



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 Psychology
University of Crete



European Union
European Social Fund



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 Psychology of the University of Crete consisted of the following four (4) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by the HQA in accordance with Law 3374/2005 :

1. Professor Andrew Papanicolaou
University of Tennessee
(Coordinator)

2. Professor Euangelia Demerouti
Eindhoven University of Technology

3. Professor Athanasios Raftopoulos
University of Cyprus

4. Professor Themistoklis Apostolidis
Aix-Marseille Universite

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

We, the members of the Evaluation Committee, with the exception of Prof. Papanicolaou who had been debriefed previously, met with the representatives of the Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency on Monday morning. Afterwards all of us flew to Crete and we arrived at Rethymnon in the evening of the same day. The same evening we met informally with the chairperson and several other members of the Department of Psychology.

The next day, Tuesday 9/12/2013 at 9 o'clock, we visited the Department in the University campus. We met first with the vice Rector of academic affairs, Prof. Papadaki. Then we visited the laboratories of the Department, the administrative staff (γραμματεία), the library, and the Departmental facilities (offices and classrooms). Afterwards, the members of the Department presented the curriculum of both the undergraduate and graduate programs, and a detailed description of their research activities. We also met with undergraduate and graduate student representatives. Finally, we met with the lecturer and the assistant professors of the Department.

The next day, Wednesday, we visited again the site of the Department where the members of the faculty continued their presentations on the practicum (πρακτική άσκηση) for the undergraduate and graduate programs, on the collaborative relations of the Department with other Institutions throughout Europe and North America, and the links of the Department with the local and broader society. They also described to us the process of the internal evaluation which they had they had initiated themselves and completed in the past and repeated again recently in advance of our visit (one person). Subsequently we examined the report of the Internal Evaluation Committee, the Self- Assessment report, as well as information provided during the three-day site visit with faculty, students, and administrative staff.

The faculty also described to us the activity of the Department's involvement

in the counseling center for students of the University of Crete. Then we met with the senior staff (namely, the associate and full professors) and the technical support staff. Finally, we met with chairperson of the Department (Dr. Evangelos Karademas) and the vice-chairperson (Dr. Kostantinos Kafetsios) with whom we revisited issues raised during our two-day visit.

Our over-all impression of the Department was definitely positive. In particular, we were impressed by the openness and the willingness of the faculty members to share with us information concerning their Department and its problems. We were also impressed by the extremely positive rapport between faculty and students (gathered from separate interviews with both graduate and undergraduate students).

It was also evident to us that there exists a spirit of co-operation and comradeship among the overwhelming majority of faculty members.

Regarding the undergraduate curriculum, we noticed that the faculty offers a very broad spectrum of courses and seminars, which covers, with some minor exceptions (see below), all basic aspects of the field. The same appears to be the case with the graduate program.

The members of the Department we interviewed are wholeheartedly committed to improving their teaching methods, and the students are satisfied with this aspect of their studies.

We would also like to emphasize the high level of productivity and quality of research output and research grant activity, which, in view of the low faculty to students ratio and the resulting heavy teaching load they simultaneously carry, renders that productivity level exceptional.

The Department has three teaching and original research laboratories but the available space is inadequate for the high volume of research conducted there. The Department also lacks sufficient teaching rooms to accommodate the ever-increasing number of undergraduate students.

We noticed that the students in general were satisfied with the administrative (γραμματεία) staff. However, concerning the relation between the faculty and the administrative staff, there seems to be some room for improvement (see below).

Finally, we were positively impressed with the University Library and the orderliness of the faculty offices, which renders them adequate even though they are small; with the high rate of successful placement of graduates in post-graduate programs in Greece and abroad(42%); the high level of job satisfaction on the part of program graduates and of the faculty and the high number of collaborative arrangements of many faculty members with prestigious Institutions in Europe and North America.

II. The Internal Evaluation Procedure

We found the documentation the faculty provided us highly informative and complete. The faculty ought to be congratulated for the impressive effort they made to gather and present all the information necessary for the evaluation of their Department. More importantly, we found that the conclusions reached in the process of the internal evaluation accord nearly perfectly with our conclusions.

The presentations by the faculty were well organized and provided all additional clarifications we requested. The faculty, the students and staff were informative and most accommodating. However, we noticed that the internal evaluation report provided to us by the HQAA did not match the most current one drafted by the Department and, as a result, the information we used to prepare our visit was outdated and incomplete.

A. Curriculum

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

APPROACH

The general characteristics of the Department's curriculum are: its pluralistic character; the integration of teaching and research and the ready access of students to the faculty. The main purpose of the program is to provide the students with a well-rounded education in Psychology so as to enable them to pursue further graduate studies in the different sub-disciplines of the field and to also prepare them to enter the job market as professional psychologists. Specifically, the curriculum was designed in order to meet the following particular objectives:

- a. Development of high level knowledge and abilities concerning the various psychological sub-disciplines and development of critical thinking.
- b. Development of high level research skills of both the undergraduate

and graduate students via laboratory courses, undergraduate theses, graduate theses, and doctoral dissertations.

- c. Exposure to and training, for the undergraduate and graduate students respectively in applied Psychology
- d. Communicating the Department's work to the scientific community but also to the broader society, by means of conferences, workshops and contributing, to the degree possible, to the welfare of the local society.

In order to achieve these objectives the students must complete 22 compulsory courses, 14 electives (7 from Psychology, 4 from the social sciences and 3 that could from the other Departments of the University of Crete), 4 courses in English emphasizing scientific terminology, 3 seminars, 3 laboratory exercises, a practicum of 200 hours of exposure to applications of Psychology and an undergraduate thesis.

These courses cover the following areas: 1. Principles of Psychology, 2. Methodology and Statistics, 3. Developmental and School Psychology, 4. Biological Psychology and Neuropsychology, 5. Social Psychology, 6. Clinical, Health and Counseling Psychology. One positive feature of the curriculum is that several courses are offered in series where the advanced ones are preceded by more basic prerequisites. Completion of the curriculum entails 242 ECTS.

The graduate program has two directions: 1. Health Psychology and 2. School Psychology. Both require practical training of 1200 hours and 600 hours respectively and the preparation of a graduate thesis. The curriculum includes the completion of 12 graduate courses. Students may enter the graduate program if they meet stringent academic criteria (such as performance on the entrance examination, the interview and in their undergraduate coursework).

IMPLEMENTATION

To implement the goals of the both programs, the Department employs exposure to research practices, a variety of teaching and performance evaluation methods. In order to optimize the curriculum, the Department is involved in revising it according to perceived needs.

The distribution of coursework across the different sub-disciplines of Psychology is adequate and covers them to a satisfactory extent. However the curriculum has some limitations. Specifically, the area of organizational Psychology is hardly represented (there is only one elective course in this area) and both Social and Clinical Psychology seem to be relatively under-represented in it. Some essential practical skills in methodology and statistics are not covered sufficiently. For example, only a part of the students become familiar with the use of the SPSS software program. Furthermore the qualitative methodology is not adequately represented in the curriculum. This course is offered by the Department of Sociology but the students tend not to attend it. Finally, it would be desirable for the practicum hours (currently only 200) to be increased to provide the students with the opportunity to reach a better insight of the work in applied Psychology areas.

In general, however, the curriculum compares very favorably not only with other programs in Psychology in Greece, but also with similar programs in Universities abroad. We reviewed the contents of the courses and our impression is that the material is clearly selected, arranged and updated to cover the classical and the contemporary literature and is similar to that of most prestigious Universities of Europe and North America.

Unfortunately, the Department is plagued by two serious problems for which the State (and not the Department or the University) is responsible. The first and foremost concerns the number of the faculty members. The Department is under-stuffed, especially in view of the increasing number of undergraduate students that the Ministry of Education requires the faculty to educate. The problem is due to the fact that (1) the vacancies due to retirement or transferring of faculty to other institutions are not re-filled, and (2) the fact that there has been no new hiring of faculty in recent years. In this context, we would like to emphasize that the number of the students is quite disproportionate both to the Departmental facilities and to the number of the faculty members. Characteristically, the number of undergraduate students has almost doubled during the last fourteen years while the number of faculty members is drastically reduced. As a result, while the average ratio of students to faculty in the University of Crete at large is 48, the ratio in the Department of Psychology is 60.

RESULTS

Despite the shortage in faculty members, we think that both students and faculty are satisfied with the accomplishments of the existing program.

In concert with the faculty, we believe that the 4-year basic degree course of studies cannot prepare students for a career as professional psychologists. This difficulty is further exacerbated by the following factors: First, the number of students attending classes, especially the mandatory ones, is very high and this limits the effective interaction between students and faculty. Second, although the students have many course choices, they feel that they do not have the opportunity to deepen their knowledge in each area sufficiently. Third, owing to the limited number of faculty members, there are fields in Psychology that cannot be covered adequately (for example, social organizational and clinical Psychology).

Finally, a point of concern is the fact that only a small percentage of the students enrolled finish their studies within four years. This is mostly due to the existing culture among the students, and due to the fact that not all courses are available to all of them in time. The latter reason is related to the lack of faculty members (see above and section F below).

Concerning the graduate program, we noticed that the specialization in school Psychology is less well served than in health Psychology. Specifically, there are fewer faculty members than those required to cover adequately the demands for the practicum and the supervision of graduate theses. There also seem to exist some problems concerning the communication and interaction between students and some of the supervisors. In contradistinction, the graduate program in health Psychology was highly praised by the graduate students.

IMPROVEMENT

The Department is fully aware of the limitations of the program and they believe (correctly, in our opinion) that the only way these could be overcome would be through radical transformation of the system of higher education in Psychology and of the laws regulating its practice (see section F below)

As mentioned above, the faculty members are fully aware of the basic problems and limitations of the program, but it is not within their power to remedy the situation (see section F below).

As mentioned above, we had the opportunity to meet with some students and graduates of the program. We were also able to review some undergraduate theses, which we found of uniformly high quality. The students were uniformly positive in their assessment of their study program and emphatic in their appreciation of their professors' efforts to maximize the effectiveness of their teaching by volunteering extra time for that purpose. Overall, we find the curriculum quite satisfactory although we recognize the need for some improvement in the following areas.

1. The 200 hours of practical experience are not sufficient and should be increased. Moreover, the quality of the practicum should be enhanced, by improving the interaction between the students and the internal and the external supervisors.
2. Scheduling of courses during the middle of the week seems to be problematic and required courses are not evenly distributed during the week. Course scheduling should be revisited and modified whenever possible.
3. The methodological training should be strengthened and diversified.
4. The seminars and laboratory exercises should be more readily available to students.
5. The Department ought to seek a solution to the problem of the lack of a sufficient number of courses in clinical and social Psychology, as well as the lack of courses in organizational Psychology.
6. The graduate program in school Psychology should be strengthened with additional faculty to cover the necessary courses and seminars and to improve the supervision of the practicum.

B. Teaching

APPROACH:

The faculty should be congratulated for being effectively engaged in their teaching tasks and for continuously reflecting on alternative pedagogic strategies. Faculty and students expressed their mutual satisfaction in collaborating on various projects, whether for the purpose of training or for the conduct of the undergraduate thesis research. We noted the presence of a general feeling of collegiality and solidarity of students and faculty and a will, on both sides, to make things work and to achieve the highest academic standards, despite the limitations in resources.

The faculty employs a variety of teaching and course evaluation methods. Specifically, they employ a mixture of the following methods: standard lectures, literature review and report writing, class presentations, review of clinical cases, interviewing, role playing, participation in laboratory experiments, field observations, construction and validation of psychometric instruments, frequent in-class tests and formal examinations.

We were very pleased to observe that the faculty uses extensively e-learning methods to disseminate a variety of information such as uploading information in the internet in the form of course notes, and power-point presentations of the lectures published papers and theses. They also use the internet for testing, for discussions, and for enabling their own evaluation by the students.

IMPLEMENTATION

Teaching and research in the Department of Psychology is greatly enhanced through its involvement in the ERASMUS Program (20 exchange programs). The University's Center organizes and oversees both faculty and student exchanges between several European countries (for example, Spain, Italy, France, Russia, Portugal, Cyprus, Germany, and UK). The Department of Psychology participates in the program with several faculty and students spending time abroad and furthering their education each year. Likewise, the Department also hosts students (both undergraduates and graduates) and faculty from abroad.

Finally, the Department has developed and validated an elaborate multidimensional instrument to evaluate courses and a manual on how to compose graduate and Ph.D theses.

RESULTS and IMPROVEMENT

The students expressed satisfaction with the effectiveness of the teaching methods employed by the faculty. The most consistent complaint of the faculty was about the extremely insufficient size of classrooms (70 seats for 200 students) and the lack of basic infrastructure (such as sufficient number of projectors and screens).

As noted above, a large number of students do not complete their studies within four years. This fact results in unpredictable size of enrollment in particular classes, which has, in turn, wider repercussions for the proper planning of the courses, seminars, and laboratory exercises. The faculty noted that the new law, which requires that the students complete their studies in six years, should lessen this problem.

C. Research

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

APPROACH

There are three research laboratories in the Department: the laboratory of Behavioral Neurosciences with includes an animal colony; the laboratory of applied Psychology and the laboratory of Experimental Psychology. These serve the dual purpose of familiarizing students with the conduct of research and of conducting original research. This research activity is supported by a total of 28 grants (of which 13 are extramural totaling 1,168,460 euro) over the period of the last six years in which members of the faculty are Principal Investigators. Moreover, faculty members participate as Co-Investigators in seven additional grants, during the same period, totaling 586,700 euro. Currently, fifteen doctoral dissertations are pursued in the three Laboratories. It is clear that this level of research activity is outstanding, by any standards.

Equally outstanding is the quality and quantity of research output reflected in over 150 articles since 2009 in referred, mostly international journals as well as in dozens of book chapters and in several books.

IMPLEMENTATION

It is interesting to note that these results are accomplished with a limited laboratory infrastructure and limited possibilities for field research. There is no dedicated technical laboratory staff. There is one truly outstanding individual that appears to serve all technical needs of the Department from website to laboratory equipment maintenance.

RESULTS and IMPROVEMENT

The prominent presence of the faculty's work in the international research community is unquestionable. We have only high praise for the accomplishments of the Department in this respect and we have only two comment to offer: First, that the University administration should make provisions for the expansion of the laboratory space and infrastructure in

general in order to facilitate the task of the exceptionally productive faculty. Second, we have noticed that research productivity varies considerably among faculty with few members lagging behind in productivity and that the remediation of this problem should be a goal for the Department to accomplish in the future.

D. All Other Services

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

APPROACH

The Department has three full-time administrative secretaries who manage all of its secretarial and administrative matters. The students seem satisfied with the services rendered by the office staff. The office staff appears to work well together and share responsibilities. However, several faculty members have voiced their dissatisfaction with the performance of the administrative staff.

The Department has a limited (one person) technical support for information technology, audiovisual devices, computers, and other devices used for teaching and for the conduct of research. Furthermore, there is no webmaster available for updating the Department's website.

Finally, the Department has implemented the policy of academic counselors who oversee the students' studies and progress. Moreover, the University has established a counseling office in which the Department of Psychology plays a pivotal role.

IMPLEMENTATION

The University has a well-organized library system that offers several services. The library spaces are adequate and conducive to studying. They are well attended by the Department's students.

The library of the School of Social Sciences, which houses the books and journals of the Department of Psychology is staffed with qualified librarians who offer introductory and advanced seminars to new and upper-level students and provide regular library support to students and faculty. The library holdings consist of hard copies and electronic journals, books, and databases. The library also offers free access to PCs and internet. The students were very satisfied with the remote access system of the library holdings. This allows them to work effectively from home and is consistent with general practice at major Universities abroad.

Reportedly, Psychology students have a higher presence on campus and class attendance in comparison to students in other Departments of the University

of Crete.

RESULTS

We were positively impressed with the University Library and the orderliness of the faculty offices, which tenders them adequate despite their small size; with the high rate of successful placement of graduates in post-graduate programs in Greece and abroad; with the high level of job satisfaction on the part of graduating students and of the faculty and with the high number of collaborative arrangements of many faculty members with prestigious Institutions in Europe and North America.

We noticed a discrepancy between the opinion of the faculty and of some students on the one hand and the administrative staff (Γραμματεία) on the other, regarding the efficiency of the services that the latter provide. A way should be found for the faculty and the students to have the type of secretarial and administrative support they require.

IMPROVEMENTS

We understood that the timely renewal of the online journal access is often interrupted and that this problem has become very pressing lately, owing to the severe cutbacks in the University's budget. Needless to say, this service is vital for student education and the conduct of research and ought to be carried out more efficiently.

As we have noted, the Department has designated academic advisors. However, only a very small number of students take advantage of this service. The Department should seek ways to increase this number, such as better advertising, and planning of meetings.

Collaboration with social, cultural and production organizations

The Department has developed several important collaborative arrangements with the local community and the wider society. Specifically, the Department has established collaborations with many institutions and organizations such as Hospitals, Day Care Centers, Schools, and Clinics. Furthermore, faculty members routinely offer lectures to increase public awareness of psychological conditions and the management of psychological disorders to municipalities, private and public Schools, social clubs and non-

governmental organizations.

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.

Delays in the hiring of already approved faculty positions originating in the Ministry of Education often induce the already selected new faculty members to decline the offer of the position. Therefore there is an urgent need for the hiring process to be implemented without delays.

The increasing number of students with severe financial problems has resulted in a commensurate increase in psychosocial problems among the students, which have detrimental repercussions for their regular class attendance and timely completion of both, the graduate and the undergraduate program of their studies. The Ministry of Education should be made aware of this situation if the situation is to be remedied.

The University should increase its financial contribution to the departmental budget to address the special needs of the Department (as compared to those of other departments) as explained above.

In addition, the University should aid the Department in the widening of the network of local Institutions (Schools, Hospitals etc.) in order to improve the exposure of the undergraduates and the training of the graduate students in the practice of applied Psychology.

F. Final Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC

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

Although this, as well as every other Psychology Departments, has its own characteristic profile, it nevertheless offers a well-rounded curriculum representing most of the basic sub-disciplines of the field with the exception

of organizational –human factors Psychology. The faculty informed us that they do wish to rectify this problem and have requested the creation of such a position in the Department in the past. But as it was mentioned before, the curriculum does provide a solid basis for the professional development of its graduates.

It is our impression that there is one issue that the Department may be able to address. It concerns the scheduling of classes in the middle of the week, which, according to some students, results from the fact that some faculty do not reside in Rethymnon but visit it in the middle of the week. The consequence of this arrangement is that the classes are not distributed evenly throughout the week and the professors may not be as available for consultations with the students as they could. The latter consequence, however, is most likely not serious, since the same students commented emphatically on the availability of the faculty and the interest of most faculty members in their academic and personal life and development.

Although the relation of the Department to the University Administration appeared to be positive, there are some indications that the relation can be improved. Specifically, it seems that the Administration is not sensitive to the fact that unlike other Departments in the School of Social Sciences, the research needs of the Psychology Department are much higher since they often involve expensive instrumentation. We therefore recommend that the special needs of the Department should be taken into account in the distribution of funds.

The most pressing and serious problems that this Department, as well as all other Psychology Departments in the country face today, could not be solved without deep structural alterations of the legislation that regulates University policy and the profession of Psychology. Specifically, as things stand now, graduates from Departments of Psychology in Greece have the right to practice the profession. The problem, however, is that there are several distinct professions of Psychology (e.g. Industrial, School, Clinical, Counselling, etc) each requiring different types of intensive practical training in addition to specialized theoretical preparation. Yet, in view of the fact that the duration of studies is limited to four years and the fact that graduates of four year programs are enabled by law to practice any of the professional sub-disciplines, the Psychology Departments in this country are saddled with the impossible task of training professional psychologists within the span of eight semesters in all sub-disciplines. There is no way of rectifying this glaring deficiency in the system of training psychologists other than radical changes

in legislation. Specifically, professional practice should be the privilege of only those that have received post-graduate practical and theoretical training in a particular sub-discipline and be limited to that discipline.

Moreover, the practice of the Ministry of Education of requiring the faculty to train more than twice the number of students that they can train (while at the same time refusing to approve additional faculty positions, or allowing for the replacement of retiring faculty) should be reversed. In order for a Psychology Department to function properly the minimum necessary ratio of faculty to students should be maintained and the minimum or the requisite resources be made available. If the State cannot afford to maintain Departments that produce Psychologists of all specialties it should properly maintain Departments that each specializes in one or some specialties.

The Members of the Committee

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