



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
HELLENIC REPUBLIC



**Εθνική Αρχή
Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης**
Hellenic Authority
for Higher Education

Αριστείδου 1 & Ευριπίδου 2 • 10559 Αθήνα | 1 Aristidou str. & 2 Evripidou str. • 10559 Athens, Greece
T. +30 210 9220 944 • **F.** +30 210 9220 143 • **E.** secretariat@ethaae.gr • www.ethaae.gr

Accreditation Report
for the Undergraduate Study Programme of:
Communication and Media Studies
Institution: National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
Date: 10 April 2021



Επιχειρησιακό Πρόγραμμα
Ανάπτυξη Ανθρώπινου Δυναμικού,
Εκπαίδευση και Διά Βίου Μάθηση
Με τη συγχρηματοδότηση της Ελλάδας και της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης



Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the Undergraduate Study Programme of **Communication and Media Studies** of the **National and Kapodistrian University of Athens** for the purposes of granting accreditation

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part A: Background and Context of the Review	4
I. The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel.....	4
II. Review Procedure and Documentation	5
III. Study Programme Profile	7
Part B: Compliance with the Principles	8
Principle 1: Academic Unit Policy for Quality Assurance.....	8
Principle 2: Design and Approval of Programmes	10
Principle 3: Student- centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment.....	12
Principle 4: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification	15
Principle 5: Teaching Staff	17
Principle 6: Learning Resources and Student Support	19
Principle 7: Information Management	21
Principle 8: Public Information	223
Principle 9: On-going Monitoring and Periodic Internal Review of Programmes	25
Principle 10: Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programmes.....	27
Part C: Conclusions	29
I. Features of Good Practice	29
II. Areas of Weakness	29
III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions	29
IV. Summary & Overall Assessment	30

PART A: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE REVIEW

I. The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

The Panel responsible for the Accreditation Review of the Undergraduate Study Programme of **Communication and Media Studies** of the **National and Kapodistrian University of Athens** comprised the following three (3) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

- 1. Professor Emeritus Joseph Joseph, Chair**
University of Cyprus, Cyprus
- 2. Professor Alexander Kitroeff**
Haverford College, USA
- 3. Associate Professor Paschalis Paschali**
University of Nicosia, Cyprus

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

In reviewing the Undergraduate Study Programme of Communication and Media Studies of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (hereafter the “Programme”), the objectives of the Panel, as described in the Guidelines for the Members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel (EEAP), are:

- to establish whether the data provided from the various resources is consistent among one another and reflect the actual situation
- identify strengths and areas of weakness
- engage in a constructive dialogue with the Institution, leading to reflection and continuous enhancement of the study programme

Following a well-prepared schedule provided by HAHE, the Panel held several separate interactive virtual (by electronic means) meetings and visits for two days as follows:

On April 7, 2021, the following virtual meetings took place:

- with the Vice Rector/President of MODIP and the Head of the Department
- with members of OMEA and MODIP
- with teaching staff of all ranks
- with undergraduate students

On April 7, 2021, the following virtual meetings took place:

- meeting with administrative staff
- on-line tour of facilities; including classrooms, lecture halls, laboratories, offices, learning resources, equipment etc.
- meeting with graduates of the Department who have completed the Programme
- meeting with employers and social partners and external stakeholders of the private and the public sector
- meeting with members and staff of OMEA and MODIP
- meeting with the President of MODIP and the Head of the Department, plus members and staff of OMEA and MODIP.

During the above virtual meetings, the Panel had the opportunity to meet, talk, and interact with all the participants of all meetings. The discussions were very constructive and fruitful and were conducted in a cooperative manner and attitude. During the last meeting, the Panel made an informal presentation of some initial key findings.

The internal evaluation report of the of the Department and other extensive material were made available to the Panel electronically well in advance through HAHE. More information was made available during the meetings. The Department worked diligently in preparing the internal evaluation report and other relevant materials, as well as in organizing and hosting the virtual meetings. All the meetings included presentations, discussions, and question and answer sessions.

It is the feeling of the Panel that the Department has performed an excellent job throughout the internal evaluation process and the objectives of the process have been fully met. The efficiency and eagerness of the Department to answer questions and provide additional information and clarifications during the meetings are worth noting. The Panel wishes to express its thanks and

appreciation to the Department and the University administration for their co-operation and professionalism.

It is worth pointing out that students were especially encouraged to talk freely about their overall learning experience. They welcomed the opportunity to talk to the Panel and to voice their views.

This Report is based on information collected and views expressed during the virtual meetings as well as on information contained in the internal evaluation report and other documents submitted before and during the virtual meetings.

III. Study Programme Profile

The Department was established about 30 years ago and the University is the oldest and largest institution of higher learning in the country. The primary mission of the Department is to meet the needs of teaching and research in the areas of communication and media studies.

The Undergraduate Programme of Communication and Media Studies is a four-year programme, requiring 240 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System), leading to the award a bachelor's degree. It has been revised and improved over time.

The objectives of the Programme are comparable to those offered by other institutions around Europe. The Programme has an interdisciplinary nature and combines theory and practice within a coherent structure. Its content is balanced and appropriately designed to meet international standards and the needs and challenges of a modern society.

The structure of the Programme and the courses offered are consistent with the Department's overall objectives, and include required and elective courses, seminars, practical training, and term papers.

The Department has twenty-one permanent faculty members (DEP). They are all active in diverse fields, such as cultural studies, political science, sociology, law, history, psychology, history of art, linguistics, Modern Greek studies, new technologies and their applications, journalism, advertising, public relations, theory, and practice of mass media. Teaching staff also include about the same number of active researchers who are employed as EEP, EDIP and ETEP.

The total number of active students (all years of study) enrolled in the Programme is approximately 1300. The number of graduates varies every year, but the average number during the last few years is just over 100.

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

Principle 1: Academic Unit Policy for Quality Assurance

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD APPLY A QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY AS PART OF THEIR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT. THIS POLICY SHOULD EXPAND AND BE AIMED (WITH THE COLLABORATION OF EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS) AT ALL INSTITUTION'S AREAS OF ACTIVITY, AND PARTICULARLY AT THE FULFILMENT OF QUALITY REQUIREMENTS OF UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES. THIS POLICY SHOULD BE PUBLISHED AND IMPLEMENTED BY ALL STAKEHOLDERS.

The quality assurance policy of the academic unit is in line with the Institutional policy on quality, and is included in a published statement that is implemented by all stakeholders. It focuses on the achievement of special objectives related to the quality assurance of study programmes offered by the academic unit.

The quality policy statement of the academic unit includes its commitment to implement a quality policy that will promote the academic profile and orientation of the programme, its purpose and field of study; it will realise the programme's strategic goals and it will determine the means and ways for attaining them; it will implement the appropriate quality procedures, aiming at the programme's continuous improvement.

In particular, in order to carry out this policy, the academic unit commits itself to put into practice quality procedures that will demonstrate:

- a) the suitability of the structure and organization of the curriculum;*
- b) the pursuit of learning outcomes and qualifications in accordance with the European and the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education;*
- c) the promotion of the quality and effectiveness of teaching;*
- d) the appropriateness of the qualifications of the teaching staff;*
- e) the enhancement of the quality and quantity of the research output among faculty members of the academic unit;*
- f) ways for linking teaching and research;*
- g) the level of demand for qualifications acquired by graduates, in the labour market;*
- h) the quality of support services such as the administrative services, the Library, and the student welfare office;*
- i) the conduct of an annual review and an internal audit of the quality assurance system of the undergraduate programme(s) offered, as well as the collaboration of the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) with the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU).*

Study Programme Compliance

The National and Kapodistrian University of Athens offers a 4-year, 8-semester, (240 ECTS) undergraduate programme in Communication and Media Studies and comprises 25 compulsory courses (5 ECTS each), 6 compulsory electives (4 ECTS each), 5 seminars (6 ECTS), 8 electives, 1 free elective, the final project seminar (5 ECTS) and the final project (20 ECTS). The addition of the multidisciplinary seminars of mostly practical nature to the curriculum, which is a subsequent change following the recommendations of the previous accreditation of the programme, clearly demonstrates the student-centric, interdisciplinary approach to education that the Department has adopted as well as their flexibility, ability, and willingness to make efficient changes to promote the quality and effectiveness of teaching.

The Panel's meetings with students and graduates of the Programme confirmed an overall satisfaction with their studies and professors which is also evident in the appropriateness of the qualifications of the academic staff who are commended academics and researchers with significant published work. Students confirmed that the faculty is approachable and always available and willing to assist them with their coursework and any other academic issues they might be facing. Students also commented on the extraordinary efforts their professors have recently made in order to cope with the restrictions and difficulties that the pandemic, and subsequently the online teaching has imposed. Furthermore, the graduates of the programme pointed out that their professors have also been helpful in assisting them to find their first jobs and make their first and very important career steps.

With regard to the qualifications of the graduates, the Programme's social partners confirmed that the Programme's students and graduates are of high educational level and for this reason they are very pleased with their ongoing collaborations and the job positions they have offered them throughout the years.

In conclusion, it is important to mention that the Department has established a well-defined quality assurance policy that is appropriate for the Programme's mission and activities. The implementation of the policy is carried out successfully by two committees, OMEA and MODIP, who confirmed that they work well together as there is a mutual respect and willingness by everyone to take on responsibilities.

Panel Judgement

Principle 1: Academic Unit Policy for Quality Assurance	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

None.

Principle 2: Design and Approval of Programmes

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD DEVELOP THEIR UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES FOLLOWING A DEFINED WRITTEN PROCESS WHICH WILL INVOLVE THE PARTICIPANTS, INFORMATION SOURCES AND THE APPROVAL COMMITTEES FOR THE PROGRAMME. THE OBJECTIVES, THE EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES, THE INTENDED PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND THE WAYS TO ACHIEVE THEM ARE SET OUT IN THE PROGRAMME DESIGN. THE ABOVE DETAILS AS WELL AS INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAMME'S STRUCTURE ARE PUBLISHED IN THE STUDENT GUIDE.

Academic units develop their programmes following a well-defined procedure. The academic profile and orientation of the programme, the objectives, the subject areas, the structure and organisation, the expected learning outcomes and the intended professional qualifications according to the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education are described at this stage. The approval or revision process for programmes includes a check of compliance with the basic requirements described in the Standards, on behalf of the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU).

Furthermore, the programme design should take into consideration the following:

- *the Institutional strategy*
- *the active participation of students*
- *the experience of external stakeholders from the labour market*
- *the smooth progression of students throughout the stages of the programme*
- *the anticipated student workload according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System*
- *the option to provide work experience to the students*
- *the linking of teaching and research*
- *the relevant regulatory framework and the official procedure for the approval of the programme by the Institution*

Study Programme Compliance

After reviewing the information provided, attending the presentation of the Quality Assurance Unit, and the discussion sessions with the faculty, students, alumni, and societal partners, it is the Panel's opinion that the Programme is largely successful in achieving a balance between increasingly differing requirements.

From our discussion with staff and students, it is evident that the design of the curriculum has undergone significant transformation and improvement since the last accreditation, adopting a number of multidisciplinary seminars of practical nature and orientation.

The links between the Department and public engagement is evident in the presentations we had with external stakeholders.

Opportunities for internships through the elective course "practical training", as well as for permanent employment, are provided through connections with the various communications and news agencies that the Department is affiliated with. In terms of research and teaching, academic staff members are active researchers and published authors whose research is directly related to their academic discipline, thus informing, and keeping their courses up to date.

Panel Judgement

Principle 2: Design and Approval of Programmes	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The Panel recommends considering the possibility of adding more seminars of practical nature to the curriculum in order to enhance students' abilities and to strengthen their hands-on skills.

As the traditional media, like newspapers and magazines are in crisis, the curriculum could be enhanced with contemporary subjects like podcasting, blogging, and photo and video journalism with the use of new means and technologies such as mobile devices.

These additions could help open a whole new horizon for the graduates and facilitate putting the valuable theoretical knowledge currently on offer into contemporary practice.

Principle 3: Student- centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES ARE DELIVERED IN A WAY THAT ENCOURAGES STUDENTS TO TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN CREATING THE LEARNING PROCESS. THE ASSESSMENT METHODS SHOULD REFLECT THIS APPROACH.

Student-centred learning and teaching plays an important role in stimulating students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in the learning process. The above entail continuous consideration of the programme's delivery and the assessment of the related outcomes.

The student-centred learning and teaching process

- *respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths;*
- *considers and uses different modes of delivery, where appropriate;*
- *flexibly uses a variety of pedagogical methods;*
- *regularly evaluates and adjusts the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods aiming at improvement;*
- *regularly evaluates the quality and effectiveness of teaching, as documented especially through student surveys;*
- *reinforces the student's sense of autonomy, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teaching staff;*
- *promotes mutual respect in the student - teacher relationship;*
- *applies appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints.*

In addition:

- *the academic staff are familiar with the existing examination system and methods and are supported in developing their own skills in this field;*
- *the assessment criteria and methods are published in advance;*
- *the assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary is linked to advice on the learning process;*
- *student assessment is conducted by more than one examiner, where possible;*
- *the regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances;*
- *assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures;*
- *a formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*

Study Programme Compliance

The Department addresses the diversity and needs of its undergraduate students by offering a programme that is structured around two main axes, the theoretical and practical, composed of a combination of required and elective courses. The Department stresses its commitment to student-oriented education, student autonomy and choice. The number of elective courses has been increased to 25 compared to 15 required courses aside from the necessary 5 seminars and the senior thesis course. Moreover, in two last years of studies electives represent the 35% of the required courses.

The Programme reflects the inherent interdisciplinarity of the field, as well the variety of media forms that exist today and enables students to engage with a range of media types. Thus, the

Programme encompasses a blending of social science and humanities training with the acquisition of the requisite skills in mass communication.

Based on the combination of theoretical and practical courses, the Department adopts different modes of delivery and pedagogical methods, ranging from lectures and seminars to instruction and hands-on engagement in its laboratories. Almost all lectures include forms of audio-visual presentations. In the seminars, 70% of the time is allocated to student presentations although the extent of each student presentation is challenging given the high numbers enrolled in seminars which in some cases can amount to 30 students. In addition, instruction methods include on-site visits to professional media centres, a practice obviously currently curtailed by the conditions of the pandemic. In the pandemic period the Department has made use of the University's web-based electronic system *eclass.uoa.gr*.

The faculty of the Department are keenly aware of the need of the curriculum to anticipate the ever-changing landscape of media by adapting existing courses or including new ones especially in the case of new communications technologies.

While reinforcing the sense of student autonomy, the Department assigns academic advisors to each student including students with special needs (AMEA) and their respective office hours are made public.

At our session with the current students, all were extremely appreciative of the efforts and support offered by their professors. There is clearly a great deal of mutual respect between the instructors and the students which suggests that the synergistic goals of student-centred teaching practices have met with a great deal of success.

The alumni of the Department also stressed their gratitude for the support they had received as students by the Department's professors.

The only factors undermining the Department's commitment and efforts are:

- the instructor/student ratio – the number of undergraduate students compared to the number of instructors is too high;
- this situation is made worse because the country's education authorities permit students to transfer from other, regional universities to the University of Athens, including to this Department but they fail to reallocate the funding they provide per student according to a student's move from one institution to the other, thus burdening further the already underfunded University of Athens;
- The availability and maintenance of the laboratories and their equipment are limited and, in some instances, inadequate;
- We understand that these important weaknesses lie beyond the Department's responsibility, but the authorities responsible for this must be alerted to the need to address these as best possible, under the circumstances, in order to strengthen the University's commitment to student-centred instruction.

The Department has in place mechanisms to ensure the evaluation and effectiveness of its teaching methods are in conformity with the practices of the University of Athens Unit for Quality Assurance (MODIP). Accordingly, the Department provides students with electronic questionnaires during the final three weeks of the semester that solicit their opinions anonymously. The questionnaire is structured along the guidelines of Hellenic Authority for

Higher Education (HAHE) and includes a range of questions about each course and the instructor. There is also a committee for student issues to handle student complaints in a formal manner. Significantly, none of the students expressed any complaints about the evaluation or the contents and methods of instruction.

The criteria and methods of assessment of student work are conveyed to the students during the semester, the methods include a combination of written and oral assignments, instructors are available to discuss and receive feedback about their written assignments and the grading, oral presentation occur in the presence of other students in order to demonstrate the required quality and the ways these presentations are assessed.

Panel Judgement

Principle 3: Student- centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- Efforts should be made to improve the instructor/student ratio.
- The Department and the University should look for ways and means to expand the availability of equipment and labs to students.

Principle 4: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD DEVELOP AND APPLY PUBLISHED REGULATIONS COVERING ALL ASPECTS AND PHASES OF STUDIES (ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION).

Institutions and academic units need to put in place both processes and tools to collect, manage and act on information regarding student progression.

Procedures concerning the award and recognition of higher education degrees, the duration of studies, rules ensuring students progression, terms and conditions for student mobility should be based on the institutional study regulations. Appropriate recognition procedures rely on institutional practice for recognition of credits among various European academic departments and Institutions, in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

Graduation represents the culmination of the students' study period. Students need to receive documentation explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed (Diploma Supplement).

Study Programme Compliance

The admission standards for the Department are determined by the Ministry of Education and Religion as is the case for all public institutions of higher education in the country.

The standards are measured by the points (moria) students achieve in the annual national entrance exams, with each Department being assigned a specific number which reflects the overall standing and student demand for that particular department.

The Department seems to be the top one among all departments of communications, journalism, and media of all universities Greece, and it also ranks very high among the approximately ninety departments of universities in Athens. The members of the faculty expressed justifiable pride in the status of their Department which we find well-earned and entirely justified.

The Department has a range of practices designed to monitor and support the progression of students. There is a special orientation day for incoming new students and information is also conveyed through the departmental webpage and in class during the first semester.

Student progress is monitored through the annual internal evaluations and data is submitted to MODIP and is also made available to the faculty.

Throughout their studies the Department instructs students how to conduct research and in the appropriate professional ethics.

During their meeting with the Panel, the students expressed great appreciation for the support they receive from members of the Department.

The Department has no funding of its own for scholarships, therefore students rely on funding and scholarships from other sources, which are very limited.

The Department participates in Erasmus, the European Union’s programme of international student exchange and study abroad. Within this programme it has forged cooperation with a good number of European universities in 15 different countries. The students availing themselves of this programme range from 35 to 48 annually and incoming students from abroad range from between 15 to 30 per year. The Department’s faculty, who themselves have had rich academic experiences abroad clearly value this aspect of student support.

The Department takes great care to provide its undergraduate students with the opportunities to have an internship experience. From 2005 onwards, it is part of a systematized provision of internships (EPEAEK). The number of students doing internships has increased between 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 from 30 to 85. The Department has a committee to oversee the award of internships and assigns a faculty member as an advisor. Overall, the Programme is deemed to be very successful and beneficial to the students.

The Panel had the opportunity to meet with representatives of employers and social partners - external stakeholders from the private and the public sector – who spoke extremely highly about their experiences with students from this Department, something that confirms that the support and nurturing the Department offers its students keeps them in good stead in a professional environment. These organizations included the Pitch Communications Agency; the Institute of Social Research or the National Centre for Social research (EKKE); InNews a media monitoring company; the Greek Film Archive; the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and Médecins Du Monde. Their very positive comments completed the picture of a Department that actively and effectively provides support to its students.

Panel Judgement

Principle 4: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

Because we were impressed by the feedback from employers and social partners -- and this an important strength of the Department – we would recommend that information about internships and alumni employment, and the positive feedback be conveyed to students, prospective and current on the Departmental website.

Principle 5: Teaching Staff

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ASSURE THEMSELVES OF THE QUALIFICATIONS AND COMPETENCE OF THE TEACHING STAFF. THEY SHOULD APPLY FAIR AND TRANSPARENT PROCESSES FOR THE RECRUITMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEACHING STAFF.

The Institutions and their academic units have a major responsibility as to the standard of their teaching staff providing them with a supportive environment that promotes the advancement of their scientific work. In particular, the academic unit should:

- *set up and follow clear, transparent and fair processes for the recruitment of properly qualified staff and offer them conditions of employment that recognize the importance of teaching and research;*
- *offer opportunities and promote the professional development of the teaching staff;*
- *encourage scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research;*
- *encourage innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies;*
- *promote the increase of the volume and quality of the research output within the academic unit;*
- *follow quality assurance processes for all staff members (with respect to attendance requirements, performance, self-assessment, training etc.);*
- *develop policies to attract highly qualified academic staff.*

Study Programme Compliance

The permanent academic staff (DEP) of the Department consists of 21 members of all ranks (Lecturer, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Professor). Their expertise, international background, high qualifications, and enthusiasm offer strengths for classroom teaching and research. They follow widely used pedagogical practices and instructional methods that meet international standards. There is enthusiasm and requisite skills in utilizing new technologies, both in the classroom and in interaction among faculty and students. The faculty should be commended for the firm commitment, concentrated effort, and enthusiasm in maintaining high-quality teaching despite the obstacles and difficulties created by shrinking resources and other external factors for which the Department cannot be blamed.

Teaching staff also includes about twenty active researchers who are employed as Laboratory Lecturing Staff (EEP), Laboratory Teaching Staff (EDIP), and Special Technical Laboratory Staff.

The Panel notes that there is a collaborative climate in the Department built on and reflecting mutual respect and collegial spirit, not only among faculty members, but also between students and teaching staff. The Panel had the opportunity to interact with students and received the impression that they think highly of their teachers. All of them talked with enthusiasm about their professors, the departmental culture, and the learning environment. They confirmed that their teachers are committed, accessible, understanding, and ready to provide support and guidance. The encouragement and advising provided by faculty members are evident and highly appreciated by the students.

There are clear, transparent, and fair processes for the recruitment of qualified staff, but there is problem in that there have been almost no new positions in recent years. Again, the real issue are external limitations, shrinking resources and other factors which have to do with the State

and its priorities in allocating resources. Increasing the number of faculty will definitely help for further improvement of teaching, research and contribution to the society.

Panel Judgement

Principle 5: Teaching Staff	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

There is a need to address the general systemic problem of inadequately funded public university system. Addressing this issue will also help address problems and challenges which universities and departments are facing, such as attracting and retaining more faculty of international calibre.

The Panel believes that faculty members should intensify their efforts to publish more of their research in high quality, peer-reviewed journals, and international publishing houses.

In order to further enhance the quantity and quality of research output, special attention should be paid, and policies and measures should be adopted, in supporting junior faculty members.

The collegial atmosphere in the Department and accessibility of faculty by the students should be maintained and further enhanced, as it is instrumental in sharing experiences and getting feedback. This goes hand in hand with departmental sensitivity and efforts in monitoring and improving performance of both faculty and students.

The Department and the University should encourage faculty members to intensify their efforts for attracting external funding, especially through international and European projects.

Principle 6: Learning Resources and Student Support

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE ADEQUATE FUNDING TO COVER TEACHING AND LEARNING NEEDS. THEY SHOULD –ON THE ONE HAND– PROVIDE SATISFACTORY INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES FOR LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORT AND –ON THE OTHER HAND– FACILITATE DIRECT ACCESS TO THEM BY ESTABLISHING INTERNAL RULES TO THIS END (E.G. LECTURE ROOMS, LABORATORIES, LIBRARIES, NETWORKS, BOARDING, CAREER AND SOCIAL POLICY SERVICES ETC.).

Institutions and their academic units must have sufficient funding and means to support learning and academic activity in general, so that they can offer to students the best possible level of studies. The above means could include facilities such as libraries, study rooms, educational and scientific equipment, information and communications services, support or counselling services.

When allocating the available resources, the needs of all students must be taken into consideration (e.g. whether they are full-time or part-time students, employed or international students, students with disabilities) and the shift towards student-centred learning and the adoption of flexible modes of learning and teaching. Support activities and facilities may be organised in various ways, depending on the institutional context. However, the internal quality assurance ensures that all resources are appropriate, adequate, and accessible, and that students are informed about the services available to them.

In delivering support services the role of support and administrative staff is crucial and therefore they need to be qualified and have opportunities to develop their competences.

Study Programme Compliance

Overall, the Department has very good facilities. The move to a new building in 2014 has brought a significant upgrade with both staff members and students expressing their satisfaction in the virtual meetings. The lecture rooms are well designed and kept in excellent condition. The building is clean and in good shape. The labs are well-equipped.

Although the equipment is modern, there seems to be an issue with upgrading it and keeping it up to date due to lack of adequate funding. There also seems to be a problem with managing the labs with students reporting that the audio-visual lab has been closed for quite some time. On the other hand, staff suggested that it has been virtually impossible to hire qualified personnel to run specialized labs due to the underfunding of the Department and the qualification restrictions imposed by the ministry. Students can borrow equipment for their coursework, but in order for such system to run smoothly, the Department needs more equipment.

Adequate administrative services are offered to the students for the duration of their studies. Students have the option to register, select their classes and monitor their progress online. The student mobility is well organized. Plenty of students take advantage of the ERAMUS+ opportunities to widen their knowledge and expose themselves to new ideas. The Department is reassuring that there are many agreements in place, increasing the choice of places to visit and topics to study.

Panel Judgement

Principle 6: Learning Resources and Student Support	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The Panel recommends that the Department keeps pushing towards securing more funding in order to keep the labs and equipment up to date. Albeit the difficulties in hiring qualified personnel to run specialized labs, it is unacceptable to have such equipment kept unavailable to students. The Department needs to address this issue by finding alternative solutions such as student lab assistants until qualified personnel is hired.

The Department could explore offering contemporary courses where students can make use of their own personal equipment, such as their mobile phones, to fulfil, to some extent, the practical component of the course. Such courses could, for example, include podcasting and/or photo and video journalism.

While we sense the Department's communications with the students is regular and informative, we recommend that the Department makes it even more clear that shortcomings in the area of laboratory and equipment use are due to factors external to the Department and that it is making every effort to address these difficulties.

Principle 7: Information Management

INSTITUTIONS BEAR FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR COLLECTING, ANALYSING AND USING INFORMATION, AIMED AT THE EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT OF UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES OF STUDY AND RELATED ACTIVITIES, IN AN INTEGRATED, EFFECTIVE AND EASILY ACCESSIBLE WAY.

Institutions are expected to establish and operate an information system for the management and monitoring of data concerning students, teaching staff, course structure and organisation, teaching and provision of services to students as well as to the academic community.

Reliable data is essential for accurate information and for decision making, as well as for identifying areas of smooth operation and areas for improvement. Effective procedures for collecting and analysing information on study programmes and other activities feed data into the internal system of quality assurance.

The information gathered depends, to some extent, on the type and mission of the Institution. The following are of interest:

- *key performance indicators*
- *student population profile*
- *student progression, success and drop-out rates*
- *student satisfaction with their programme(s)*
- *availability of learning resources and student support*
- *career paths of graduates*

A number of methods may be used for collecting information. It is important that students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.

Study Programme Compliance

The Department's information management operates within the broader system of the University's information gathering and disseminating system. The primary data it deals with is information about the students, teaching staff, the structure, and contents of the curriculum. The relevant Departmental committees gather all the necessary data and provided to the University's central services. The Panel was provided with an extensive and detailed set of quantitative and qualitative data about the department that proves its ability and effectiveness in information management.

In addition, information about the Department and its members is provided on the Departmental website, which is more fully discussed below, under Principle 8.

Panel Judgement

Principle 7: Information Management	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

There is room for improvement for the utilization of statistics and relevant findings. For example, assessment statistics (without names), such as student evaluations of courses and faculty, as well as other sources of feedback, should be shared and discussed openly within the Department, thus making sure the views of all stakeholders involved are considered.

Principle 8: Public Information

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD PUBLISH INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR TEACHING AND ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES WHICH IS CLEAR, ACCURATE, OBJECTIVE, UP-TO-DATE AND READILY ACCESSIBLE.

Information on Institution's activities is useful for prospective and current students, graduates, other stakeholders and the public.

Therefore, institutions and their academic units provide information about their activities, including the programmes they offer, the intended learning outcomes, the qualifications awarded, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to their students, as well as graduate employment information.

Study Programme Compliance

The main vehicle of the Department to convey information about its manifold activities is a well-structured and content-full web page. It provides all the necessary information and orientation in detail to students, postgraduate students all its members and outsiders.

The Department's webpage is regularly updated, and it is there where students are able to look up information about the curriculum and the various services that are available to them.

Judging by the English-language version of the homepage of the Departmental website, there is an emphasis on providing as much information as possible in a functional and usable way rather through an emphasis on graphic design. To that extent, the website is very effective in its function of information management.

There is a noticeable lack of photographs and imagery on this site, which is contrast with the very informative and visually attractive Power Point presentation slides about the Department we were provided. Also, a twenty-minute guided tour via video hosted by the Department's Chair that we were provided was extremely valuable.

While both the Power Point and the YouTube video were produced because we could not physically visit the Department's facilities due to the pandemic, these could very well function in normal times as an additional way for providing information to prospective students and other stakeholders. Also, given the Department's focus on communication, the webpage could also be used to showcase its own creativity and the student projects.

Panel Judgement

Principle 8: Public Information	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The Department's website does a very good job in conveying data and information, but we feel a Communications and Media departmental website should include more images and possibly more videos, such as the guided YouTube tour video provided to the Panel.

Given the nature of the student projects undertaken within the Department, we recommend that the webpage is used to showcase some of this work of the students.

Principle 9: On-going Monitoring and Periodic Internal Review of Programmes

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE IN PLACE AN INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM FOR THE AUDIT AND ANNUAL INTERNAL REVIEW OF THEIR PROGRAMMES, SO AS TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES SET FOR THEM, THROUGH MONITORING AND AMENDMENTS, WITH A VIEW TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT. ANY ACTIONS TAKEN IN THE ABOVE CONTEXT SHOULD BE COMMUNICATED TO ALL PARTIES CONCERNED.

Regular monitoring, review and revision of study programmes aim to maintain the level of educational provision and to create a supportive and effective learning environment for students.

The above comprise the evaluation of:

- *the content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up to date;*
- *the changing needs of society;*
- *the students' workload, progression and completion;*
- *the effectiveness of the procedures for the assessment of students;*
- *the students' expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme;*
- *the learning environment, support services and their fitness for purpose for the programme*

Programmes are reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders. The information collected is analysed and the programme is adapted to ensure that it is up-to-date. Revised programme specifications are published.

Study Programme Compliance

The Department and the University have in place an internal quality assurance system which provides for regular monitoring, review, and revision of the Programme.

The Programme has been reviewed and revised regularly in order to ensure that it is up to date and in line with the latest research. Revisions of the Programme are also aimed at harmonizing its objectives and content with international standards and practices.

Revisions of the Programme take into account the changing needs of the society and the expectations of students who provide evaluations of courses, faculty and the overall learning environment.

The sensitivity of the Department and the ongoing debate on issues of monitoring and improvement confirm that high quality research and teaching are firm and clear objectives embedded in the Programme.

In general, the on-going monitoring and upgrading of the Programme reflects an academically rigorous, open and dynamic Department.

Panel Judgement

Principle 9: On-going Monitoring and Periodic Internal Review of Programmes	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The Departmental quality assurance committee should have a more structured procedure (such as scheduled meetings) and timeframes to assure that ongoing monitoring and periodic reviews are sustained and enhanced.

Principle 10: Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programmes

PROGRAMMES SHOULD REGULARLY UNDERGO EVALUATION BY COMMITTEES OF EXTERNAL EXPERTS SET BY HAHE, AIMING AT ACCREDITATION. THE TERM OF VALIDITY OF THE ACCREDITATION IS DETERMINED BY HAHE.

HAHE is responsible for administrating the programme accreditation process which is realised as an external evaluation procedure, and implemented by a committee of independent experts. HAHE grants accreditation of programmes, with a specific term of validity, following to which revision is required. The accreditation of the quality of the programmes acts as a means of verification of the compliance of the programme with the template's requirements, and as a catalyst for improvement, while opening new perspectives towards the international standing of the awarded degrees.

Both academic units and institutions participate in the regular external quality assurance process, while respecting the requirements of the legislative framework in which they operate.

The quality assurance, in this case the accreditation, is an on-going process that does not end with the external feedback, or report or its follow-up process within the Institution. Therefore, Institutions and their academic units ensure that the progress made since the last external quality assurance activity is taken into consideration when preparing for the next one.

Study Programme Compliance

The current accreditation review is the second external review of the programme, following that of 2013.

The first review was positive with some constructive recommendations, which for the most part have been implemented, demonstrating the Department's commitment to the spirit and the processes of quality assurance.

Based on the information gathered during the online presentations and discussions, it appears that the faculty, administrative staff, and students are aware of the importance of the internal and external review process and its contribution to the improvement of the Programme and the Department.

All stakeholders of the Programme, including the current undergraduate students and alumni, were actively engaged in the current review. During the meetings, the staff members demonstrated that they are fully aware of the importance of external review and the positive effects that can result from it.

Both faculty and staff seem to be passionate about their work, displaying a great team spirit.

Students and graduates confirmed that they are satisfied with their university experience and praised the efforts of the Department, and its faculty members and staff.

Panel Judgement

Principle 10: Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programmes	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

None.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

- The structure of the Programme and the courses offered are consistent with the Department's overall objectives; they combine theory and practice, and include required and elective courses, seminars, practical training, and term papers.
- The Programme reflects the inherent interdisciplinarity of the field, as well the variety of media forms that exist today and enables students to engage with a range of media types.
- The faculty of the Department are keenly aware of the need of the curriculum to anticipate the ever-changing landscape of media by adapting existing courses or including new ones, especially in the case of new communications technologies.
- The expertise, international background, high qualifications, and enthusiasm of the faculty offer strengths for classroom teaching and research.
- The teaching staff follow widely used pedagogical practices and instructional methods that meet international standards.
- The on-going monitoring and upgrading of the Programme reflect an academically rigorous, open and dynamic Department.
- The faculty, administrative staff and students are aware of the importance of the internal and external review processes and their contribution to the improvement of the Programme and the Department.
- Overall, this is a top Programme in a relatively young Department, and, in the Panel's judgement, it is fully compliant with the standards for quality accreditation of undergraduate programmes.

II. Areas of Weakness

Some of the difficulties the Programme is facing stem from the general systemic problem of bureaucracy and an inadequately funded public university system. Addressing this issue will, for example, address the issue of hiring more qualified personnel to run specialized labs, provide technical support, update equipment, and make it accessible to students. There is also room for intensifying efforts in attracting external funding, especially through international and European projects. In that respect, the Department and the University can provide support and incentives and encourage faculty members to intensify their efforts in applying and securing such projects.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

- Faculty members should intensify their efforts to publish more of their research in high quality, peer-reviewed journals, and international publishing houses.
- More qualified personnel are needed to run specialized labs and make equipment more accessible and available to students.
- As the traditional media, like newspapers and magazines are in crisis, the curriculum could be enhanced with contemporary subjects like podcasting, blogging, and photo and video journalism with the use of new means and technologies such as mobile devices.
- Further improvement of the Department's website, especially by adding more photographs, imagery, and guided tours.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: **1, 2, 4, 5, 9 and 10.**

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: **3, 6, 7 and 8.**

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are: **None.**

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are: **None.**

Overall Judgement	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname

Signature

- 1. Professor Emeritus Joseph Joseph, Chair**
University of Cyprus, Cyprus
- 2. Professor Alexander Kitroeff**
Haverford College, USA
- 3. Associate Professor Paschalis Paschali**
University of Nicosia, Cyprus