

Response of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA) to the Draft of the External Evaluation Committee (EEC)'s Report submitted to ADIP and communicated to NKUA (November 2015).

The NKUA wishes first to express its sincere thanks to the EEC, both as a team and as individual members, for the real interest, the understanding and the diligence with which they have carried out their task of assessing the various parts and aspects of our institution's present state, structure and work. We have especially appreciated that they insisted on fulfilling this task under partly difficult conditions and with a really cooperative and constructive spirit in their contacts with all groups involved in the process of the evaluation.

We accept and thank for the final conclusions of their report properly recognizing our University's struggle to preserve and promote its positive sides, which have also been recently appreciated in various international ranking systems (<http://www.usnews.com/education/best-global-universities/rankings?page30>). We also honestly intend to utilize the EEC's valuable recommendations for improvements on various points, concerning both strategic choices and methods of implementation, as far as our means and practical possibilities go.

However, there are a number of points where we would like to add some information and comments on specific views contained in the EEC's report with the request that they may be considered in the final edition of the report. These points are:

- 1. Part 3.1.3, "Academic Development Strategy" (p. 11)**

Concerning the Academic Development Strategy, we would like to underline the following points:

- a) For the Academic Development Strategy of each one of the Departments (33) of NKUA, please see the site: modip.uoa.gr, where all departmental strategies were made public, as well as the respective external evaluations committees. All this effort for improvements, utilizing the comments of all special external evaluations of specific departments, is closely coordinated by MODIP.
- b) For the central academic development strategy, we would like to briefly note some key aims as they were orally explained by the University authorities.
 - Systematic efforts have been undertaken to cut down the main expenses of the University, as its funding by the Greek state has been limited to 10 million euros (36 million in 2010!).
 - A better administration of the University's 102 endowments has been organized.
 - An improvement of the research indicators through more funds from the European Union and its programmes is also aimed at.
 - A new programme of linking graduates further with their University has been launched.
 - A policy of improvement of services offered (e.g. special sites) to foreign students and teaching staff is pursued.
 - Recruiting more specialized administrative staff belongs to the University's strategy.

2. 3.1.5 "Financial Strategy" (p. 13)

The EEC's report deserves our thanks especially concerning their remarks on our efforts to face the problems caused by our country's present financial

situation. At the same time, we should note the main lines of financial strategy of NKUA, which are:

- An asset liability management
- A development strategy, in close collaboration with ministries and stakeholders to attract more funds.

One should not lose sight of the very respectable international position of our University despite its extreme underfunding.

3. Part 3.1.6, 'Building and Grounds Infrastructure Strategy' (p. 14)

Admittedly, the self-evaluation report is poor in information concerning our relevant strategy. However, in the oral presentations to the EEC by the Rector and the Vice-Rectors important and recent information on this issue was added. One aspect concerns reducing the budget for rents, and thus providing resources for upgrading buildings infrastructure. The University has already begun since the beginnings of this year the realization of a big plan of transferring many of its teaching and administrative activities from hired buildings, apartments etc. to self-owned premises in various places in Athens. As specific examples of this process we may mention the already achieved removal of two important administrative units (Unit of Education, Unit of Publications) to rooms of the Central Administration Building (at Chr. Lada street) and the similar relocation of some facilities of the Department of Media and Communication to other central and also self-owned buildings of the University. In both these and several other cases this meant a serious economic and organizational gain for the NKUA as considerable rent obligations and the local separation of its facilities have been now avoided.

At the same time, a systematic plan of coordinating university hospitals in the central parts of Athens (from the University hospitals Aiginiteion and Aretaieion in Ilissia until the area of the Laikon Hospital and the Department

of Dentistry in Goudi) has been prepared and its realization will be negotiated with the responsible ministries of the state. This project promises numerous benefits in regard to student access and quality of life as well as patient management between different medical University Units. The project is not going to burden the University budget as we have planned to realize it on self-funded basis.

In any case, important elements of a 'Building and Grounds Infrastructure Strategy' have been already conceived and are either in a state of gradual realization or in a phase of preparation of their acceptance by jointly responsible departments of the Greek state. An important contribution to this effort and strategy is performed and expected from the University's "Technical Services Department" (TYPA) which conscientiously copes with the control of a huge area and sees its work handicapped by the severe cuts in the "programme of public investments"

It is worth-reconsidering whether all this actually corresponds to the statement 'negative evaluation'.

4. 3.2.3, 'Programmes of Doctoral Studies' (p. 23)

To a large extent specific conditions and criteria as those suggested in the EEC's report already apply to the management of doctoral studies at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. These include: limits on the number of doctoral students per faculty member, delegation of specific academic duties to doctoral students etc. On the other hand, 'support systems' as those envisaged in the report definitely collide with the general and well-known financial problems of the present Greek state, which greatly affect the University.

5. 4.5, 'Quality Assurance as regards the teaching staff' (p. 29)

The evaluation process of the teaching-research staff in NKUA includes:

- Self -Assessment of the scientific/scholarly and pedagogical abilities and activities of teachers- researchers on departmental basis.
- An assessment of the quality of educational activities by students, informing teachers of the views of students in regard to the quality of their educational activities.

Based on the above information, teaching staff receives feedback and make improvements for the benefit of students

On the other hand, one should note that the present legal framework does not prescribe a closer connection between the evaluation of teaching staff by the students with academic promotion, nor penalties for members of teaching staff with repeated low evaluation of their teaching activity by the students.

6. 4.7, 'Information Systems for Recording and Analysing Data and Indicators' (p. 31)

The Documentation Department (a part of the Directorate of Planning and Programming of the University) has the responsibility for the collection, collation and analysis of statistical data on students, all categories of staff, financial figures, the equipment and the Institution`s research programs. This systematic data collection performed in collaboration with the relevant departments and administrative services of the University does establish and update also these data bases, which have built the foundation for the Internal Evaluation`s Report series of Tables.

7. 4.8, “Dissemination of information to stakeholders” (p. 32)

One should note here that there do exist parallel study guidebooks in English in most Departments, while information on all activities (congresses, open seminars, lectures, ceremonies etc.) of the University are systematically announced in its website, and also forwarded to the printed and electronic mass media.

8. 4.10, ‘Periodic External Evaluation’ (p. 34)

In the first version of the Self-Evaluation Report, which was submitted to ADIP on 5/12/2014, we had provided proposals by our institution on how to deal with observations to be made by the EEC. However, on 11 March 2015 we received from ADIP instructions which had to be followed so that our self-evaluation report fully complied with the standards foreseen. Specifically, in regard to Chapter 10 (Periodic External Evaluation), where the NKUA’s Internal System of Quality Assurance had been presented, the following was remarked:

“Το Ίδρυμα δεν έχει υποβληθεί ακόμα σε περιοδική (ιδρυματική) εξωτερική αξιολόγηση. Οπότε δεν θα έπρεπε να δοθούν απαντήσεις για αυτά τα πεδία”.

Thus, in compliance with this specific comment of ADIP, our proposals for the utilization of the findings of EEC had to be removed from the final version of our self-evaluation report.

9. 5.1, ‘Central Administration Services of the Institution (p. 36)

One should consider that the Institutional framework of Quality Assurance in Higher Education had not prescribed in depth analysis and

evaluation of Administrative Services and their individual departments. The criteria set out by ADIP mainly refer to academic and research work of the University and to the procedures followed for the quality assurance of Undergraduate, Postgraduate and Doctoral Studies.

We propose then that the phrase: *“The self –evaluation report is relatively weak and there is not enough depth for the EEC to conduct a thorough review of these departments”* be appropriately nuanced in the final report.

In the case of library services the Rectorate has already appointed a central coordinator of libraries, which ensures a faster solution of problems and a better allocation of human and material resources.

We sincerely hope that these remarks and additional data may help the EEC reconsider its statements on the points mentioned above so that a completely fair final edition of the report will be elaborated. We also appreciate and thank for this additional work in advance.

M.-A. Dimopoulos

Rector of the NKUA