



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ

HELLENIC REPUBLIC

Α.ΔΙ.Π.

H.Q.A.

ΑΡΧΗ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ & ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ
ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΑΝΩΤΑΤΗ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗ

HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE
AND ACCREDITATION AGENCY

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

**DEPARTMENT OF PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF CRETE**



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

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External Evaluation Committee

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the Department of Pre-School Education of the University of Crete consisted of the following three (3) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by the HQA in accordance with Law 3374/2005:

1. Dr Maria Eliophotou-Menon (Coordinator)
Associate Professor, University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus

2. Prof Moschos Morfakidis-Filactos
Professor, University of Granada, Spain

3. Dr Andreas Philaretou
Associate Professor, European University of Cyprus

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

The external evaluation process took place during the week of December 1-8, 2013. The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) met in Athens for a brief orientation at the HQA offices. On December 2, the EEC travelled to Crete for the site visit at the Department of Pre-School Education (DPE). The EEC was received by the Vice Rector of the University of Crete (UOC), the Head of the DPE, and several faculty members. The Vice-Rector gave a presentation on the University as a whole, highlighting facts/figures relevant to the performance and contribution of the DPE. This was followed by a presentation on the DPE by the Head of the Department. Both presentations were very well structured and provided a comprehensive account of the University and the Department. The first day of the site visit ended with a visit to the Library, where the Head Librarian led the EEC members on a tour of the premises, providing information on facilities and collections. The EEC was warmly received by all faculty and staff members, who supported and facilitated the work of the EEC at all stages of the evaluation process.

On the second day, the EEC went to the DPE in order to meet the faculty members. The programmes of study (undergraduate, postgraduate, and teacher training programme) were presented by faculty members. A separate presentation covered the school experience (practical training) component of the undergraduate course. This was followed by a presentation on the organisation and delivery of teaching, with reference to the Erasmus programme. Information on the research conducted at the department was offered in a separate presentation. Moreover, the DPE faculty members provided information on links with society through actions, events and cooperation with external organisations and agents. In the afternoon of the second day, the EEC gathered information from students, both undergraduate and postgraduate.

On the third and final day of the site visit, the EEC visited the classrooms and laboratories and spent more time discussing with DPE faculty.

During the visit, the EEC collected information from DPE faculty in the form of documents, reports and other relevant material. The most important of these were the following:

1. The Internal Evaluation Report (IER) of the UOC for the academic year 2007-2008 and the updated version prepared for the EEC
2. The programmes of undergraduate and postgraduate studies as well as the currently inactive Teacher Training Programme

3. The Curriculum Vitae of Faculty members
4. A list of publications by the Faculty members and copies of selected recent publications in international refereed journals
5. A list of recent research programmes in which the Faculty participated
6. Samples of undergraduate, postgraduate and PhD theses

Interviews covered all members of the Faculty of DPE. In-depth interviews were conducted with administrative/secretarial support personnel, as well as with the Head of the Library. As regards students, the EEC members attended a randomly selected class consisting of about 20 students. After the end of instruction, the EEC members interviewed students on all topics included in the Evaluation Report.

As previously mentioned, the EEC visited all main facilities which included the following:

1. main campus of the DPE at the UOC
2. library of the UOC
3. restaurant and cafeteria adjacent to the library
4. pedagogical research and applications laboratory of the DPE
5. laboratory for research on psychology of the DPE
6. laboratory for the theater and arts of the DPE
7. laboratory for music and movement of the DPE
8. book collections within departmental offices of the DPE

II. The Internal Evaluation Procedure

The information provided by the DPE was very detailed and up to date. The written sources were very informative and provided a very good basis for answering the questions set by the HQA. The presentations were very well prepared and structured and the presenters answered all questions that followed. The EEC was impressed by the organisation and quality of presentations. It is clear that a great deal of effort went into the preparation of the presentations. Moreover, the members of the DPE were extremely cooperative and reacted very positively to requests for additional information. Consequently, the EEC concluded that the objectives of the internal evaluation process had been met by the DPE in an exemplary manner.

A. Curriculum

To be filled separately for each undergraduate, graduate and doctoral programme.

APPROACH

The DPE offers an undergraduate programme, a postgraduate programme and a Teacher Training Programme (Διδασκαλείο) which is currently inactive due to budget cuts. The latter provided specialised teacher training to qualified teachers with 5-25 years of experience.

Undergraduate

The mission of the DPE is to develop the Pedagogic Sciences through theoretical and applied perspectives in teaching and research; to provide graduates with the skills and knowledge that will enable them to have a successful career; to contribute to the improvement of standards in pre-school education and to the resolution of problems in this area. In addition, the goals of the undergraduate programme are as follows: first, to prepare pre-school education teachers with the ability to think critically, seek knowledge and behave in a democratic manner. Second, to prepare pre-school education teachers who are able to exhibit a spirit of collaboration, professional cooperation and tolerance. The curriculum aims to achieve these goals through offering a series of compulsory modules (32 courses) and a number of elective modules (20 courses).

The goals mentioned above take into account current trends and expectations in Europe, according to which pre-school curricula should integrate theoretical knowledge and practical exercises in the teaching curriculum of young children. This is a domain where other Greek pre-school departments are somewhat lacking. Consequently, the DPE aims to satisfy a real need in Greek pre-schools and society in general, through the provision of a wide array of theoretical and applied courses.

The broad outlines of the curriculum are decided by the DPE through its Departmental Council, taking into account the needs and views of current students. In addition, this process takes into consideration the various opinions of members of local professional bodies dealing with pre-school children. At this point, it should be noted that the department has built-in mechanisms for updating the curriculum should the need arise.

Postgraduate

The DPE offers a Doctoral and a Master's programme in the general area of Educational Sciences, the latter being divided into two subdivisions:

- Psychological Applications in Education (1)
- Pedagogy & Didactics in Pre-school Education (2)

Within these two areas, the following four specialisations exist

- Alternative Psychological-Pedagogical Approaches (1.1)
- Psychoeducational Interventions for Pre-school and School-Aged Children (1.2)

- Theory & Practice in Pre-school Education (2.1)
- Language and Literacy in Pre-school Education (2.2)

The typical duration of the Master's programme is 2 years in which students complete 7 courses and a thesis (120 ECTS in total). The typical duration of the Doctoral programme is 3 years in which students complete a thesis.

The purpose of the postgraduate programme is to promote the specialist study of the previously mentioned fields of specialisation taught by the Department and to produce graduates able to hold administrative positions in various pre-school, academic, and governmental settings. The taught postgraduate programmes are coordinated by the Postgraduate Committee of Studies. At this point, it should be mentioned that the students who are ultimately chosen for the various postgraduate areas are adequately prepared in their undergraduate programme and the procedure with which they are selected is in line with standards of admission of other European universities.

IMPLEMENTATION

It is our opinion that the current undergraduate curriculum is appropriate and in line with international and universally applicable standards of excellence. The structure of the curriculum is clearly articulated and communicated to students in an excellent and informative Guide to Undergraduate Studies. As of this academic year (2013-2014) all members of academic staff also act as Academic Advisors (six students per advisor) and will be aiming at providing students with all the necessary assistance in their academic endeavours. Teaching staff are very well qualified to deliver the programme. During the visit, the EEC discussed with faculty members the content of some of the courses and we were overall quite impressed with their scholarly and practical ability.

Concerning the DPE's doctoral and post graduate programmes, the aforementioned procedures of implementation are also applicable and follow similar parameters as noted above. In addition, at this point we need to stress the quality of supervision provided by the various staff members.

A very important aspect of implementation in any academic department is the spirit of collaboration, amount of hard work, and the organisation of efforts of the various sectors of the department in order to produce both adequately trained students and quality research, something that characterised this department in an exemplary manner, given the severity of their budget cuts. This reflects the excellent managerial efforts of the various committees coordinated by their Head of the DPE.

RESULTS

The curriculum appears to work very well in providing a solid theoretical background in pre-school pedagogy. Additionally it provides considerable opportunities for practical training. It appears to achieve its goal of providing students with grounded knowledge in school pedagogy quite well.

It is both concise and complete and course content does not overlap and is not repeated in different year groups, given that the introductory courses are taught at the beginning of the curriculum and there is a satisfactory progression in the complexity of the subjects.

At this point, we would like to note the considerable importance of the practical training of students in their preparation for their future roles as pre-school education teachers. It should be pointed out that practical training begins in the second year of studies and continues into the third and fourth. These placements require considerable supervision by staff members in order to ensure that the objectives of the practical training are met.

Post graduate

The postgraduate curriculum is very well organised and gives a large degree of choice in terms of specialisation. It appears to achieve its goal of providing students with specialised knowledge in specific areas of pre-school education.

IMPROVEMENT

Even though the curriculum in its current form is generally well accepted by the majority of undergraduate students and adequately prepares them for their professional careers in pre-school education, some students suggested the following to us during a scheduled meeting:

- Increase the number of courses having to do with children of special needs, including special courses on sign language.
- Change the status of some courses from elective to compulsory (especially applicable to the Natural Sciences Teaching course).
- Increase the number of special topic seminars and reduce the number of students per seminar.
- Increase the number of theatrical simulations in their current courses, such as puppet shows, shadow theatre etc., as well as introduce a special course in theatre arts.
- Have the ability to take more ECTS without limitations so as to be able to enrich their academic knowledge far and beyond the 240 ECTS limit required for earning their degree.

At this point, we would like to note the fact that both students and teaching staff stressed the need to reintroduce the practice of bringing auxiliary personnel (αποσπασμένοι) trained in pre-school education who are deemed invaluable in helping students in the applied area of their studies.

The DPE is aware of a pressing problem that may inhibit the effectiveness of the undergraduate curriculum, having to do primarily with the shortage of teaching staff, which is particularly evident in the domain of laboratory courses as well as in the supervision of the work placements of students in schools.

In general, both undergraduate and postgraduate students expressed vehemently and overwhelmingly their satisfaction with both the academic and research skills of their teachers and their ability and enthusiasm in transmitting these skills to them.

B. Teaching

APPROACH:

Teaching is delivered in the following main three ways: as lecture modules, laboratories, and seminars for practical training. Lecture modules and laboratories are assessed through written examinations, individual and team work, production of educational materials, presentations of different topics, etc.

Furthermore, we have noticed as a team that there is a high degree of satisfaction among undergraduate and postgraduate students concerning both the availability and cooperativeness of their teachers. Also, the DPE as a whole has a well organised infrastructure of technological networking resources in certain areas that are used by the students, such as specialised laboratories (psychology, music, art etc.). Similarly, we consider the examination system in its entirety to be both rational and in line with the standards of most European and international universities.

IMPLEMENTATION

Teaching is facilitated by the availability of the excellent university library (noted as one of the best in Greek universities in the area of social and humanistic sciences), and teaching materials and resources are both made available to students online through various platforms and updated regularly by the teachers.

The student per teacher staff ratio is high despite the concern of the DPE regarding this matter and here we ask the appropriate bodies of the Ministry of Education to pay particular attention to this sensitive matter in order to promote the quality of undergraduate education, which will require the Ministry in general to abide by the requirements of the Protocol of the Bologna Agreement.

Concerning the link between research and teaching, it should be noted that teachers both produce their own educational material and promote it to students not only in their classrooms but also in their practical exercises and special training seminars.

The Department participates in the Erasmus programme, which allows students to study in universities outside Greece and to transfer their earned credits to their degree at the UOC. Although the teachers of the DPE seem to have a relatively high degree of participation in mobility programmes in general, we have also noted their willingness to further expand their outgoing academic mobility as well as their collaborations with various international universities. This is evidenced by a number of teachers who have started promoting the Erasmus placement programme to students. However, the number of students currently participating in Erasmus is below what would have been expected.

Overall, the students express a high degree of satisfaction concerning the teaching ability of their teachers as well as their course content even though they once again noted their preference for both more weight being placed on the practical aspect of their courses and the reduction of class size.

RESULTS

The EEC believes that both undergraduate and graduate teaching in the Pre-school Department at the UOC is excellent. Following our personal meetings with the faculty members during the second and third days of our visit, we are convinced that their academic excellence and their modern teaching approaches ensure a very high level of teaching.

As evidenced from their internal evaluation, the average of the student grades of this department is one of the highest of all departments at the UOC, failure rates being considerably low, and actual duration of studies being within expectations. Overall, we believe that this particular department has an excellent reputation in Greece and can further develop into a very competitive European university.

IMPROVEMENT

The committee has a few suggestions to make in the area of teaching.

- There is a need for a few more classrooms to become available for the exclusive use of the DPE.
- There is a need to decrease the high student per teacher staff ratio.
- There is a need for updating the computer hardware of the department, especially those of the various specialised labs, although most teachers and students alike have their own laptops.
- There is a considerable need for the Ministry of Education to reconsider its current banning of transferring qualified personnel to the department (αποσπασμένοι), who are deemed invaluable in the practical training of students.
- There is a need for removing the current 240 ECTS barrier to undergraduate students thereby enabling them to take more courses and better prepare themselves for the job market.
- There is a need to increase the Department's liaisons with the private sector, such as various companies in the area, especially in the tourist sector, in order to:
 1. Attract funding for covering their own needs given the severity of governmental budget cuts.
 2. Develop training and educational programmes in collaboration with major companies and tourist and local organisations (municipalities) to aid such organisations in creating pre-school settings to accommodate the needs for daycare of the large numbers of visitors that populate the area in the summer.
- There is a need to increase the DPE's involvement with people with special needs.
- There is a pressing need to continue with the construction of the experimental pre-school complex that has already been planned in an area nearby the Department, but has stopped due to lack of funds, a place where students will be able to better do their practical training.

C. Research

For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate level, if necessary.

APPROACH

- What is the Department's policy and main objective in research?

The policy of the DPE is to encourage faculty members to participate in research to the greatest possible extent. The importance of research is recognised and in recent years there has been an increase in the number of publications in academic journals. The main objectives and priorities of the DPE with respect to research are the following: First, the DPE intends to place greater emphasis on international research and publications. Second, the DPE intends to take actions in order to secure more research funding in general. Finally, the DPE intends to strengthen the role and contribution of an academic journal published by the Department (*Pre-school and Primary Education*).

- Has the Department set internal standards for assessing research?

Based on the information provided, there do not appear to be specific internal standards for assessing either the quality of research projects and publications or their contribution to the improvement of the quality of education. However, there are indications that the DPE is aware of the importance of assessing research through commonly agreed standards. For instance, the number of citations linked to the work of DPE faculty members is monitored and recorded.

IMPLEMENTATION

- How does the Department promote and support research?

Even though financial support is not offered to faculty members, the DPE attempts to promote research in several ways. Departmental members attend national and international conferences and conduct research on important issues despite the lack of financial support. As previously mentioned, faculty members are strongly encouraged to participate in international research projects and attract external funding for research. An important initiative in the attempt to promote research is the publication of an open access journal on pre-school and primary education published by the DPE (<http://childducation-journal.org>). In collaboration with the National Documentation Center the first issue was published in 2013 and papers can be published in both Greek and English.

- Quality and adequacy of research infrastructure and support.
- Scientific publications.
- Research projects.
- Research collaborations.

With respect to research infrastructure and support, there appear to be adequate facilities to enable students and faculty members to become

involved in research projects. The requirement of a thesis in both the undergraduate and the graduate programmes results in a large volume of research work on several aspects of pre-school education. The EEC was impressed by the comprehensiveness of some research theses they reviewed. However, it is clear that the limited financial resources are having an impact on both infrastructure and support due to the inability of the DPE to maintain and improve equipment and provide research allowances to its staff. As previously mentioned, the importance of participation in scientific projects, research projects and collaborations is recognised at the DPE. The figures submitted to the EEC indicate an increase in activity, even though the analysis of the relevant data is based on the quantity and not on the quality of output.

RESULTS

- How successfully were the Department's research objectives implemented?
- Scientific publications.
- Research projects.
- Research collaborations.
- Efficacy of research work. Applied results. Patents etc.
- Is the Department's research acknowledged and visible outside the Department? Rewards and awards.

It appears that the DPE is making considerable progress towards meeting its objectives, based on the list of research projects and publications of its faculty members. The faculty members of the DPE have published a significant number of books/monographs, papers in academic refereed journals, chapters in books and papers in conference proceedings. The list of publications suggests that in the last five years the number of publications in academic (mostly international) journals has increased substantially (from 11 in 2008 to 40 in 2013).

Moreover, it is important to mention that several members of the academic staff are able to publish in top journals in the field. However, this does not apply to all faculty members. The publication of the online journal in 2013 can be considered to constitute an achievement.

Based on the information provided, an increase in citations was recorded between 2012 and 2013. In 2012 the number of citations was reasonable (under 200) considering the number of faculty members (28). However, it is not clear what percentage of these are self citations.

The list of research projects provided suggests that the faculty members participate in a significant number of projects and collaborations. Of the 16 research projects currently led/coordinated by faculty members, 4 are externally funded.

It is important to note that an attempt is made to link research to community needs (e.g. research projects included a study on the transfer of children from kindergarten to primary schools and a study on the redesign of school environments of kindergarten schools, which was conducted in collaboration with the School of Engineering). This increases visibility of departmental research because of the involvement of parents, school personnel and other

stakeholders.

The research of the DPE is made visible outside the department through scientific publications, conference presentations, seminars and other events. Most dissemination appears to take place within local and national boundaries. For instance, there is considerable increase in publications in conference proceedings but most of these relate to local as opposed to international conferences.

IMPROVEMENT

- Improvements in research proposed by the Department, if necessary.
- Initiatives in this direction undertaken by the Department.

The EEC agrees with the objectives set by the DPE and the initiatives/actions that are undertaken in order to meet these objectives. It is important that the DPE continues to support the publication of their open access electronic journal. The mere publication of the journal, however, is not sufficient: The DPE should ensure that the papers published in this journal meet certain quality standards (for instance, in the appropriateness of methods of statistical analysis). The number of papers published in English should be significant in order to increase international dissemination.

Moreover, the EEC recommends that the DPE members place emphasis on securing external funding that can be used to promote the visibility of their research. Ideally, external funding should also be available to graduate students. International dissemination of research findings should be further encouraged.

Overall, the EEC believes that more emphasis should be given to research that can inform, and contribute to, the international literature on pre-school education.

D. All Other Services

For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate level, if necessary.

APPROACH

- How does the Department view the various services provided to the members of the academic community (teaching staff, students).
- Does the Department have a policy to simplify administrative procedures? Are most procedures processed electronically?
- Does the Department have a policy to increase student presence on Campus?

Both students and faculty members expressed their satisfaction with the services provided by administrators. Moreover, the three administrators of the DPE were satisfied with their work. They were comfortable with the use of technology and indicated that administrative procedures had been simplified considerably through electronic processing.

Students and faculty members also expressed their general satisfaction with other facilities and services (library, halls of residence, PCs and free internet access).

The DPE does not have a policy of increasing student presence on campus. This is the case for all universities in Greece where attendance at the undergraduate level is not compulsory. Attendance for postgraduate courses is compulsory but the number of students in these courses is very small to contribute to the increase of student presence on campus. In general, faculty members felt that despite the lack of a policy, their classes were well attended.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Organisation and infrastructure of the Department's administration (e.g. secretariat of the Department)
- Form and function of academic services and infrastructure for students (e.g. library, PCs and free internet access, student counselling, athletic-cultural activity etc.).

The Secretariat of the Department currently consists of three administrators. One of the administrators has been employed at the DPE since its establishment, which has provided continuity and stability in the provision of services. The administrators provide secretarial support but they also appear to have a counselling role in relation to students. At present, they have "student hours" (6 hours: 2 hours/3 times a week). In practice, according to the administrators, students have access to the service to a much greater extent than is indicated by the student hours.

The library is large, well designed and very well managed and equipped. The Head Librarian exhibited enthusiasm and pride when presenting the collections and services offered by the library. Students have access to PCs and free internet but no student counselling was available until this year. There was no mention of student participation in athletic/cultural activities.

RESULTS

- Are administrative and other services adequate and functional?
- How does the Department view the particular results?

Based on the comments of students and faculty members during the interviews, it appears that the administrative services are adequate. However, the lack of systematic counselling services for students was acknowledged as a weakness.

When interviewed, administrators pointed to a number of problems they faced. These included the fact that they were not fully informed about changes in legislation relevant to their work and the lack of training.

Despite their overall satisfaction with the services provided by the library, students were not satisfied with changes in opening hours, which had been implemented because of the protests against the reduction of university administrative staff. However, the EEC was informed that the library would return to regular opening hours before the end of the site visit.

Students also noted the fact that there were no provisions for students with special needs. The halls of residence were considered satisfactory but a major problem lies in the fact that security services are not available. This is a major concern, which was expressed both by faculty members and students. The lack of funding (and issues related to negative attitudes towards private companies) have made it impossible to hire private security providers. As a

result, university faculty members and students pointed to increased security risks.

Moreover, it is important to note the lack of technical and maintenance support, which is also due to the lack of resources. At present, there is only one technical support employee at the University as a whole. As a result, there are technical and maintenance problems which remain unsolved. Likewise, there is no technical support in the area of information technology. Equipment is not properly maintained and cannot be repaired when necessary.

IMPROVEMENTS

- Has the Department identified ways and methods to improve the services provided?
- Initiatives undertaken in this direction.

The EEC believes that the administrative support provided to the DPE is sufficient, despite limitations and weaknesses stemming from the limited financial resources. It is clear that administrators are committed to the provision of high quality services to students and faculty members. This was evident both in the case of the Head Librarian and the Departmental administrative/secretarial staff. However, the EEC believes that more consultation hours should be made available to students on a formal basis. Overall, initiatives in the area of administrative services are limited by the lack of funds but there is an awareness of problems and a desire to overcome weaknesses through hard work.

Collaboration with social, cultural and production organisations

Please, comment on quality, originality and significance of the Department's initiatives.

Overall, the EEC considers the quality, originality and significance of the Department's initiatives in this field to be satisfactory. The faculty members work with school units in order to organise events such as lectures, seminars and other activities in collaboration with school staff. In addition, they provide informal counselling services to schools. There is also collaboration with several educational and cultural organisations such as museums. For instance, DPE members have recently worked with the Natural History Museum of Crete on a project relating to the impact of natural disasters on children.

Lectures are organised for the public to attend, while faculty members write for the local press. The participation of faculty members in educational programmes of the Pedagogical Institute is also considered very important.

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

For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate level, if necessary.

- Please, comment on the Department's Potential inhibiting factors at State, Institutional and Departmental level and Proposals on ways to overcome the above inhibiting factors.
- Short-, medium- and long-term goals.
- Plan and actions for improvement by the Department/Academic Unit
- Long-term actions proposed by the Department.

As regards strategic planning, there does not appear to be a systematic process of formulating long-term goals. After reviewing the relevant information, the EEC considers the potential inhibiting factors to include the following:

At State level

1. Lack of educational funding, which results in infrastructure limitations and constraints in all areas.
2. The fact that decision making is centralised means that the DPE as well as other departments at the UOC are not in a position to make important decisions regarding their programmes and staff. For instance, the selection of administrators for redundancy is made at the central level (Ministry), without any consideration of the views of university officials and faculty members.

At Institutional level

1. Poor funding with an impact on the quality of services offered. Lack of security for the university as a whole is an important issue.
2. A culture of hostility towards private organisations (mainly relates to students).
3. A culture of hostility towards the introduction of fees (mainly relates to students).
4. Weaknesses in research infrastructure, support and funding.

Departmental level:

1. Lack of a structured Strategic Plan, which deals with long, medium and short-term goals.
2. Some faculty members do not appear to have strong international collaborations and are unable to disseminate their work on an international level.
3. The Teacher Training Programme (Διδασκαλείο) is currently inactive due to lack of funds.
4. Problems mentioned at the State and Institutional level apply to the departmental level as well.

The DPE is aware of the above inhibiting factors and where possible, is taking actions to overcome them. For instance, there is strong encouragement to faculty members to seek external research funding and publish in international journals.

Proposals on ways to overcome the above inhibiting factors are outlined in the final chapter of this report concluding with recommendations of the EEC.

F. Final Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC

For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate level, if necessary.

Overall, the DPE fulfils its educational and research goals, meeting international standards of excellence in almost all aspects of its activities and engaging fully with the national and international academic community. It enjoys an excellent reputation within Greece and has established strong collaborations with other universities abroad.

The following recommendations ought to be viewed within this very positive context, and include the following:

1. Both the University and the Department should develop a general strategic plan in order to meet the challenges presented by current and future trends. Specifically, the EEC recommends that a more budgetary appropriate strategic plan ought to be developed by both the Department and the University, one that takes into consideration the current severe cuts of academic budgets. In this framework, a distinction should be made between short-term, medium-term and long-term goals.
2. In relation to the above, the UOC should consider the introduction of a small student fee in order to support its function and improve the quality of its services. This will require educating students on the importance of change and handling resistance to change on their part. The reasons for the introduction of fees and the risks of not introducing this measure should be clearly outlined. Students with very low family incomes could be exempted.
3. Certain changes in the undergraduate curriculum are necessary. As mentioned in the relevant chapter of this report, the EEC recommends increasing the number of special education courses, including the introduction of special courses on sign language. Moreover, the number of special topic seminars should increase and the status of some courses should change. For instance, The Natural Sciences course should be compulsory, which is in line with most international pre-school programmes. The same applies to practical applications such as simulations in current courses. The DEP should consider allowing undergraduate students to take more credits without the current limitation of 240 ECTS. There is also a need to reintroduce the practice of bringing auxiliary personnel (αποσπασμένοι) trained in pre-school education. Finally, the high student per teacher staff ratio should be reduced.
4. The UOC should assist the DPE in all its teaching and research

missions by improving and adequately maintaining all departmentally related services such as classroom and other building facilities, library and digital services, and technology equipment. In terms of infrastructure and equipment, a number of major needs identified by the DPE are in the following areas: research tools and software for the analysis of data, programmes for the analysis of human behaviour and emotions, interactive blackboards, electronic equipment etc. The need for the establishment of a Science laboratory is also important.

5. There is a need to increase DPE liaisons with the private sector by networking with various companies in the area, especially in the tourist sector, in order to attract much needed funding. Training and educational programmes could be developed in collaboration with major companies and tourist and local organisations.
6. The EEC believes that more emphasis should be placed on research that can significantly contribute to the international literature as well as upgrade the research status of the DPE. International dissemination of research findings should continue to be encouraged. The DPE Website needs to be further developed with all the faculty CVs, research interests, and course descriptions. This may contribute to the establishment of international research collaborations.
7. Regarding administrative services, it is important to recognise the various risks associated with the lack of administrative support, especially in the areas of technical support and security. The UOC, in general, and the DPE in particular, should consider this a matter of priority and take actions that can help improve the situation.
8. All necessary actions should be taken in order to re-establish the Teacher Training Programme (Διδασκαλείο), which ceased its operations due to lack of funds. The EEC believes that this programme plays an important role in the educational system by providing further training to qualified teachers. In an effective pre-school education system, training must not end after the acquisition of a university degree.
9. It is recommended that when possible, the UOC continues with the construction of the experimental pre-school complex that has already been planned in an area nearby the Department, but has stopped, due to lack of funds. This will provide students with more opportunities in the area of practical training.
10. Finally, the DPE should take all actions needed in order to maintain the healthy and open organisational climate, which currently serves as the basis for the collaborative efforts and achievements of its staff. The EEC was impressed with the positive attitude and team spirit that appears to characterise both the leadership of the DPE and its faculty members.

The Members of the Committee

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