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H.Q.A.A.
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ASSURANCE AGENCY
FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

FACULTY OF ENGLISH STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS

March 2011

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External Evaluation Committee

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the Faculty of English Studies of the University of Athens consisted of the following five (5) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by the HQAA in accordance with Law 3374/2005 :

1. Professor Dimitris Tziovas (President)
(Title) (Name and Surname)

University of Birmingham

2. Professor Stratos E. Constantinidis
(Title) (Name and Surname)

The Ohio State University

3. Professor Andreas Papapavlou
(Title) (Name and Surname)

University of Cyprus

4. Emeritus Professor Irene Philippaki-Warburton
(Title) (Name and Surname)

University of Reading

5. Professor Lia Litosseliti
(Title) (Name and Surname)

City University London

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

- *Dates and brief account of the site visit:* The External Evaluation Committee visited the Faculty of English Studies at the University of Athens on February 21 and 22, 2011 from 9:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. on both days.
- *Who did the Committee meet?* The Committee met with the Rector, Vice Rector, the Dean, the faculty, administrative staff, students and alumni of the Faculty of English Studies at the University of Athens.
- *List of Reports, documents, other data examined by the Committee:* a) The Internal Evaluation Report for 2004-2008, b) The List of Faculty Publications—both books and articles in peer reviewed journals, c) The Study Guide 2010-2011, d) The Information Leaflets for both undergraduate and graduate programs, and e) various other materials regarding Faculty activities since the inception of the Faculty.
- *Groups of teaching and administrative staff and students interviewed:* The Committee interviewed the Internal Evaluation Committee (9 members), the teaching staff of the Faculty of English Studies (26 members), the representatives of the undergraduate, M.A., and Ph.D. students (28 in all), alumni of the department (5 members), the Rector, the Vice-rector, the Dean, the faculty administrative staff (6), the library staff (3) and the department secretaries (2).
- *Facilities visited by the External Evaluation Committee:* The main building in which the Faculty of English Studies is housed, the administrative offices, the library, the Research Centre for the English Language Teaching and Assessment, the Multi-media Centre, the Self-Access Learning Centre, and the faculty offices.

II. The Internal Evaluation Procedure

Please comment on:

- *Appropriateness of sources and documentation used:* The data provided

to the Committee were entirely appropriate. All supplementary information requested by the Committee was promptly provided by the Faculty of English Studies. The materials were of the highest quality, detailing the history and activities of the two departments.

- *Quality and completeness of evidence reviewed and provided:* They were both excellent.
- *To what extent have the objectives of the internal evaluation process been met by the Faculty of English Studies?* They were met to a great extent. The members of the External Review Committee recognize and appreciate the careful thought and hard work that went into preparations for their visit and are grateful for the helpfulness and hospitality shown us by administrators, faculty, staff, and students. Strong attendance and lively participation at the meetings for each constituent group spoke well of both departments' investment in the review process and allowed for maximum input. We learned a great deal about the large and complex Faculty of English Studies and the justifiable pride its members take in its achievements.

A. Curriculum

APPROACH

- *What are the goals of the Curriculum? What is the plan for achieving them?*
The goals of the undergraduate and graduate curriculum are to provide students with the knowledge in the field and skills necessary to pursue further studies and become employable in the Greek, EU, and other international markets.
- *How were the objectives decided? Were they set against appropriate standards? Did the unit consult other stakeholders?* The Faculty of English Studies followed the tradition but adapted its objectives to the availability of faculty in terms of research fields and resources available at the time. The faculty aimed at achieving international standards in terms of updating courses and pursuing current research developments. They also took into account recent trends in the teaching of English as a foreign language in Greece and elsewhere.
- *Is the curriculum consistent with the objectives, needs, and requirements of society?* Yes, it is to a great extent.
- *Has the unit set a procedure for the revision of the curriculum?* Yes, and it has been revised periodically.

IMPLEMENTATION

- *How effectively is the Faculty of English Studies' goal implemented by the curriculum?* It was implemented effectively during the 2004-2008 period.
- *How does the curriculum compare with appropriate, generally accepted standards for the specific area of study?* The curriculum compares very favourably with international standards and prepares students to be sensitive to issues of good citizenship. The Committee was particularly impressed with the quality of the interviewed students (at both undergraduate and graduate levels) that the Faculty of English Studies has produced. The practical training in teaching English as a foreign language through school visits is useful and should be continued. All obstacles should be removed to facilitate this process.
- *Is the structure of the curriculum rational and clearly articulated?* Yes.
- *Is the curriculum coherent and functional?* Yes.
- *Does the Faculty of English Studies have the necessary resources and appropriately qualified and trained faculty to implement the curriculum?* The Faculty of English Studies is appropriately trained and qualified to implement the curriculum, but they are constrained by the resources made available to them through the Ministry of Education. Some of the administrative staff need further specialized information technology training.

RESULTS

- *How well is the implementation achieving the predefined goals and objectives of the Faculty of English Studies?* The faculty is making every effort to implement the predefined aims, and their resourcefulness is exceptional, but the faculty/student ratio is obstructive, causing many problems. According to the internal evaluation report, 31 faculty members address the needs of about 4,000 students annually—although the numbers of active students vary from year to year and cannot be verified.
- *Does the Faculty of English Studies understand why and how it achieved or failed to achieve these results?* Yes. At the same time, the Faculty of English Studies is painfully aware of the constraints placed upon them by the student/faculty ratio and the poor English of a considerable number of students who are admitted to the program through the National Entry Exams process.

IMPROVEMENT

- *Does the Faculty of English Studies know how the curriculum should be improved?* Yes, they do, and they have made two good suggestions to improve the curriculum and the management of the curriculum: a) the appointment of new faculty should be expedited (e.g., 2 of the new faculty members that the Committee met, were appointed after a 19 month wait); b) the textbook purchases should be managed in a way that textbooks are made

available to students at the beginning of each semester.

- *Which improvements does the Faculty of English Studies plan to introduce?*
The Faculty of English Studies would like to introduce the following improvements, pending the appropriate funding: a) to improve and maintain the technology information facilities in their laboratories; and b) to make full use of and expand the e-learning facilities as they become available.

B. Teaching

APPROACH:

Does the Faculty of English Studies have a defined pedagogic policy with regard to teaching approach and methodology? Yes. They use methods appropriate for each module that they are teaching, developing discipline specific and transferable skills. They take the size of each class into consideration when deciding the appropriate method of teaching (lecture, seminar, e-learning options). The students interviewed were quite happy with the methods of instruction which included faculty feedback to their written work. The rapport between students and faculty was very satisfactory to the extent that the Committee was able to determine. It is expected that the assignment of an e-mail address to each undergraduate student will facilitate the learning process. The large number of examinations that need to be corrected and graded at the end of each semester delays the announcement of the results and student registration for the following semester. In addition, student unrest and sit ins (katalipseis) in university buildings disrupt the daily teaching schedule. The Committee suggests that semesters should not be extended to compensate for such disruptions, and that the university administration should urgently address this problem in consultation with the Faculty of English Studies. The Committee also recommends that each lecture room should be equipped with permanent power-point facilities, and audio-visual equipment (including a permanent ceiling projector) for the screening of films on DVDs.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Committee cannot comment on the quality of teaching and teaching procedures because it was unable to observe the classroom teaching of the Faculty of English Studies. The Committee's visit took place during the exams week and no classes were held. However, the Committee was able to review some of the exam scripts and course syllabi, as well as teaching training materials (e.g., DVDs and "Using the Internet for Self Study") and e-class module descriptions. Teaching was linked to faculty research interests and expertise. The course materials were up to date and of very high quality. There is some evidence that the students of the Faculty of English

Studies were involved in exchange programs. According to the Internal Evaluation Document, in just one year (2007-2008), a total of 22 students from the Faculty of English Studies went to various institutions in Europe, while 10 foreign students came to the Faculty of English Studies at the University of Athens. For example, the Committee had the opportunity to interview a visiting Ph.D. student from the University of Bucharest in Romania. The Committee read some of the student evaluations of faculty teaching. It was pointed out by the Faculty of English Studies that these evaluations might not be a representative sample of undergraduate student opinion about the course content and/or the instructor, mainly because of problems endemic in the evaluation process. The Committee recommends that the Faculty of English Studies should look into this issue in order to establish a more rigorous and reliable process for the evaluation of faculty teaching by the undergraduate and graduate students.

RESULTS

The Committee did not have the opportunity to observe the classroom teaching of the Faculty of English Studies.

The Committee was able to observe that the department of language and linguistics is currently attracting research funding in two areas: a) the National Examination System for Foreign Language Proficiency; and b) the National Language Education Policy and the Introduction of English to Very Young Learners. Five other projects were funded by European and national resources during the period 2004-2008. Given the fact that about 1/3 (5 out of 15) of the faculty members in the department are engaged in some way or another with the teaching of English as a foreign language, the creation of a Center for the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language within the department could help strengthen research activities and raise the visibility of the existing faculty members. The Committee feels that the Faculty of English Studies should consider having a discussion about this matter as part of their future research and teaching strategy.

The Faculty of English Studies understands the problems with degree completion and graduation rates. It attributes the student failure to graduate on time to the great number of poorly qualified students on entry to the university. The Faculty of English Studies is willing and ready to address this problem provided that the national policy on this matter changes in order to accommodate their concerns.

IMPROVEMENT

Has the Faculty of English Studies proposed any methods and ways for improvement? Yes, the Faculty of English Studies has proposed several methods and ways for improvement in their Internal Evaluation Report. The Committee agrees with their suggestions and would like to emphasize here that a course

structure based on pre-requisites should be implemented as soon as possible. For the time being, the students are admitted to the university on the basis of the National Exam Process. Their English proficiency varies. On entrance, increased attention should be given to the diagnostic tests used to identify: a) those who are proficient enough to follow courses taught entirely in English; and b) those that are in need of remedial English. Such increased attention, in the short term, would entail monitoring the progress of and supporting those students in the second group above, particularly given the absence (at the time of the external evaluation site visit) of teaching assistants who could help with this task. In the longer term, a diagnostic/ placement test and evaluation of the results entails the establishment of a Testing Unit. The establishment of the Testing Unit should be funded and staffed by the Ministry of Education, and be managed in consultation with the Faculty of English Studies. This suggestion could be helpful to the anticipated changes that are expected to take place in the near future regarding the admittance of students to the university.

C. Research

APPROACH

- *What is the policy and main objective of the Faculty of English Studies in research?* The Faculty of English Studies supports and promotes research into two areas a) English Language and Linguistics, including pedagogy/teaching and learning; and b) the literature and culture of English-speaking people (primarily British, Canadian, and American).
- *Has the Faculty of English Studies set internal standards for assessing research?* No, it has not, because reportedly there is no funding, incentives, or infrastructure for research development in the School of Philosophy. The only time that any standard is applied pertains to the assessment of research outputs which are directly linked to matters of promotion (from lecturer to assistant, from assistant to associate and from associate to full professor), and that should not be the only case. This situation increases the uncertainty and anxiety levels of the candidates, especially at the junior level.

IMPLEMENTATION

- *How does the Faculty of English Studies promote and support research?* The Faculty of English Studies promotes and supports research through research leaves (sabbaticals), some travel funds for conference presentations, enriching the library holdings, the organization of conferences and colloquia on campus, occasional guest speakers, and collaborative research.
- The quality and adequacy of research infrastructure and support is a matter of

concern for several members in the Faculty of English Studies. The primary concern that was voiced, was the limited funding for presenting papers at conferences, paying registration fees, etc. A second concern voiced by junior faculty was the absence of formal faculty mentoring outside collaborative projects. A third concern had to do with the absence of research incentives outside promotion.

- It would have been advantageous if more faculty members had secured EU or other funding for their projects. A research development office assisting faculty members to identify and apply for EU and other funds would be desirable.
- The number of scholarly publications of the Faculty of English Studies compares favorably with comparable faculty publications in the EU and other countries. However, there are some significant discrepancies in the research output among the members of the Faculty of English Studies at the University of Athens. The Committee recommends that the University of Athens should reward those faculty members who are research active, with additional travel funds, teaching relief, research leaves, and acknowledgement during the promotion process. The Committee also feels that an annual activity report should be submitted by each faculty member, and the report should be appraised with mutually agreed criteria.
- *Research projects:* The Faculty of English Studies is currently working on two research projects on a nation-wide scale: a) The National Examination System for Foreign Language Proficiency, and b) the National Language Education Policy and the Introduction of English to Very Young Learners. The Committee met with the coordinator of the two projects and the research collaborators and assistants. They demonstrated the efficiency and capacity of their projects, and they answered all of the Committee's questions in a knowledgeable manner.
- *Research collaborations:* The Faculty of English Studies is engaged in two types of research collaborations: a) Collaboration within the Faculty, leading to joint publications; and b) Collaboration between the faculty and faculty in other departments and universities.

RESULTS

How successfully were the research objectives of the Faculty of English Studies implemented? They were implemented through 1) an adequate number of scholarly books published by reputable publishing houses; 2) a significant number of research papers published in refereed journals; 3) a sizeable number of papers published in conference proceedings and periodicals; 4) several on-going research projects—two of them of great magnitude; and 5) various other research collaborations. The Faculty of English Studies has been visible primarily in Greece. However, some of their publications are also visible abroad. Moreover,

the Faculty of English Studies was awarded a European award for innovative programs of teaching and learning foreign languages.

IMPROVEMENT

- The Faculty of English Studies proposed and established the position of “guest researcher”, but the Committee could not find any record that this position has been filled during the 2004-2008 period.
- The anticipated devolution from the central administration to the Faculty of English Studies, if successful, will improve the flexibility in allocating funds for research (e.g., allowing the appropriate allocation of funds for the presentation of papers in conferences).

D. All Other Services

APPROACH

- *How does the Faculty of English Studies view the various services provided to the members of the academic community (teaching staff, students)?* To begin with, the renewal of subscription to on-line journals is erratic, affecting negatively the teaching and research of faculty and students. In addition, the ordering and distribution of textbooks to students is neither cost-effective nor efficient as far as the Committee could ascertain.
- *Does the Faculty of English Studies have a policy to simplify administrative procedures?* The university does not have a policy to simplify administrative procedures (except for the anticipated decentralization of some of the funding); therefore neither does the department for the time being. However, the use of electronic portals for staff and students will help alleviate the administrative burden.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Regarding the organization and infrastructure of the Faculty of English Studies, it has adequate secretarial support, but there is no clear policy for training the administrative staff. The secretaries of the two departments have clear job descriptions.
- The library facilities of the Faculty of English Studies provide an adequate infrastructure for the students, and it is staffed by professional librarians. However, there is a need for maintaining standards in view of the fact that the library will be moved to new premises in the coming year.
- All of the PCs should be upgraded.
- The provision of undergraduate counseling ought to increase student involvement in their studies, and the timely completion of their degree

requirements.

- There is also a need for a common room for both postgraduate students and faculty.

RESULTS

- *Are administrative and other services adequate and functional?* Yes. For details and qualifications, see earlier comments.

IMPROVEMENTS

- *Has the Faculty of English Studies identified ways and methods to improve the services provided?* Yes. However, several of the problems that the Committee has identified stem from the over-centralized structure of the university and the Ministry of Education. These problems could be solved by effective decentralization with greater faculty input in the decision-making process.

Collaboration with social, cultural and production organizations

The Faculty of English Studies is well connected with institutions such as the British Council, the Fulbright Commission, and associations such as the European Association of American Studies and the European Association for the Study of English, the state and private schools, publishing houses in Greece, etc. They maintain the quality of the annual functions of the two departments and make their presence felt in the community at large. The significance of this type of initiatives cannot be overstated.

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

In suggesting ways to make an already strong faculty stronger, the members of the External Evaluation Committee recognize that their own understanding of the Faculty of English Studies and the University of Athens is necessarily restricted. In pointing out certain overarching issues and concerns, the Committee acknowledges that some of these issues are common to Faculties of English Studies across the country.

The culture of the Faculty of English Studies seems healthy and supportive. Faculty members meet regularly and talk frequently in their interest groups and departments, and as Faculty of English Studies.

Both undergraduate and graduate students speak highly of the courses that they have taken and the faculty who have taught them. They especially praised the generosity of faculty members in working with them individually.

The Faculty of English Studies has done the tough work of setting its priorities, building to its strengths in areas such as linguistics, the teaching of English as a foreign language, translation, literature, drama, critical theory and cultural studies, as well as developing interesting initiatives such as Creative Writing. The Committee also identified another interesting trend that is in the process of being developed in the Faculty of English Studies, the aim of which is to disseminate Greek literature and culture through comparative studies (Greek-English) and translations of Greek works into English.

The current emphasis on language, translation, and literature has cross-disciplinary potential. And therefore the Faculty of English Studies is in a strong position to build on 1) developing modules with interdisciplinary perspectives, and 2) pursuing interdisciplinary research.

The External Evaluation Committee was extremely pleased with the planning and coordination of their visit, and appreciated the hard work, leadership, and resourcefulness of the Internal Evaluation Committee, the Chair of the Faculty of English Studies, as well as the other faculty who participated in the external evaluation process.

Some members of the faculty argued that the Greek component in the degree program should be retained, but other members suggested that the Greek component presented an obstacle in recruiting foreign students. The Greek language requirement in particular prevents the recruitment of international faculty. In case the Greek component of the program is retained, the faculty should explore the possibility of additional major/minor combinations, involving other modern languages.

F. Final Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC

1) A strategic plan should identify how the areas of excellence connect with other areas in the Faculty of English Studies and other areas within the University of Athens. The Faculty of English Studies has the capacity to develop new M.A. programs in collaboration with other faculties of the School of Philosophy (e.g., pathways in Linguistics such as Discourse Studies, an M.A. in Comparative Literature, an M.A. in Translation, an M.A. in Drama, and an M.A. in Creative Writing in collaboration with other university departments and state-run organizations such as the National Book Centre of Greece). The establishment of a centre for American and Canadian Studies within the Faculty of English Studies

could further increase the visibility of those faculty members who are teaching and researching in those areas.

2) The Faculty of English Studies should consider examining which of the subject areas (including new areas) best contribute to enhance the employability of graduates, increase grant development resources, increase scholarly productivity by faculty and graduate students, improve the recruitment of better students, and attract more exchange students.

3) The Committee recommends that a way should be found to improve the students' proficiency in English. There are several ways to implement this. For example, continue to a) raise the requirements of the entrance examination in terms of proficiency in English; and b) give much more weight (percentage) to the English component of the entrance examination. The Committee understands the difficulty in implementing any of the above, and does not favour any particular way.

4) The Committee recommends that the Faculty of English Studies considers the implementation of a number of quality assurance procedures for a trial period of three years:

I) Faculty development:

a) annual internal faculty appraisal (where faculty appraise each other and junior faculty are supported in their research and teaching endeavours).

b) annual teaching peer observation.

c) the introduction of a mentoring system for junior faculty.

II) Teaching:

a) The introduction of pre-requisites to allow the progressive structure of the degree program.

b) The addition of learning outcomes for each undergraduate and graduate module.

III) Examination process:

a) the appointment of external examiners to sample and review part of module assessments and structures for the graduate programs.

b) the introduction of marking criteria for undergraduate and graduate programs

c) the extension of double marking to all graduate courses.

d) the word limit for the M.A. thesis should be around 20,000 words.

IV) Administration:

- a) The introduction of a 3-year rotation of administrative responsibilities within the Faculty of English Studies with clear definition of each role.
- b) The establishment of two committees: an undergraduate studies committee, in addition to the already existing graduate studies committee, to run and review their respective programs, and make recommendations for the future.
- c) The decentralization of decision-making so as to allow the Faculty of English Studies to have control over finances, recruitment, admissions, program planning, and textbook ordering, among other things.
- d) Provisions should be made to increase the security of classrooms and offices so as to prevent theft and vandalism.
- e) Drinkable water should be made available to all faculty and students on each floor of the main building.
- f) The introduction of on-line application for graduate studies.

5) It seems that about five faculty members will be retiring sometime during the next few years. It is the recommendation of the External Evaluation Committee that an effort continues to be made to consider advertising new faculty positions after a thorough examination of the areas that need to be introduced or expanded, rather than simply replacing the vacated positions. The University of Athens might consider the set up of an international advisory board to assist the faculty in identifying new directions and developments in the area of English Studies.

6) Several faculty and staff members have raised the issue of accountability within the university administrative structure. The Committee noted this fact, and would like to suggest that an effort should be made, in the first instance, to formulate clearer responsibilities for all administrative positions. In addition, the Committee should emphasize that Rectors continue to carry the responsibility of presenting the views of all the Faculties to the Ministry of Education and ensuring that their recommendations are followed up.

7) A second step should be added to the internal evaluation process. During this second step the university authorities at the level of Dean and/or Rector should respond to the internal evaluation of the Faculty of English Studies by assessing accomplishments, needs, and shortcomings, and by providing factual information about all aspects, including the distribution of the budget to the departments. Then both evaluations should be sent to HQAA. The External Evaluation Committee should receive both reports prior to its on-site visit in order to be able to make more reliable and informed suggestions.

The Members of the Committee

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