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HELLENIC REPUBLIC
H.Q.A.A.
HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY
FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

DEPARTMENT Archives and Library Science

UNIVERSITY /TEI Ionian University

November 2011

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External Evaluation Committee

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the Department Archives and Library Science of the Ionian University consisted of the following three (3) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by the HQAA in accordance with Law 3374/2005 :

1. Dr Konstantina Martzoukou (Coordinator)
Department of Information Management, Aberdeen Business School, The Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, UK

 2. Professor Chrysa Maltezou, Director of the Hellenic Institute for Byzantine and post-Byzantine Studies in Venice, Italy.

 3. Professor Derek Law
Computing and Information Science, University of Strathclyde, UK.
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N.B. The structure of the “Template” proposed for the External Evaluation Report mirrors the requirements of Law 3374/2005 and corresponds overall to the structure of the Internal Evaluation Report submitted by the Department.

The length of text in each box is free. Questions included in each box are not exclusive nor should they always be answered separately; they are meant to provide a general outline of matters that should be addressed by the Committee when formulating its comments.

Introduction

I. The External Evaluation Procedure

Dates and brief account of the site visit.

The External Evaluation Committee visited the department from 7th -9th November 2011. The visit was completed in accordance with the schedule of visit. The members of the department were very welcoming and supportive of the process and we would like to express our appreciation for the excellent organisation of the procedure and the open/positive spirit with which we were received. The Department were very effective in the way in which they addressed a small student protest which initially barred access to the department.

The committee was particularly impressed with the modern, well-appointed building in which the department is housed and the sense of pride and ownership of their environment. It is admirable that this is also transmitted to the students.

The Department has an interesting and unusual combination of disciplines which complement each other in novel ways and it is unique in Greece. It offers a unique contribution to the study and conservation of cultural heritage of Greece.

We had every opportunity to visit the different areas/facilities of the department and speak to members of staff collectively and in private. As a result we are confident we have developed an accurate picture of the department.

Whom did the Committee meet ? Groups of teaching and administrative staff and students interviewed

The Committee met with:

- The President of the Department of Archives and Library Science
- The Head of the Administration Unit
- A group of first year students (approx 60) including 6 continuing students
- Formal sessions with three groups of four members of staff and informal individual interviews.

List of Reports, documents, other data examined by the Committee.

- Internal Assessment Report Academic year 2008-2009
- Identity of the University Department (HQAA)
- Departmental Statistics (staff and students – Department Archives and Library Science)
- Department Archives and Library Science website
- Internship Agreement
- External Collaborators list
- Proposal for Restructuring the Programme of Studies (April 2010)

Facilities visited by the External Evaluation Committee.

- Lecture Theatres
- Research and Undergraduate Laboratories
- Conference Facilities
- Staff Offices
- Exhibited Resources
- Library

II. The Internal Evaluation Procedure

Appropriateness of sources and documentation used

The sources and documentation reviewed were very appropriate.

- Internal Assessment Report Academic year 2008-2009

It was fairly comprehensive but not always up-to-date and as a result the data were not consistently current. Although the postgraduate programme is the strength of the Department it was under-represented in the documentation.

Quality and completeness of evidence reviewed and provided

The quality of the evidence was appropriate although the statistics were provided from different sources (HQAA and Department) and it was difficult to gain a clear picture of the number of students from the statistics. However, the panel acknowledges that this is due to the balance of active and inactive students.

- Departmental Website

The quality of the website is notably good with full and clear evidence of the work of the department. The team should be commended on the visibility of the website.

To what extent have the objectives of the internal evaluation process been met by the Department?

The objectives have been fully met.

A. Curriculum

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

APPROACH RESULTS AND IMPROVEMENT

The Department offers a four year undergraduate degree covering an interesting range of subjects (within the areas of history, language, archives and library science, informatics, museology, palaeography, diplomatics etc) which aims to prepare students for a variety of employment opportunities that require professional expertise. Currently a large, rich and varied set of modules (compulsory and elective) is offered but only a proportion of them is taught each year. There is a formal annual review of the curriculum but so far this has failed to reduce the number of modules to a manageable and meaningful level. In the next Internal Annual Review the number of modules and the balance amongst them should be addressed as a priority and as a consequence the Course Guide should accurately reflect exactly what modules are offered.

The Department has been recently considering a restructuring of the degree so that the first two years would consist of a common core curriculum and the final two years would offer specialist directions. We endorse this approach although we have some concerns about the details such as the proposals for marking as set out in the Proposal for Restructuring the Programme of Studies (April 2010). Both the common core curriculum and the final two years should form part of formal assessment. In addition, it would be advisable to offer, during the initial semesters, introductory modules which demonstrate the relevance of material (from history to informatics) which support each main discipline: a) archives, b) library science and c) museology (the latter does not currently appear in the title of studies but there are formal plans in place for adding it). The material should not be disconnected from the main disciplines but should be taught within their specific context.

The Department should also consider offering a more varied set of Masters programmes that is wider ranging and addresses one or more of the main disciplines.

Finally, the Doctoral Programme meets the needs of the Department effectively.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Department has appropriately qualified and trained staff to implement the curriculum. They operate effectively but constrained resources create barriers to areas that are significant for the successful fulfillment of the course objectives. We note below areas in which additional resources are essential for supporting specific activities:

- Technical support and equipment in computer laboratories
- Fieldwork trips
- Paleography and archival material
- Administrative resources

B. Teaching

APPROACH:

Does the Department have a defined pedagogic policy with regard to teaching approach and methodology?

Because of the variety of subjects a single/uniform pedagogic policy may not be appropriate and teaching methods vary according to the precise nature of the topic (archives, library science, museology).

Teaching methods used

Modern facilities are used for teaching purposes and there is strong evidence of good interaction between students and members of staff.

Teaching staff/ student ratio

The teaching staff/student ratio was appropriate.

Teacher/student collaboration

It appears excellent.

Adequacy of means and resources

The Department is currently in the process of updating the computing and library facilities. However, there is a need to continuously update resources, especially in the rapidly changing modern technological environment to address the needs and requirements of the course.

The teaching material is overall of high quality. The buildings and facilities are of a commendably high quality which creates a positive environment for students and staff.

The expertise and research interests of the members of new staff recruited should reflect the direction of the department in a balanced manner.

Use of information technologies

Information technology is sufficiently integrated into the teaching where appropriate.

Examination system

There is evidence that a wide range of assessment methods is used as part of the course, e.g. essays, exams, presentations, laboratory exercises and other 'semi-compulsory' methods, such as reflective journals and weekly exercises. The internship forms an important aspect of the course and the students are required to produce a report on their experience. A formal contract of collaboration between students and internship hosts is currently in place, however, it fails to address the aims and objectives of the internship and particularly the

precise details and nature of the practical exercise(s) agreed. The internship needs to be based on aims and objectives that are relevant and at the level required for this study.

The examination system was not raised as an issue by either students or members of staff and can be considered fit for purpose.

IMPLEMENTATION

Quality of teaching procedures

The quality of teaching procedures is managed autonomously. Staff take this responsibility very seriously. Overall, we were impressed by the technical competence of the academic staff and their inclusive approach to pedagogy.

Quality and adequacy of teaching materials and resources.

There are very active members of staff who make exceptional efforts to create and maintain an environment that reflects the culture of the discipline.

Quality of course material. Is it brought up to date?

As part of the annual curriculum review the content of the course is updated.

Linking of research with teaching

There is awareness of the importance of linking research with teaching and this is evident for example in the setting up of three research labs. The implementation needs to be strengthened across all subjects. Staff should be encouraged to undertake research which will inform teaching.

Mobility of academic staff and students

The issue of mobility is clearly understood and the department makes a great effort within the resources at their disposal. There is a good selection of internships, regular visits of external experts in conferences and opportunities for the students and staff to participate in the ERASMUS programme. However, there is a need for a better balance between incoming and outgoing staff and students and the department should consider means of redressing this such as the provision of Greek language tuition to attract more students from other countries.

Evaluation by the students of (a) the teaching and (b) the course content and study material/resources

The students welcomed the opportunity to evaluate the course content and study material/resources on an annual basis. An earlier evaluation was very positively received by the students.

RESULTS

The breakdown of marks, particularly for the academic year 2008-2009 in the undergraduate degree, are not consistent with previous years. There is an observed reduction in the number of graduating students which is not explained. A more consistent approach should be established in the collection of success and failure rates and the time taken to graduate. In addition, the overall profile of academic performance in the undergraduate degree appears to have dropped. It is important to establish the reasons behind this phenomenon.

The marks attained by students in the Postgraduate degree are of a high level.

Overall, the phenomenon of inactive and continuing students (over the normal registration period) creates a difficulty in interpreting statistics. It is hoped that under the new law this issue will be resolved.

IMPROVEMENT**Does the Department propose methods and ways for improvement?**

The department does propose specific methods/ways for improvement. More importantly there is clearly a climate within the department which encourages regular discussion on improvement. A formal system for sharing best practice in teaching pedagogical methods should be established.

What initiatives does it take in this direction?

Individual members of staff are supported in developing new teaching techniques, such as reflective journals and actively strengthening the link between teaching and practice via visits to relevant institutions. This encourages students to critically reflect on how theory applies to practice. The students, however, should be encouraged to be more proactive in developing independent research skills.

C. Research

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

APPROACH, IMPLEMENTATION RESULTS AND IMPROVEMENT

There is good research practice in the department in terms of holding conferences and journal publishing (e.g. submission and publication of original studies by the academic staff in the journal *Tekmerion* and the *Mediterranean Chronicle*). This demonstrates a broad Mediterranean focus that can be further expanded as a research strategy is being developed.

The research laboratories are a useful innovation that allow sharing of research methods and practice between students and members of staff. There is an active research culture but there is need for an overarching departmental research strategy for contextualising research and establishing a direction which more tightly reflects the aims of the disciplines taught in the department. This will also encourage a thriving and focused research culture.

The department needs to be commended on having acquired the D-space repository software. Staff should be encouraged to deposit publications in accordance with standard international practice as this promotes the visibility of research.

Some members of staff have a high level of international recognition and this should be used to encourage further international collaboration.

D. All Other Services

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

APPROACH, IMPLEMENTATION RESULTS AND IMPROVEMENT

The balance of administrative to academic staff is not sufficient to satisfy the needs of the department (both students and staff). As a result too much academic staff time is spent on administration. For example, the development and maintenance of the departmental website is solely the responsibility of academic staff whereas there should be technical support. This should be addressed.

Pastoral support should be offered to students on a formal basis.

The construction of the new library is almost complete and this might present the opportunity to consider the creation of a small museum as a practical activity for students to reinforce the museology aspect of the course.

There is a lively political culture amongst the student body. The provision of a social space for students appears limited.

Keeping a register would allow a clearer picture of student presence.

The offices of members of staff were suitably equipped and there was evidence of using electronic information management for administration.

The student laboratories were sufficiently equipped and in the process of being updated.

A lot of thought has gone into creating a suitable environment through exhibits, pictures and technology display that are used as part of actual teaching. This is a very commendable practice. There is also an open culture amongst staff that promotes debate on alternative futures and directions.

We were pleased to see the development of the new library building but could not of course pass judgment on it. However, we would stress the central importance of an excellent library to a department such as this.

Collaboration with social, cultural and production organizations

There is active engagement with the community through public lectures.

Further collaboration with local museums, libraries and archives and engagement with practitioners should be encouraged. We consider this critical to the success of the department especially because of its unique identity. For example, practical projects could be designed in collaboration with other local organisations (such museums, archives and libraries) to address each component/direction of the course (library science, archives and museums) in a practical way. There is an obvious opportunity to have a close collaboration with the Hellenic Institute of Venice.

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.

Potential inhibiting factors at State, Institutional and Departmental level, and proposals on ways to overcome them.

- It is the responsibility of the government to ensure that positions in libraries, museums and archives are filled with people who have appropriate professional qualifications.
- Some degree of certainty in future funding would assist the development of long terms goals.

Short, medium and long-term goals

- The department should seek to develop postgraduate masters programs which exploit the uniqueness and range of its disciplines
- The Department explained to us its goal of developing a new course structure in which the first two years preserved a common core, which would ensure the general employability of students and the final two years allowed specialism (in one of the specified directions). This was also welcomed by some of the students we met. We commend this approach.
- Employability is a key concern by both the students and the department. The provision of adequate funding to support visits, internships, exchanges etc which enrich the student experience is a worth while investment.
- The Department should develop a strategy for marketing and promoting its unique identify to become a leading international centre of education and research in the fields that it covers. By extension, this will ensure that the highest quality of students is recruited.

F. Final Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC

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

The External Evaluation Panel has formed a very positive view of the Department and its progress. A lot of thought has gone into creating a suitable environment through exhibits, pictures and technology display that are used as part of actual teaching. This is a very commendable practice. There is also an open culture amongst staff that promotes debate on alternative futures and directions.

The Panel commended the Department for:

- The unique contribution to the study and conservation of cultural heritage of Greece.
- The very open and caring attitude of staff creating a very positive environment.

The recommendations highlighted below should be understood in the positive overall context:

- The Department has the appropriately qualified and trained staff to implement the curriculum. However, it is important to ensure that the profile and expertise of academic staff is relevant to the core disciplines and that it is well balanced. At present, there appears to be more emphasis on specific areas and less concentration of expertise on the main disciplines (e.g. Archives and Library Science).
 - The development of a new course structure in which the first two years preserve a common core and the final two years allow specialism is welcome.
 - Good practice exists in many areas, such as pastoral support and quality assurance but these would benefit from being formalised.
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