Departments
- The Departments develop a cutting-edge research in a wide field of theoretical, laboratory, practical and experimental fields. The high level of research activity is proved by the large number of publications in prestigious scientific journals, the number of references, invited talks at conferences and seminars, the ability to attract research programs and collaborations with scientists from leading universities and research centers abroad.
- The doctoral students of NKUA have attested presence in the research field. They have often received international awards and wider recognition, as one

may conclude from their subsequent fate: they occupy research or faculty positions in research centers and universities in Greece and abroad, or posts of responsibility in the rest labor market.

Weak/ Negative Points

- A decrease has been noticed in the number of doctoral candidates in recent years as a result of the lack of integrated tools of support and funding, in the form of scholarships linked to the doctoral study programs.
- The extremely inadequate secretarial, technical or other support in certain departments imposes doctoral students' spending time on activities that could be otherwise undertaken by support staff.
- High average completion time of doctoral dissertations and low rate of graduation.
- Limited participation of doctoral students in certain departmental events (lectures, conferences, etc).

Opportunities for the Development of positive points

- Strengthening the "internationalization" of PDS either through the development of joint curricula with universities abroad, or with the participation of at least one foreign faculty member in three-member consulting committees of doctoral candidates.
- Defining quality standards of doctoral theses, concerning their internal structure as well as the "external good testimony and recognition" of them, through the systematic presentation of the interim and final results of theses in international conferences with referees.
- Eventual introduction of each PhD-candidate's obligation to have already some publications in scientific journals (peer-reviewed procedure) before the acceptance of his dissertation.
- Possible institutional integration of PhD students into the academic activities of the Departments according to their possibilities (teaching courses, involvement in research activities, etc.)

- Creation of a framework of mandatory and assistive courses related to doctoral research, so that doctoral candidates are reinforced in their work and become familiar with current research methods and tools.
- Increased initiatives for participating in international funding programs linked with corresponding PhD themes.
- Support and intensification of the Departmental connections with the labor market, so that the absorption of doctoral graduates rises.

Potential risks from the negative/weak points

- The "stagnant" PhD students may block positions and prevent young doctoral students from joining research, since every faculty member is legally entitled to supervise only up to a certain number of candidates.
- The technological infrastructure in some Departments is rudimentary, resulting in incomplete utilization of information and communication technologies in the research process.
- Libraries are underfunded, thus the needs of electronic databases and the subscription to electronic journals are pending or interrupted, although they are absolutely necessary for research projects.
- The general underfunding of research at NKUA makes it also difficult for PhD students to participate in scientific conferences abroad. Thus research performed at our University lacks international promotion, although its level is very often equivalent to that of foreign universities.
- Lower numbers of faculty members at the University will also reduce in the long run the opportunities to develop dissertations.
- The absence of support programs for doctoral candidates (e.g. HERAKLEITOS) discourages new students from a doctoral thesis whereas the prolonged economic crisis forces ever more of the present doctoral candidates to abandon the preparation of their thesis.

3. International relations and partnerships

3.1. Introduction

The NKUA includes in its strategic options the role of an institution actively interested in co-shaping the development of European and international education and culture. It tries to contribute positively to the processes at decision-making centers where the issues of higher education are regulated. At the same time it takes care for making widely known the high-quality of the educational and cultural work produced under its auspices.

The achievement of its corresponding objectives is pursued through:

- The activity in the European educational program Erasmus
- the participation in further European scientific cooperation and mobility programs
- the conclusion of international bilateral scientific cooperation agreements with other High Educational Institutions and the participation in international independent programs.
- the participation in various international organizations, associations and university networks
- The development of international joint master and doctoral programs and the co-supervision of doctoral theses.

3.2 Bilateral Agreements International Scientific Cooperation

The International Bilateral Relations of the NKUA have been systematized especially since 1982. Since then many International Bilateral Cooperation Agreements have been signed with institutions of equal status - mostly public Universities or equivalent higher education and research institutions, as well as with International Networks.

International Bilateral Agreements promote inter-university partnerships that aim at sharing knowledge, exchanging information and promoting science and research. Also, the International Bilateral Cooperation Agreements foresee exchange of scientists and students, administrative staff, research material and the organization of joint research projects and scientific meetings (workshops,

symposiums, conferences and others). There are sixty-three (63) such active Bilateral Agreements of the University of Athens.

3.3 International Organizations, Associations and Networks

The NKUA participates as a member in seven major international Organizations, Unions and University Networks that aim to promote international cooperation between Universities and develop methods and strategies that help to improve their educational and research activities.

These agreements are governed by the Regulation of International Bilateral Agreements of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens adopted by the Senate in July 2008 and is a text elaborated by the International Relations Committee.

3.4. Erasmus Programs

The NKUA has been on the forefront for many years concerning the realization of students' and academic staff's mobility between EU universities through the program Erasmus, now continued as ERASMUS +. ERASMUS + is the new European Commission program for Education, Training, Youth and Sport in the period 2014-2020 and has been in force since 1st January 2014. It replaces existing EU programs that covered all areas of education: the program LLP – Erasmus and various other preexisting programs (Leonardo da Vinci, Comenius, Grundtvig, Tempus etc.). All member states of the EU are entitled to participate in all actions of ERASMUS +. The same rights are valid for the following countries: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and countries-candidates for accession to the EU: Turkey and FYROM.

The activities of mobility of the Erasmus + program are based on bilateral Erasmus agreements between the University of Athens and other European Universities wishing this connection. The faculty members who wish to collaborate with colleagues from other European institutions usually take the initiative of preparing the ground for such a bilateral agreement. The conclusion

of these bilateral agreements is signed every year during the period September-December and concerns the mobility of the next academic year. The faculty members of the University are informed on the commencement of that process by the Department for European and International Relations during the month of September. In all mobility actions of Erasmus + the above-mentioned countries may participate.

According to the statistics for the Erasmus Program for the academic year 2012-2013, which have been recently published by the EU, the University of Athens is included in the "top 100 educational institutions that send Erasmus students" (ranked to the 48th place) among 2,673 European institutions of higher education.

Incoming Erasmus Students are encouraged to participate in all educational and cultural activities of the NKUA. They are also offered the possibility to attend free Greek language courses in the Teaching Center for Modern Greek attached to the Faculty of Philosophy. Moreover, they are encouraged to attend the course interdisciplinary course offered there under the title: "CONTEMPORARY GREECE: History, arts and Letters" (in English).

4. Research in the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

4.1. The strategy of the University on Research

The research mission of the University is very important and intertwined with its educational one. It consists in systematically supporting and developing scientific research under conditions of academic freedom. Free scientific research is considered both as a right and an obligation of the academic staff. The University undertakes to guarantee the freedom of research and at the same time to ensure the compliance with basic research ethics.

The University supports all forms of research activity (individual and collective, fundamental and applied, funded and non-funded) and promotes the publication of research results through papers at scientific conferences, publications and any other appropriate means.

The education process itself contributes also to the development of research, as one of its targets, on postgraduate level the most important one, is the training of new researchers. Postgraduate students and especially doctoral students are naturally expected to contribute to the research process.

The University utilizes the existing research resources and the infrastructure to support research across the spectrum of disciplines represented by its academic units and their members.

The research developed at the University of Athens may be described as rich, multi-layered, often innovative and internationally recognized. The research work conducted covers the areas of basic, applied and technological research. A basic guideline of this activity is that the role of research in modern society is not only the production of new knowledge but also the utilization of research achievements in the University by the broader market space and society.

A main concern of the university community is the active participation and integration of its members in the largest possible number of research projects at national and international level. Specifically, students' participation in research does not only aim at enriching their practice and their connection with the educational process, but also to inform and familiarize them with means and methods of modern science. The overall purpose of these activities is both to recruit new scientists of high-level training at the NKUA and to activate in research and thus properly exploit the intellectual capacities of a larger number of students.

Already running research and future growth prospects in new research areas have highlighted the University of Athens as a healthy and authoritative academic institution of international respect, despite the noticeable imperfections of organizational framework and infrastructure.

The key research growth factors at the NKUA are the human potential (Faculty, Research Associates, Administrative and Technical Staff, Students), existing academic and administrative structures (Academic Departments, Laboratories, Clinics, University Research Institutes, Special Account for Research, Research Committee, Liaison Office with the Work Market) and available resources (research funds - programs, infrastructure, equipment).

The research policy of the University of Athens consists in a set of actions to enhance and improve the participation of key players in research. These actions include, among others, the search for resources and programs, the renewal of the research equipment, providing advice and technical support in undertaking and implementing research projects.

This research policy followed by the University is part **of its research strategy** which has the following main objectives:

- a) The development of research skills by undergraduate and postgraduate students, who as part of their studies, should also participate during their studies in courses requiring their presence in laboratories and clinics (for the medical school) or in seminar courses with concomitant essays (in the field of humanities and social studies).
- b) The implementation of research projects at doctoral and post-doctoral level by scientific groups and individual researchers of the University, eventually in collaboration with researchers of other institutions in Greece and abroad.
- c) The promotion and development of research activity by faculty members, which is reflected among others in the work and publications in scientific journals, the presentation of research at conferences, books and monographs, chapters in edited volumes, organization and implementation of research seminars, book reviews, patents etc.
- d) The identification, mapping, promotion and economic exploitation of research results, the assurance of the intellectual property and the establishment of Spin Off companies.
- e)

4.2. Research Projects -ELKE

A prerequisite for the exercise of a systematic research policy by the NKUA is the existence of the necessary resources to meet research needs. In the NKUA operates the Special Account for Research (ELKE) for the provision and management of funds coming from different sources and intended to cover expenditure necessary for the needs of projects undertaken by faculty members and the University (as individual units or as a whole).

These projects are executed or relevant services are provided by the faculty members, while the rest of the staff of the University as well as other scientists and students participate in this work in varying degrees. The activity of ELKE concerns mainly research and education, and, more generally, the development and upgrading of the University. The administration of ELKE is governed by the Committee for Education, Research and Management and the Secretary's Office attached to and assisting the latter and managing the ELKE funds.

The University of Athens is implementing a large number of works either as a concessionaire or in the form of a collaboration or co-executing a work for third parties. It has also undertaken the execution of whole development, research and service projects for third parties. Indicatively, one may report that the University of Athens in the period **2008-2014** had been implementing projects:

- amounting to 125.000.000 € **within the Operational Programmes of the National Strategic Reference Framework (E.S.P.A)**
- amounting to 96.500.000 € under funding from the **European Commission**
- amounting to 63.500.000 € by self-funding from the **Special Account for Research.**
- amounting to 42.500.000 € funded by a **third** party, such as donations, financial aids, etc.
- amounting to 98.600.000 € for **the supply of services** in various sectors and institutions, particularly projects worth 2,000,000 € funded by the NSRF Operational Program, projects worth 921 500 € funded from the European Commission projects, worth 95.700.000 € funded by other entities.

Finally we mention that the NKUA has participated and implemented, under the Operational Programmes of the third CSF, 672 development projects with a total budget of 173,670,175.04 € in the period 2000-2008.

4.3.Laboratories of Departments and University Clinics

The University of Athens develops applied and basic research by the faculty members and associate researchers. This research activity is developed in many of the Departments of the NKUA and especially in laboratories, attached to almost all the Departments of the University. There are in all 169 laboratories that are used for educational and research purposes. Laboratories are typically smaller units of a Department, but, in essence, the most active ones and those which are the epicenters of growth for applied research.

A rich educational and research work is carried out at the clinics belonging to the NKUA. The 71 clinics operating belong organically to the Medical School (57), to the Department of Nursing (10) and to the Department of Dentistry (4). The Clinics of the Medical School and the Department of Nursing operate (or are foreseen to work) in hospitals of Athens (Attikon, Evangelismos, Hippokrateion, Laikon etc.), while the clinics of the Dental Department operate in the Department's premises.

5. Strategic Targets and Priorities

The specific targets of Departments are linked with and form part of the whole strategic quality improvement targets. They come forth through actions and activities that improve teaching, research, the administrative work of departments and faculties, develop innovation and extroversion, solve infrastructure issues, promote the interdisciplinary, interuniversity and transnational cooperation. These targets are connected with choices and decisions in the following areas of action:

- Reformation of the undergraduate curriculum.
- Solving problems related to the implementation of administrative work

- Reduction in the percentage of students who abandon their studies.
- Improving efficiency and performance of students participating in the University's programs.
- Production and higher impact of papers in international scientific journals.
- Strengthening of international cooperation programs which provide for the mobility of students and teaching staff.
- Foundation of new multidisciplinary or interinstitutional programs of postgraduate Studies.
- Development of synergies between Departments of Schools concerning undergraduate and postgraduate programs
- Solving problems of buildings and infrastructure
- Development of the international character of Schools and Departments
- Attracting high-level faculty members
- Adapting the curricula of all three levels of studies to the developments of science and society.
- Strengthening of partnerships with other institutions of high education in Greece and abroad, dissemination and enhancement of research projects and synergies as well as improvement of research production of international standards.
- Development of English language curricula and thus closer research cooperation with corresponding Departments abroad, thus attracting foreign students from European Union, USA, East Asia and the Near and Middle East.
- Intensified search for and use of alternative sources of financing (participation in international funded programs, BOT programmes, sponsorships / donations)
- Elaboration of further Lifelong Learning programs

- Measures to reduce pollutants and environmental burden caused by the University because of its operation.

It should be emphasized that a large part of the individual evaluators' comments refers to the reorganization of the curricula and their improvement in regard to the number and structure of courses, teaching methods and techniques, guidance and targeting, etc. Therefore, the main responsibility for undertaking changes on these points belongs to the competent organs of the Departments. The University's management is invested only with a supervisory and advisory role, mainly through the activity of the Quality Assurance Unit (MOΔIII/MODIP). The MODIP staff in cooperation with the corresponding units in the Departments (OMEA) prepare reports of relevant data for each Department which reflect the main points and proposals for improvements, departing from the findings of the external evaluators.

Every six months meetings are foreseen between the President of MO.DI.P and the OMEA of the Departments to determine the degree of implementation of the proposed changes. Of course, the implementation schedule largely depends on the type, depth and texture changes (of radical or improving character) and the level of resources required for their realization. It is not possible to give a precise timetable for each Department. It should, however, be mentioned that a reasonable deadline for the integration of changes is considered to be the date of the next internal evaluation process in each Department.

The administration of the University has been especially considering the recommendations of the external experts on questions which go beyond the administrative bodies of Departments, and touch on state policy and responsibility. These issues include:

- The underfunding of Departments and the University as a whole, which has a fundamental impact on the neglect of infrastructure, the non-renewal of equipment, and generally the lower quality of service.

- The understaffing of the University concerning faculty members (no new positions granted; inability to fill vacant places after retirements).
- The number of admissions per year in the Departments of the NKUA, which grows disproportionately after various categories of special admissions and transfers being imposed by the state, despite the University's repeated protests.

The administration of the University works with all means at its disposal to solve these problems seeking the cooperation of responsible state officials. However, the stifling context in which the Greek economy has been caught for a series of years by now would not allow any precise timetable for resolving these problems to look realistic.-