



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
HELLENIC REPUBLIC



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Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης**
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Accreditation Report
for the New Undergraduate Study Programme in
operation of:

Agriculture
University of Ioannina

2 July 2023



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



Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the New Undergraduate Study Programme in operation of **Agriculture** of the **University of Ioannina** for the purposes of granting accreditation.

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PART A: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE REVIEW

I. The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

The Panel responsible for the Accreditation Review of the new undergraduate study programme in operation of **Agriculture** of the **University of Ioannina** comprised the following four (4) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

- 1. Professor Emeritus, Spyros Pavlostathis (Chair)**
Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, Georgia, USA

- 2. Professor, Andronikos Mauromoustakos**
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA

- 3. Dr. Athanasios Saropoulos**
Member of the Geotechnical Chamber of Greece, Thessaloniki, Greece

- 4. Mrs. Aphrodite Lioliou**
Student, Department of Agriculture, International Hellenic University, Thessaloniki, Greece

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

In preparation for the assessment, the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel (EEAP) reviewed multitude of material provided by the Hellenic Authority of Higher Education (HAHE), which included background information and guidance on the accreditation process, detailed material and data related to the programme under evaluation, such as the programme accreditation proposal and associated appendices.

The programme review was conducted via teleconference (Zoom), organized and coordinated by HAHE with the help of the Department of Agriculture, University of Ioannina. The schedule and agenda of the review were as stated below:

Tuesday, 27/06/2023:

- a) Preliminary private meeting of the EEAP; assignment of writing parts of the accreditation report draft to the members of the EEAP.
- b) Welcome meeting and short overview of the undergraduate programme (UP) with the vice-Rector/President of MODIP Prof. P. Kanti and the Head of the Department Prof. A. Tsinas: presentation of Institution and Department history, academic profile, current status and future developments, strengths and areas of concern.
- c) Meeting with OMEA members Profs. Ch. Karipidis, E. Bonos, C. Nathanailidis, G. Patakioutas, and P. Mpeza, MODIP members Profs. S. Agathopoulos and E. Evaggelou, MODIP staff Mrs. P. Griva, P. Alexoudi, and L. Zisi: discussion of degree compliance of the UP to the quality standards for accreditation, internal procedures, course examinations, review of students' progress, course/instructor evaluations, and Department facilities.
- d) Private debriefing (EEAP members only).

Wednesday, 28/06/2023:

- a) Discussion with faculty and teaching staff members: J. Skoufos, A. Tzora, G. Varras, I. Tsirogiannis, C. Voidarou, I. Anastopoulos, V. Stournaras, E. Gouva, D. Kyrkas, and P. Yfanti.
- b) Discussion with eight (8) 1st to 4th academic year undergraduate students as well as two (2) students in transition from the old TEI to the Department.
- c) On-line (video) and walk-through, live tour of facilities: discussion of Department facilities, such as classrooms, laboratories, faculty and staff offices, secretariat, as well as library and other campus facilities. Participating faculty and staff: J. Skoufos, I. Tsirogiannis, and Mrs. E. Tsoumpa, Secretary.
- d) Discussion with employers and social partners from both private and public sector: Mr. A. Kachrimanis, Governor of Epirus Region; Mrs. R. Vevetsi, Mayor of Nikolaos Skoufas; Mr. E. Vitsios, CEO Vitsios Nurseries Company; Mr. C. Kolios, CEO Kolios Fruit Company; Mr. I. Patounas, Director of R&D Department, Ioannina Agricultural Poultry Cooperative Pindos S.A.; Mr. V. Kitas, CEO Kitas Winery Company; Mr. A. Tatsis, Epirus Farm Manager, division of Epirus S.A. Dairy Products & Cheese Producing Company; Mr. K. Michas, Director of Michas Poultry Farm Company; Mr. G. Dudas, Founder of GreenLandscapes, Greening and Landscape Management Company; and Mr. I. Anastasiou, Business Manager of Nuevo Animal Nutrition Ltd., Feeding & Consultancy Company, Ireland.

- e) Private debriefing (EEAP members only): discussion of findings and preparation of oral report.
- f) Discussion with OMEA and MODIP members and staff on points needing clarification relative to Internal Quality Assurance System and procedures followed by the Institution and the Department. Participating members: Prof. P. Kanti, Vice-Rector/President of MODIP; Prof. A. Tsinas, Department Head; OMEA members, Profs. C. Karipidis, E. Bonos, C. Nathanailidis, G. Patakioutas, P. Mpeza; MODIP members, Profs. S. Agathopoulos, E. Evaggelou; and MODIP staff Mrs. P. Griva, P. Alexoudi, and L. Zisi.
Final, closure meeting with the Vice-Rector/President of MODIP, the Department Head, OMEA, and MODIP members and staff: informal, oral presentation of the EEAP key findings.

Thursday, 29/06/2023:

Draft report writing.

Friday, 30/06/2023:

Draft report writing.

Saturday, 01/07/2023:

Draft report writing.

Sunday, 02/07/2023:

EEAP meeting: Review and finalization of report draft.

Throughout the review and evaluation process, the EEAP was in close communication with the Head of the Department, who was very accommodating in providing additional information requested by the EEAP. The EEAP found that OMEA and MODIP representatives, as well as the faculty, students, and staff interviewed were eager and helpful in our discussions, providing all additional information requested by the EEAP.

III. New Undergraduate Study Programme in operation Profile

The Department of Agriculture of the University of Ioannina, located in Kostakioi Artas, was created in 2018 by Law 4559/2018 as a result of the transition of the Department of Agricultural Technology (which in 2013 merged the three independent departments of Crop Production, Animal Production, and Floriculture–Landscape Architecture) of the former Technological Educational Institute (TEI) of Epirus to a University Department. The Department has been in operation from the academic year 2019-2020. The Department has 19 tenure-track faculty (DEP), 11 non-tenure track teaching staff (EDIP), 4 special technical staff (ETEP), and 3 administrative staff.

The number of newly admitted students in 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022 was 134, 157, 28, and 64, respectively. Several of the students the EEAP interviewed stated that the Department of Agriculture of the University of Ioannina was among their first to fourth choice. The anticipated total number of enrolled students in the five coming years is around 550, i.e., 110 students/year.

The undergraduate programme is a five-year study resulting in a Diploma degree. The curriculum includes ten (10) semesters of study. A total of 112 courses are offered, of which 17 are General Background, 39 Special Background and 56 advanced for in depth knowledge on specific areas. The Department offers two directions/specializations: a) Plant Production; and b) Animal Production. To graduate, the student must have successfully passed courses totalling 270 European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits, have completed mandatory practical training (10 ECTS), and have prepared and completed a thesis (30 ECTS). The total number of credits must be at least equal to 310 ECTS. Courses taken beyond the 270 ECTS are included in a Diploma appendix. For graduates of the Department who have successfully taken a set of specific courses from a designated list, a Certificate of Digital Skills may be granted. The EEAP found that the curriculum is extensive; however, the number of elective courses is low and not well distributed among the two cycles of study.

The Department prepares graduates for careers in both the private and public sector of the economy. There are strong links to the society, Industry, and administration, both in the Region of Epirus and beyond, which are key priority of the Department.

The Department supports doctoral studies and participates in two interdepartmental Postgraduate Studies Programmes. The faculty carry research projects of regional, national, and international scope/needs.

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

Principle 1: Strategic Planning, Feasibility and Sustainability of the Academic Unit

Institutions must have developed an appropriate strategy for the establishment and operation of new academic units and the provision of new undergraduate study programmes. This strategy should be documented by specific feasibility and sustainability studies.

By decision of the institutional Senate, the Institutions should address in their strategy issues related to their academic structure in academic units and study programmes, which support the profile, the vision, the mission, and the strategic goal setting of the Institution, within a specific time frame. The strategy of the Institution should articulate the potential benefits, weaknesses, opportunities or risks from the operation of new academic units and study programmes, and plan all the necessary actions towards the achievement of their goals.

The strategy of their academic structure should be documented by specific feasibility and sustainability studies, especially for new academic units and new study programmes.

More specifically, the feasibility study of the new undergraduate study programmes should be accompanied by a four-year business plan to meet specific needs in infrastructure, services, human resources, procedures, financial resources, and management systems.

During the evaluation of the Institutions and their individual academic units in terms of meeting the criteria for the organisation of undergraduate study programmes, particular attention must be placed upon:

a. The academic profile and the mission of the academic unit

The profile and mission of the department should be specified. The scientific field of the department should be included in the internationally established scientific fields of Higher Education, as they are designated by the international categorisation of scientific fields in education, by UNESCO (ISCED 2013).

b. The strategy of the Institution for its academic development

The academic development strategy for the operation of the department and the new study programme should be set out. This strategy should result from the investigation of the factors that influence the studies and the research in the scientific field, the investigation of the institutional, economic, developmental, and social parameters that apply in the external environment of the Institution, as well as the possibilities and capabilities that exist within the internal environment (as reflected in a SWOT Analysis: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats). This specific analysis should demonstrate the reason for selecting the scientific field of the new department.

c. The documentation of the feasibility of the operation of the department and the study programme

The feasibility of the operation of the new department should be justified based on:

- *the needs of the national and regional economy (economic sectors, employment, supply-demand, expected academic and professional qualifications)*
- *comparison with other national and international study programmes of the same scientific field*
- *the state-of-the-art developments*

- *the existing academic map; the differentiation of the proposed department from the already existing ones needs to be analysed, in addition to the implications of the current image of the academic map in the specific scientific field.*

d. The documentation of the sustainability of the new department

Mention must be made to the infrastructure, human resources, funding perspective, services, and all other available resources in terms of:

- *educational and research facilities (buildings, rooms, laboratories, equipment, etc.)*
- *staff (existing and new, by category, specialty, rank and laboratory). A distinct five-year plan is required, documenting the commitment of the School and of the Institution for filling in the necessary faculty positions to cover at least the entire pre-defined core curriculum*
- *funding (funding possibility from public or non-public sources)*
- *services (central, departmental / student support, digital, administrative, etc.)*

e. The structure of studies

The structure of the studies should be briefly presented, namely:

- **The organisation of studies:** *The courses and the categories to which they belong; the distribution of the courses into semesters; the alignment of the courses with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).*
- **Learning process:** *Documentation must be provided as to how the student-centered approach is ensured (modes of teaching and evaluation of students beyond the traditional methods).*
- **Learning outcomes:** *Knowledge, skills and competences acquired by graduates, as well as the professional rights awarded must be mentioned.*

f. The number of admitted students

- *The proposed number of admitted students over a five-year period should be specified.*
- *Any similar departments in other HEIs with the possibility of student transfers from / to the proposed department should be mentioned.*

g. Postgraduate studies and research

- *It is necessary to indicate research priorities in the scientific field, the opportunities for interdisciplinary research, the challenges towards new knowledge, possible research collaborations, etc.*
- *In addition, the postgraduate and doctoral programmes offered by the academic unit, the research projects performed, and the research performance of the faculty members should be mentioned.*

Relevant documentation

- *Introductory Report by the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) addressing the above points with the necessary documentation*
- *Updated Strategic Plan of the Institution that will include its proposed academic reconstruction, in view of the planned operation of new department(s) (incl. updated SWOT analysis at institutional level)*
- *Feasibility and sustainability studies for the establishment and operation of the new academic unit and the new study programme*
- *Four-year business plan*

Study Programme Compliance

NOTE: In commenting on the programme compliance relative to the various elements of Principle 1 (i.e., elements *a* through *g*), and to avoid repetitions, when applicable, reference to comments in individual Principles (i.e., Principle 2 through 12) is made.

a. The academic profile and the mission of the academic unit

The Department of Agriculture was established in 2018 (Law 4559/2018) by the transfer of faculty and staff members of the Technological Educational Institute of Epirus to the new Department. The mission of the Department is to offer high-level education to scientific fields related to agriculture/agronomy by conducting research and producing new knowledge, operating in an environment of extroversion, attractive to students, researchers and young scientists. It promotes innovation by conducting research related to the primary production sectors, by strengthening collaborations with foreign and domestic institutions, professional organizations both public and private companies, as well as industry. The scientific field of the Department is included in the internationally established scientific fields of Higher Education designated by UNESCO (International Standard Classification of Education – Fields of Education and Training 2013; ISCED-F 2013); thematic section "0811. Crop and Livestock Production" (01.7-621)(See also Principles 2, 3).

b. The strategy of the Institution for its academic development

The strategy of the operation of the Department as well the development of the study programme is fully harmonized with the strategy of the Institution. The design of the programme study took into account the national and international experience, as well as societal and research needs related to the broader area of Crop and Livestock Science. Curricula of similar programmes in Greece and abroad were examined. For the development of the programme study, institutional, economic, developmental, as well as societal factors were considered. A SWOT analysis was conducted (See also Principles 2, 3).

c. The documentation of the feasibility of the operation of the department and the study programme

As mentioned in section ***b. The strategy of the Institution for its academic development***, above, institutional, economic, developmental, as well as societal factors were considered for the development of the Department and its programme study. The geographic location of the Department in the centre of the region of Epirus is of strategic importance as it is in the centre of agricultural and livestock production for which the new programme with emphasis on applied research and further development of scientific know-how will support the needs of medium and large businesses in the agri-food sector. The development and operation of the Department is consistent with and supportive of the Epirus Region's development vision and expertise needs. Relative to other similar programmes, the new Department is differentiated by its focus of plant and animal production in close proximity to engagement with agrobusiness in the Epirus Region. However, the curriculum needs to be expanded to include several core sub-areas of agronomy (e.g., plant pathology, entomology, precision agriculture, etc.). The Department proximity to a multitude of agroindustries offers lots of opportunities to the students for educational visits as well as for hands-on, realistic internships (See also Principles 2, 3, 5).

d. The documentation of the sustainability of the new department

The general needs of infrastructure and support of the students are covered by the Department and the University of Ioannina. The Department has five (5) large classrooms (80-

90 seats) and four (4) small classrooms (45 seats). The Department has four (4) approved/statutory laboratories, as well as laboratories for student laboratory practicals. The laboratories and the laboratory equipment are sufficient and adequate for the instructional needs of the students and research projects. The Department's library is on campus, while the Students Restaurant is located in the city of Arta. The Department's farm includes four (4) conventional greenhouses, one (1) hydroponic greenhouse, one (1) orchard-vineyard and five (5) farms for large crops. Experimental stable facilities remain incomplete. However, the Department cooperates and contracts with two (2) state-of-the-art poultry units, two (2) pig farms and two (2) goat and sheep breeding units for student training. The Department has 19 tenure-track faculty (DEP), 11 non-tenure track teaching staff (EDIP), 4 special technical staff (ETEP), and 3 administrative staff. Filling of future faculty positions resulting from retirement as well as new positions in academic/research areas more closely related to the fields of the Department have been identified. Faculty members carry externally funded research projects with funding secured from competitive national and international sources, as well as industry (See also Principles 6, 7, 8).

e. The structure of studies

The undergraduate programme is a five-year study resulting in a Diploma degree. The curriculum includes ten (10) semesters of study. A total of 112 courses are offered, of which 17 are General Background, 39 Special Background and 56 advanced for in depth knowledge on specific areas. The Department offers two directions/specializations: a) Plant Production; and b) Animal Production. To graduate, the student must have successfully passed courses totalling 270 European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits, have completed mandatory practical training (10 ECTS), and have prepared and completed a thesis (30 ECTS). The total number of credits must be at least equal to 310 ECTS. Courses taken beyond the 270 ECTS are included in a Diploma appendix. For graduates of the Department who have successfully taken a set of specific courses from a designated list, a Certificate of Digital Skills may be granted.

The EEAP found that the curriculum is extensive; however, the number of elective courses is low and their distribution is not well distributed among the two cycles of study. Courses not directly relevant to Agriculture could be made electives and instead new courses should be added in the areas of plant protection, new agricultural technologies, climate change, courses related to Artificial Intelligence (AI), analytics, coding, and design of experiments.

The Curriculum is based on learning outcomes specified in each course syllabus, the quality of teaching and research, as well as the use and integration of technology to improve teaching-learning processes. A number of published internal regulations exist for all aspects of course and laboratory delivery, examination, and grading, laboratory exercises, preparation of diploma thesis, etc. Modes of teaching include theory, practice exercises, laboratory exercises, homework, and individual or group study assignments. The students' performance and grading are evaluated by a combination of end of semester examination and other assignments as mentioned above. Practical training is required. As mentioned in section **a**, above, the mission of the Department is to offer high-level education to scientific fields related to agriculture/agronomy by conducting research and producing new knowledge, operating in an environment of extroversion, attractive to students, researchers and young scientists. To a large extent the Department fulfils its role in imparting knowledge and skills to its graduates consistent with its mission (See also Principles 3, 6, 7).

f. The number of admitted students

The undergraduate programme is a five-year study resulting in a Diploma degree. The number of newly admitted students in 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022 was 134, 157, 28, and 64, respectively. Several of the students the EEAP interviewed stated that the Department of Agriculture of the University of Ioannina was among their first to fourth choice. The anticipated total number of enrolled students in the five coming years is around 550, i.e., 110 students/year. Student transfers from/to a number of similar departments of other Greek Higher Education Institutes, created by the transition of TEI to University departments, are possible (See also Principle 5).

g. Postgraduate studies and research

The Department of Agriculture participates in two interdepartmental postgraduate studies programmes: a) "Environment & Agri-Food" in partnership with the Department of Chemistry and the Department of Biological Applications & Technologies of the University of Ioannina, and b) "Aquaculture - Pathological Problems of Farmed Aquatic Organisms" in partnership with the Department of Veterinary Medicine of the University of Thessaly. The Department supports doctoral studies. The faculty carry research projects of national and international scope/needs based on the laboratory facilities and resources of the Department as well as in collaboration with other Universities and Research Centres. It is commendable that the Department has developed a large number of collaborative research programmes. Overall, the research output of the Department should and is expected to increase with a greater focus on Agronomy (See also Principle 6).

Panel Judgement

Principle 1: Strategic planning, feasibility and sustainability of the academic unit	
a. The academic profile and the mission of the academic unit	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
b. The strategy of the Institution for its academic development	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
c. The documentation of the feasibility of the operation of the department and the study programme	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
d. The documentation of the sustainability of the new department	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
e. The structure of studies	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
f. The number of admitted students	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
g. Postgraduate studies	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Principle 1: Strategic planning, feasibility and sustainability of the academic unit (overall)	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

To avoid repetitions, where appropriate, specific recommendations are made under the remaining Principles that follow.

Principle 2: Quality Assurance Policy of the Institution and the Academic Unit

The Institution should have in place an accredited Internal Quality Assurance System, and should formulate and apply a Quality Assurance Policy, which is part of its strategy, specialises in the operation of the new academic units and the new study programmes, and is accompanied by annual quality assurance goals for the continuous development and improvement of the academic units and the study programmes.

The quality assurance policy of the Institution must be formulated in the form of a published statement, which is implemented by all stakeholders. It focuses on the achievement of special annual quality goals related to the quality assurance of the new study programme offered by the academic unit. In order to implement this policy, the Institution, among others, commits itself to put into practice quality procedures that will demonstrate: the adequacy and quality of the academic unit's resources; the suitability of the structure and organisation of the curriculum; the appropriateness of the qualifications of the teaching staff; the quality of support services of the academic unit and its staffing with appropriate administrative personnel. The Institution also commits itself to conduct an annual internal evaluation of the new undergraduate programme (UGP), realised by the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) in collaboration with the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) of the Institution.

The quality assurance policy of the academic unit includes its commitment to implement quality procedures that will demonstrate: a) the adequacy of the structure and organisation of the curriculum, b) the pursuit of learning outcomes and qualifications in accordance with the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education, c) the promotion of the quality and effectiveness of the teaching work, d) the adequacy of the qualifications of the teaching staff, e) the promotion of the quality and quantity of the research work of the members of the academic unit, f) the ways of linking teaching with research, g) the level of demand for graduates' qualifications in the labour market, h) the quality of support services, such as administration, libraries and student care, i) the implementation of an annual review and audit of the quality assurance system of the UGP through the cooperation of the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) with the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) of the Institution.

Relevant documentation

- *Revised Quality Assurance Policy of the Institution*
- *Quality Assurance Policy of the academic unit*
- *Quality target setting of the Institution and the academic unit (utilising the S.M.A.R.T. methodology)*

Study Programme Compliance

According to the data presented to the EEAP, the Institution has developed and implements their Quality Assurance Policy as part of its broader strategy. The past three years the University has applied this policy at the new undergraduate curriculum of the Department of Agriculture, accompanied by annual quality assurance targets for the continuous development and improvement of the academic unit and teaching programme. The Quality Assurance Policy of the academic unit, which is publicly accessible from the Department website (<https://dagri.uoi.gr/politiki-diasfalisis-poiotitas/>), includes adequate reference to the delivery of the new undergraduate programme, including commitments to satisfy requirements and strive for continuous improvement. There are explicitly recorded in the four-year Business Plan of the academic unit and also in the Programme of Study. The Quality Assurance Policy is

sufficiently communicated to all parties involved as it is publicly available in the Departmental webpage. The academic unit has set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely goals regarding the new undergraduate programme, and according to their Quality Target for the Programme they are at a satisfactory point in terms of achieving the required targets. Based on the data presented to the EEAP, the targets are also paired with suitable key performance indicators (KPIs). Goals are monitored, updated, and communicated, according to the Quality Assurance Policy implemented by the Institution and the academic unit. On average, 5.8% of registered/active students participate in course/instructor evaluation, which is considered very low, but not unusual for Greek Higher Education Institutes.

Elected student representatives are not included in OMEA and in the General Faculty Assembly meetings as there are not elected representatives. However, the Department allows students to participate as observers in General Assemblies.

Panel Judgement

Principle 2: Quality assurance policy of the Institution and the academic unit	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

To enhance adherence to Principle 2, the EEA Panel recommends the following:

- An elected student representative should be included in the OMEA to directly connect with the student population relative to the evaluation and accreditation process.
- The Department should make an effort to substantially increase student participation in course/instructor evaluations.
- Establishment of an External Advisory Board should be considered which will guide the continuous revision and further development of the curriculum, as well as the prioritization of applied research.
- Interactions with alumni upon their graduation should be exploited as a potential means of informing the decision-making process regarding future directions.

Principle 3: Design, Approval and Monitoring of the Quality of the New Undergraduate Programmes

Institutions should design the new undergraduate programmes following a defined written process, which will involve the participants, information sources and the approval committees for the programme. The objectives, the expected learning outcomes, the intended professional qualifications and the ways to achieve them are set out in the programme design. The above details, as well as information on the programme's structure, are published in the Student Guide.

The Institutions develop their new undergraduate study programmes, following a well-defined procedure. The academic profile, the identity and orientation of the programme, the objectives, the subject areas, the structure and organisation, the expected learning outcomes and the intended professional qualifications according to the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education are described at this stage. An important new element in the structure of the programmes is the introduction of courses for the acquisition of digital skills. The above components should be taken into consideration and constitute the subject of the programme design, which, among other things, should include: elements of the Institution's strategy, labour market data and employment prospects of graduates, smooth progression of students throughout the stages of the programme, the anticipated student workload according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), the option of providing work experience to the students, the linking of teaching and research, the international experience in study programmes of similar disciplines, the relevant regulatory framework, and the official procedure for the approval of the programme by the Institution.

The procedure of approval or revision of the programmes provides for the verification of compliance with the basic requirements of the Standards by the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU).

Relevant documentation

- *Senate decision for the establishment of the UGP*
- *Curriculum structure: courses, course categories (including courses for the acquisition of digital skills), ECTS awarded, expected learning outcomes according to the EQF, internship, mobility opportunities.*
- *Labour market data regarding the employment of graduates, international experience in a related scientific field.*
- *Student Guide*
- *Course outlines*
- *Teaching staff (list of areas of specialisation, its relation to the courses taught, employment relationship)*
- *QAU minutes for the internal evaluation of the new study programme and its compliance with the Standards*

Study Programme Compliance

The Department has set up an Undergraduate Programme Committee for the design of the Undergraduate Programme (UGP) under review and evaluation, which was approved by the Senate of the University of Ioannina (Extract of Minutes/Senate meeting 1068/27-6-2019).

According to the Feasibility Study and the Accreditation Proposal of the UGP of the Department, the UGP was designed to fulfil the strategic planning of the University of Ioannina for the new Department which is to support the development and especially the local production of Epirus in the primary and secondary sector, and also to enable the Department's agronomist graduates to exercise their professional rights in accordance with the provisions of the Presidential Decree 344/2000 (Practice of the geotechnical profession; articles 8 & 9).

The elective courses are limited in number and more importantly they are not distributed evenly. Each subject is only available once for one semester of study in the 6th to the 9th semester, while elective courses are not offered in core areas (1st cycle of studies; 1st - 4th semester). The EEAP recommends a number of curriculum changes (see Panel Recommendations below).

The total number of courses (compulsory and elective) required to obtain the degree is 63, resulting in 310 ECTS. The subjects of the undergraduate courses are clearly influenced by the subjects of the three departments of the former TEI of Epirus that merged and by the scientific specialties of the existing members of the Teaching Research Staff (ΔΕΠ). Specifically, in the Crop Science direction there are ten (10) courses (4 compulsory and 6 elective) in the area of horticulture/landscape architecture, as well as there are 12 courses (of which 9 are compulsory) of Veterinary Science content in the area of Animal Production. However, these subjects do not adequately correspond to the requirements of the already granted professional rights. Additionally, there are courses that are not compatible with a Department of Agriculture and its purposes, such as Breeding and Health of Companion Animals, Laboratory Animal Science, Companion Animal Nursing, and Functional Biomaterials/Tissue Engineering Biosystems. Moreover, the basic courses of the Livestock Science direction such as Sheep/Goat Breeding, Cattle Breeding, Animal Genetic Improvement, Beekeeping, and other courses are taught by temporary staff.

The professional rights recently legislated for the graduates of the Department, described in the Presidential Decree 344/2000 (Practice of the geotechnical profession; articles 8 & 9) are common to all agricultural fields of study (Crop Production, Livestock Production, Food Science, Agricultural Economics and Land Improvement–Agricultural Machinery and Construction). The lack of specializations of the Plant Pathologist, the Entomologist, and the Agricultural Economist related to the above academic subjects in the Teaching Research Staff of the Department is reflected in the UGP under consideration. The courses in the fields of Phytopathology and Entomology are limited in number (there are no specialized courses in the subjects of Virology, Acarology, Prokaryotic and non-parasitic Diseases of Plants and Enemies of Health Importance). The Department during the next revision of its UGP should also consider the possibility of increasing the semesters of the 1st study cycle (with a corresponding reduction of the specialization semesters of the 2nd study cycle) from the current four (4) to five (5) or six (6), integrating the general courses of plant production and plant protection as core subjects for all its graduates. Such a structural change will better align the content of the

UGP with the professional rights and jobs available, and possibly increase the proportion of students choosing the Livestock Production direction, since the percentage of students who choose Livestock Production is only 20%.

Five courses of the UGP informatics group are offered and the student should take four of them in order to acquire proficiency in the use of informatics (digital skills), while 47 courses have been included in the Asynchronous Distance Learning Platform (e-courses) of the University of Ioannina. There are also several courses in the UGP that incorporate modern trends and developments in Agriculture (e.g., Precision Agriculture-Livestock, Remote Sensing - Geographic Information Systems, Biofoods - functional foods, etc.). In general, the Study Guide and the Course Outlines are complete, clarifying and recording all the necessary information (learning outcomes, teaching and learning methods, evaluation, etc.).

The EEAP notes the need for a substantive, periodic study programme revision and restructuring. The procedure should also foresee a more formal and comprehensive consultation with stakeholders (e.g., Geotechnical Chamber of Greece), external experts, students, and graduates. A form of advisory/consultation panel comprised of alumni and external stakeholders should be considered.

Panel Judgement

Principle 3: Design, approval and monitoring of the quality of the new undergraduate programmes	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	X
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

To enhance adherence to Principle 3, the EEA Panel recommends the following:

- The number of elective courses counted in ECTS for obtaining the degree should be increased and be available for all winter or spring semesters of the 2nd (6th, 7th, 8th and 9th semesters) study cycle.
- The number of courses in the area of Horticulture - Landscape Architecture could be reduced, while that in the areas of Phytopathology and Entomology could be increased, in which the effects of extreme weather events due to current and future Climate Change on crops should also be studied. It would also be useful to develop a specific course on the study of the effects of the Climate Change on crops and farmed animals, both from the perspective of abiotic stresses, as well as from the change of habitats and the introduction of new pathogens and animal enemies.
- Courses whose subject area is incompatible with an Agriculture Department and its purposes should be reconsidered.
- The course of “Agricultural experimentation and data analysis” should be made compulsory.
- Stakeholders and external experts of public and private sectors should be formally consulted for revisions and future planning of the study programme. We propose the establishment of a formal external advisory board to engage with the Department.

Principle 4: Student-centred Approach in Learning, Teaching and Assessment of Students

The academic unit should ensure that the new undergraduate programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process. The assessment methods should reflect this approach.

In the implementation of student-centered learning and teaching, the academic unit:

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

Relevant documentation

- *Questionnaires for assessment by the students*
- *Regulation for dealing with students' complaints and appeals*
- *Regulation for the function of the academic advisor*
- *Reference to the planned teaching modes and assessment methods*

Study Programme Compliance

From the discussion the EEAP had with the students (represented by 8 females and 2 males from different years of study many from the same geographical area), it was communicated that the students are extremely satisfied with the teaching staff regarding its educational work both in the classroom and the laboratories. They mentioned that almost 60% of students were attending their classes, which is much larger than in similar programmes in Greek Institutions. The laboratory equipment is of high quality and serves to a great extent the educational and research needs, something the faculty and students testified.

Students, prefer to turn to their teachers, but also address issues and problems through their Academic Advisor. They expressed satisfaction with the department administrative staff in addressing their concerns in a timely manner. Concerning the books provided, the students did not express any concerns with accessing them timely and they expressed satisfaction with the material as well as their teachers.

The students are concerned providing input through regular course/instructor evaluations as many are concerned that the evaluations might not be totally unanimous without proof to the opposite. Regarding the course/instructor assessment procedures (an entire month in the end of the semester much longer than peers' institutions), the students expressed concerns with the length of the questionnaires along with the guarantee for anonymity leads to extremely

low participation rate anywhere between 5%- 33% in the best-case scenario. They felt ignorant of the benefits of the assessment.

Students did not express any concerns about score ratings, or the existence of difficult theory courses that prolong the length of their study and almost all of them mentioned that they expected to get their degrees in the required time.

Teachers inform the students about the examination procedure, material and mode of grading in advance so that the students may study efficiently and organize their time properly. The students did not report any issues related to course/laboratory examinations and grading.

Though most lecture slides are online (e-class), there are no recorded lectures for all courses for those who are not capable of attending classes or happened to be sick and missed important lectures or even for those who would like to review them some other time or catch up with the others. However, basic videos made by the teaching staff exist for several courses describing laboratory procedures and methods.

High percentage of students (80%) of those taking parts in the exams end up passing the courses. Over 60% agree or strongly agree that the UGP provides the necessary skills for finding jobs in the marketplace.

There is mutual respect from both sides, teachers and students, and eagerness to solve problems. The necessary procedures for dealing with students' complaints and incidents of harassment and bullying as well as AMEA issues exist and followed.

The students benefit from the laboratory exercises and the projects assigned. Thus, they are confident to apply that knowledge in the field, and they think they are helpful in the job market by the majority of those responding.

In conclusion, the curriculum requires improvements to help students meet the demands of the marketplace, including new areas affected by artificial intelligence (AI). Qualified teaching staff must expose students to the advantages and dangers of using AI especially in writing and data analysis which is already creating serious issues in higher education.

Panel Judgement

Principle 4: Student-centred approach in learning, teaching and assessment of students	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

To enhance adherence to Principle 4, the EEA Panel recommends the following:

- To facilitate the educational work, the lectures should be recorded and put online, enabling students to watch them at any time, so no one is excluded. Adopting this hybrid system of synchronous and asynchronous teaching could help motivate studying and increase scoring. This could help the already high success rate (80%) of passing the exams compared to that in peer Greek Institutions.
- The advantage of the Department, which produces professional plant (~80) and animal scientists (~20%), should be supported by more faculty members related to plant sciences structuring a more integrated curriculum that includes experimental design as most Diploma theses are based on experiments. In general, more electives in data analytics-related courses are needed to support Precision Agriculture and Big Data, Machine Learning and AI modeling courses. In addition, use of AI to code with R and Python should be considered.
- Due to the difficulty of the courses and the high load, lecturers should also focus on creating guidelines for taking exams successfully that lead to higher grades. The idea is that a good teacher may as well convey the knowledge once and, combining the existing detailed laboratory exercises and useful assigned projects, would help students achieve higher grades. The recorded lectures mentioned above as a suggestion would also help.
- To increase the extremely low participation in the course/instructor assessment rates, students should have access to shorter, anonymous questionnaires. Otherwise, there could be alternative conditions completing a questionnaire during class without the presence of the course instructor, maintaining the voluntary nature of the process.

Principle 5: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition of Academic Qualifications and Award of Degrees and Certificates of Competence of the New Study Programmes

Academic units should develop and apply published regulations addressing all aspects and phases of studies of the programme (admission, progression, recognition and degree award).

All the issues from the beginning to the end of studies should be governed by the internal regulations of the academic units. Indicatively:

- ✓ *the registration procedure of the admitted students and the necessary documents - according to the law - and the support of the newly admitted students*
- ✓ *student rights and obligations, and monitoring of student progression*
- ✓ *internship issues, granting of scholarships*
- ✓ *the procedures and terms for writing the thesis (diploma or degree)*
- ✓ *the procedure of award and recognition of degrees, the duration of studies, the conditions for progression and assurance of the progress of students in their studies*

as well as

- ✓ *the terms and conditions for enhancing student mobility*

Appropriate recognition procedures rely on relevant academic practice for recognition of credits among various European academic departments and Institutions in line with the principles of the Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region. Graduation represents the culmination of the students' study period. Students need to receive documentation explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes, and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed (Diploma Supplement).

All the above must be made public within the context of the Student Guide.

Relevant documentation

- *Internal regulation for the operation of the new study programme*
- *Regulation of studies, internship, mobility and student assignments*
- *Printed Diploma Supplement*

Certificate from the President of the academic unit that the diploma supplement is awarded to all graduates without exception together with the degree or the certificate of completion of studies

Study Programme Compliance

In spite of the high number of subjects (117, including laboratories) and the low number of permanent faculty (18), as well as the high teaching load per faculty (10 hours a week), the students to faculty ratio is a very healthy 1:20. We did not hear student complains with access

to laboratories and equipment critical to student learning experience and laboratory conditions. The majority of the students felt ready to apply their knowledge in the workplace.

Students were concerned in the importance of successful accreditation of the UGP so that they can attain the equivalent of an Integrated Master which means, if desired, they can continue directly to acquire a PhD following their graduation.

During the EEAP discussion with the students, the ratio between females and males was imbalanced. The students mentioned that most of the students in the Department are females.

Though a graduate of this Department is considered an Agriculture graduate, many students (4 out of 5) prefer to follow the plant science direction over the animal direction, especially since more jobs are in abundance in the specific Epirus region that the department serves. The students are taught a few analytics courses without deepening their knowledge about AI and seem unaware of the changes in the future workplace due to current advances and adaptation of AI technologies in the agricultural sector.

Students lack exposure to programming languages such as R and Python, which contradicts teachers' claims concerning their eagerness to develop students' digital skills. Students could develop some of these skills, attending certification programmes as it is going to take time to hire new faculty members with such expertise.

The Department can help meet modern Greek society's demands in agriculture expressed by the local stakeholders and they help with the needs of a more hands-on integrated curriculum.

Teachers should communicate how to use AI and how to prepare students for the future workplace due the adaptation of AI soon in many aspects that support decision making in Agriculture.

As this new Department is the transition from the three departments of the former TEI of Epirus, the graduation or transition of the 149 students of the former TEI since 2020 is happening.

In conclusion, there is a healthy balance between the number of students and teaching staff with adequate administrative support and appropriate infrastructure. The vast majority of the students among those showing up for the exams (80%) passes the course. The Diploma acquired should eventually lead directly to doctoral studies in the same department for all students that voice intentions to continue their studies.

Panel Judgement

Principle 5: Student admission, progression, recognition of academic qualifications, and award of degrees and certificates of competence of the new study programmes	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

To enhance adherence to Principle 5, the EEA Panel recommends the following:

- The transition of students from high school education to the university should happen smoother. The curriculum should be re-structured in a way that meets the demands of a Higher Education Institution but also reflects the changing workplace.
- The Institution must keep track of its graduate students' development, when that time comes, in order to involve them in the revision of the curriculum. This way, the Institution will keep its connections with companies and research institutions alive and create new ones with the local industry. It may also help attract funding and will further enhance research needed in the area.
- The Institution should continue paying students involved in research programmes something that the department and the Institution should be very proud. It should always pursue solutions to Industry problems and finding new ways allocating scholarships to researchers, as well as organizing events of awards and honours.

Principle 6: Ensuring the Competence and High Quality of the Teaching Staff of the New Undergraduate Study Programmes

Institutions should assure themselves of the competence, the level of knowledge and skills of the teaching staff of the academic units, and apply fair and transparent processes for their recruitment, training and further development.

The Institution should attend to the adequacy of the teaching staff of the academic unit, the appropriate staff-student ratio, the suitable categories of staff, the appropriate subject areas and specialisations, the fair and objective recruitment process, the high research performance, the training – development, the staff development policy (including participation in mobility schemes, conferences and educational leaves- as mandated by law).

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

Relevant documentation

- *Procedures and criteria for teaching staff recruitment*
- *Regulations or employment contracts, and obligations of the teaching staff*
- *Policy for staff recruitment, support and development*
- *Performance of the teaching staff in scientific-research and teaching work, also based on internationally recognised systems of scientific evaluation (e.g., Google Scholar, Scopus, etc.)*

Study Programme Compliance

The Department has 19 scientists in total who work as permanent Teaching Research Staff (ΔΕΠ). Thirteen (13) of them belong to the two (2) laboratories of the Crop Production direction and six (6) of them to the two (2) laboratories of the Livestock Production direction. The Crop Production members consist of 1 Architect, 1 Forester, 1 Ichthyologist, 1 Chemist, 7 Agronomists, and 2 Agricultural Technologists. The Livestock Production members consist of 1 Veterinarian - Doctor, 4 Veterinarians, and 1 Agronomist. This categorization is in line with the legally established professional rights. Of the 19 faculty members, two (2) do not hold a PhD and have the status of lecturer. There are also 11 members of the Laboratory Teaching Staff (ΕΔΙΠ) who participate in the teaching of laboratories or the theoretical part of courses, of which four (4) do not hold a doctoral degree.

The members of the Laboratory Teaching Staff (ΕΔΙΠ), however, are allowed to be assigned independent teaching work only in the event that they hold a doctoral degree. Based on the Study Guide, the Name List of Teaching Staff, and the posted timetable of the Spring semester on the Department's website, it appears that, two members of ΕΔΙΠ independently

teach the courses Agricultural Machinery and Postharvest Handling in Plant Production Products without holding a PhD degree.-Also, due to the lack of a sufficient number of ΔΕΠ and ΕΔΙΠ with a doctoral degree, a significant number of undergraduate courses are taught by temporary staff.

As regards the strategy for research activities in specific fields of scientific interest, this is clearly influenced by the field of study of the Department's laboratories. For example, the Laboratory of Animal Health - Food Hygiene and Quality has a scientific subject of Veterinary Medicine and not Agriculture and the Laboratory of Sustainable Ecological Planning, Management and Informatics is very specialized. As can be seen from the data of the Scopus Database for the Department's published research, there is a great disparity in the contribution of the faculty members to the h-index values.

Despite the heavy teaching workload, however, students are largely satisfied with the teaching competence of the academic staff, cooperation and social interactions as it comes from student evaluation surveys, even though the participation rate of students was low. Student exchange programmes (e.g., Erasmus) were not offered during the COVID pandemic, but now students should be encouraged to join them.

There are established links between research and teaching in the undergraduate programme, which are apparent from the subjects of the offered core and elective courses. The Department has established collaboration with other universities, research laboratories and the public and private sectors and thus has attained increased research expenditures through projects/grants/contracts, which has led to improved laboratory facilities. This very good practice should be further promoted.

In conclusion, the issues described above stem from the serious lack of permanent Teaching Research Staff, particularly in critical specializations for Crop and Livestock Production. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to recruit competent scientists in the following specializations until the next revision of the UGP: Entomology, Phytopathology, Plant Physiology, Plant Genetic Improvement, Viticulture, Agricultural Economy, Poultry Breeding, Sheep/Cattle Breeding. Independent teaching of undergraduate courses with a theoretical part by members of the Laboratory Teaching Staff who do not hold a PhD should be avoided.

Panel Judgement

Principle 6: Ensuring the competence and high quality of the teaching staff of the new undergraduate study programmes	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

To enhance adherence to Principle 6, the EEA Panel recommends the following:

- The Department's research should be oriented to and focus more on the Agricultural and Biological Sciences. The number of faculty with Agronomy orientation should be increased.
- Members of ΔΕΠ and ΕΔΙΠ should be encouraged to participate in high-level research projects in order to increase their contribution to the Scopus Database h-index and reduce the existing disparity between them.
- ΔΕΠ members should be recruited in the subjects of Entomology, Phytopathology, Plant Physiology, Plant Genetic Improvement, Viticulture, Agricultural Economy, Poultry Breeding, Sheep/Goat Breeding, and Cattle Breeding.

Principle 7: Learning Resources and Student Support of the New Undergraduate Programmes

Institutions should have adequate funding to meet the needs for the operation of the academic unit and the new study programme as well as the means to cover all their teaching and learning needs. They should -on the one hand- provide satisfactory infrastructure and services for learning and student support and -on the other hand- facilitate direct access to them by establishing internal rules to this end (e.g., lecture rooms, laboratories, libraries, networks, boarding, career and social policy services, etc.).

Institutions and their academic units must have sufficient resources, on a planned and long-term basis, to support learning and academic activity in general, in order to offer students the best possible level of studies. The above means include facilities such as, the necessary general and specific libraries and possibilities for access to electronic databases, study rooms, educational and scientific equipment, information and communication services, support and counselling services. When allocating the available resources, the needs of all students must be taken into consideration (e.g. whether they are full-time or part-time students, employed students, students with disabilities), in addition to the shift towards student-centred learning and the adoption of flexible modes of learning and teaching. Support activities and facilities may be organised in various ways, depending on the institutional context. Students should be informed about all available services. In delivering support services, the role of support and administration staff is crucial and therefore this segment of staff needs to be qualified and have opportunities to develop its competences.

Relevant documentation

- *Detailed description of the infrastructure and services made available by the Institution to the academic unit to support learning and academic activity (human resources, infrastructure, services, etc.) and the corresponding specific commitment of the Institution to financially cover these infrastructure-services from state or other resources*
- *Administrative support staff of the new undergraduate programme (job descriptions, qualifications and responsibilities)*
- *Informative / promotional material given to students with reference to the available services*

Study Programme Compliance

The Department has adequate facilities dedicated to supporting the study programme and its students. Teaching equipment in the classrooms and laboratories is of satisfactory quality. Auxiliary facilities (i.e., EDUROAM, VPN, IT Systems and learning platforms, academic publishing houses' databases, etc.) are also available and accessible to students when needed. Students are well informed of the different support services available.

The Department utilizes five (5) out of eight (8) buildings of the Kostakioi campus, and it occupies nine (9) lecture rooms in total: five (5) with a capacity of 80-90 students each and another four (4) with a capacity of 45 students each. All lecture halls are of exclusive use of the Department.

The virtual tour and discussions with teaching staff and students revealed that laboratories satisfactorily cover the learning needs; however, some laboratory materials are missing due to

Department's State underfunding; a significant percentage of those is acquired by externally funded research projects.

The Department's Library is located in the city of Arta. All staff and faculty offices are in the Kostakioi campus, allowing daily communication between students and their teachers. Under the curation of the Department, the following Research Institutes are established, approved, and licensed via Official Government Gazettes:

- Laboratory of Sustainable Ecological Design, Management and Informatics (Government Gazette: B 3589/29.08.2020)
- Laboratory of Productive Agriculture and Plant Health (Government Gazette: B 3588/29.08.2020)
- Laboratory of Animal Production, Nutrition and Biotechnology (Government Gazette: B 3553/27.08.20)
- Animal Health Laboratory – Food Hygiene and Quality ((Government Gazette: B 3588/29.08.2020)

The Department's facilities for plant production include a farm (fruit orchard, vineyard, outdoor areas of large, cultivated plants) of a relatively small size (16,3 hectares in total), 2 greenhouses (hydroponics and plant propagation). There is no experimental farm owned by the Department to support the animal production sector. Nevertheless, the Department cooperates with private companies where possible; however, this limits academic research in livestock production. Limited digital technologies and smart infrastructure applications in Agriculture were mentioned or presented during the meetings and the on-line tour.

There is Student Advisor Support service for the students to seek advice on their study programme as well for the resolution of possible personal problems. In general, all students interviewed by the EEAP indicated that the relationship with and accessibility with the support facilities and their professors is very good and friendly. Information and material for thematic units (47 out of 112 courses) are uploaded on the electronic learning platform (e-class), which contains useful learning material including lecture notes, articles, and other useful sources of information pertinent to the programme. This also provides a useful platform for communication between students and faculty. The students indicated that they are pleased with the support services and their accessibility.

The Department's website is bilingual (Greek/English), well structured, user-friendly, and up-to-date, allowing students to be informed about all available services and regulations. Lectures are available in English, but mainly due to COVID-19, the Department did not welcome Erasmus+ students the last four years. During the virtual tour and the discussions with faculty, teaching staff, and students, as well as the prepared video, it was revealed that the existing laboratories satisfactorily cover the students' learning needs. The Department administrative staff is housed within the campus, at the Animal Production building. It appears to be sufficiently staffed, well-equipped and organized to offer support to students, staff, and faculty in an efficient manner.

The Department and the University institutionally provide counselling/advocating/complaint and objection management services to students, whether in the first or in an advanced year of study. Teachers have adopted the "open-door" approach to supporting the students. The

interviewed students expressed their satisfaction with the efficiency of the Secretariat and the support and counselling services in robust terms, especially during the two years of the pandemic.

There is a dormitory available in Arta city with a capacity of 150 beds, available for students of all three departments of the Kostakioi campus. A student restaurant is also available, but students have to travel to Arta. Nevertheless, students are benefited by an affordable student offer for their local transfers by bus, a service highly appreciated by them. Sports facilities are not available on-site in the Kostakioi campus as the existing Campus gym is not operating.

Overall, the Department has adequate facilities dedicated to supporting the study programme and its students, but State/University funds need to be secured for maintenance and upgrading of facilities.

Panel Judgement

Principle 7: Learning resources and student support of the new undergraduate programmes	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

To enhance adherence to Principle 7, the EEA Panel recommends the following:

- Work closely with the University authorities to maintain the generous levels of infrastructure available and ensure its continuous maintenance.
- Consider the enhancement of students' extracurricular activities wherever possible.
- Update sports facilities to allow students to practice team and individual sports at no cost.
- Develop and install cutting-edge precision agriculture technologies in the available open farms: remote sensing, precision soil cultivation and sowing, precision nutrient and irrigation management, automation, machinery and vehicles, etc.

Principle 8: Collection, Analysis and Use of Information for the Organisation and Operation of New Undergraduate Programmes

The Institutions and their academic units bear full responsibility for collecting, analysing and using information, aimed at the efficient management of undergraduate programmes of study and related activities, in an integrated, effective and easily accessible way.

Effective procedures for collecting and analysing information on the operation of Institutions, academic units and study programmes feed data into the internal quality assurance system. The following data is of interest: key performance indicators for the student body profile, student progression, success and drop-out rates, student satisfaction with the programme, availability of learning resources and student support. The completion of the fields of National Information System for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NISQA) should be correct and complete with the exception of the fields that concern graduates in which a null value is registered.

Relevant documentation

- *Report from the National Information System for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NISQA) at the level of the Institution, the department and the new UGP*
- *Operation of an information management system for the collection of administrative data for the implementation of the programme (Students' Record)*
- *Other tools and procedures designed to collect data on the academic and administrative functions of the academic unit and the study programme*

Study Programme Compliance

An existing information network is utilized to serve the academic and administrative needs of the Department. Easy access to the departmental system is provided to the faculty, students, and staff, all of whom are involved in the submission of data.

The departmental statistics rely on information management systems involved in the gathering, analysing, and utilizing data and information relative to the Undergraduate Programme of Study, including:

- The University wide-based MODIP system
- The Departmental information management system
- The ERASMUS programme management system
- The Career Office management system
- The Comprehensive National Quality Control Information System (ΟΠΕΣΠ) of ΕΤΗΑΕ

This information network is utilized to serve the academic and administrative needs of the Department as well as to be used for Programme Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement, for which the Departmental Unit for Quality Assurance (OMEA) and the University Unit for Quality Assurance (MODIP) are responsible. OMEA, the internal evaluation group, analyses the student data and uses this information to improve the performance of students and all teaching personnel. OMEA gathers and inputs data and information in the departmental information system on an ongoing basis about a variety of categories relevant to the Programme of Study, such as:

- The instructional and research activities of the faculty members
- The departmental teaching support facilities
- The administrative staff support
- Data on course/instructor evaluations by the students
- Student profiles
- Student academic progress

Easy access to the departmental system is provided to the faculty, students, and staff, all of whom are involved in the submission of data, which eventually is quantified in the form of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that can be easily interpreted and used for measurement and assessment purposes.

Students are presented with the opportunity to evaluate the faculty and support personnel via anonymous surveys. Still, the EEAP found that student participation in course/instructor evaluations is low, on average approximately 5.8% of registered/active students.

Employability and career paths of graduates are unavailable at this time as only a few students have graduated from the current new undergraduate study programme. At the moment, the Department relies on the employment and career structure (DASTA-Domi Apaxolisis kai Stadiodromias) of the University of Ioannina.

Panel Judgement

Principle 8: Collection, analysis, and use of information for the organization and operation of new undergraduate programmes	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

To enhance adherence to Principle 8, the EEA Panel recommends the following:

- Encourage students to complete course/instructor surveys for all semester classes, possibly linking their participation with a grade bonus.
- Develop methodology and procedures to collect systematically employment data and provide information on career paths and employability of graduates.

Principle 9: Public Information Concerning the New Undergraduate Programmes

Institutions and academic units should publish information about their teaching and academic activities in a direct and readily accessible way. The relevant information should be up-to-date, clear and objective.

Information on the Institutions' activities is useful for prospective and current students, graduates, other stakeholders and the public. Therefore, Institutions and their academic units must provide information about their activities, including the new undergraduate programmes they offer, the intended learning outcomes, the degrees awarded, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to their students. Information is also provided, to the extent possible, on graduate employment perspectives.

Relevant documentation

- *Dedicated segment on the website of the department for the promotion of the new study programme*
- *Bilingual version of the website of the academic unit with complete, clear and objective information*
- *Provision for website maintenance and updating*

Study Programme Compliance

Public information concerning the new undergraduate programme is made available through the Department's website, <https://dagri.uoi.gr>. The website is suitably structured in sections for easier access by visitors, and all the basic information concerning the academic unit is posted.

All essential information regarding the Department, undergraduate studies, announcements, activities, conferences/symposia, research activities of faculty members and contact information is available in separate tabs both in Greek and English, easily accessible on the website.

In a separate section, information about the teaching faculty members and staff with their contact details, a brief description of research interests, a link to their CV and the current courses each staff member teaches is also available.

The basic need for daily information for students is met. Also, in a separate tab, the extroversion and the synergies with major/local stakeholders and foreign academic institutes is presented. Connection with the following services is easily made through relevant links from the front page of the website, facilitating the students' needs with direct access to: E-classes; Electronic secretariat; Distribution management of scientific publications and books (Eudoxos portal); Electronic Platforms of Synchronous Education; Institutional Digital Repository; Live Broadcasts and Video Lectures service; Academic webmail; Erasmus exchange programme; Open Academic Courses; Hellenic Academic Library Link; Academic id; Student care; Accessibility issues; Library and information centre; and student advocate support.

No information exists on the graduates of the Department as the first graduates are anticipated in 2024. Only a few students have already graduated which had transferred to the Department from former TEI departments, after following the provisioned procedures to graduate with a University degree (i.e., students in transitional study programme; see also Principle 12).

Overall, the public information could be significantly improved in order to enhance the outreach of the Department, through information delivery and active presence in social networks with regular uploads (including information in English).

Panel Judgement

Principle 9: Public information concerning the new undergraduate programmes	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

To enhance adherence to Principle 9, the EEA Panel recommends the following:

- Short videos of current students that talk about the Department could be added. Other activities could target high school students who are on their way to enter the University.
- In the English version of the Department’s site, there are some deficiencies, which will possibly soon be addressed (e.g., <https://dagri.uoi.gr/en/research-laboratories/> or <https://dagri.uoi.gr/en/students/> or <https://dagri.uoi.gr/en/faculty-members/>).
- The EAAP noticed lack in the promotion of the Department to possible incoming foreign Erasmus students.

Principle 10: Periodic Internal Review of the New Study Programmes

Institutions and academic units should have in place an internal quality assurance system, for the audit and annual internal review of their new programmes, so as to achieve the objectives set for them, through monitoring and amendments, with a view to continuous improvement. Any actions taken in the above context, should be communicated to all parties concerned.

Regular monitoring, review and revision of the new study programmes aim at maintaining the level of educational provision and creating a supportive and effective learning environment for students. The above comprise the evaluation of: the content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up to date; the changing needs of society; the students' workload, progression and completion; the effectiveness of the procedures for the assessment of students; the students' expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme; the learning environment, support services, and their fitness for purpose for the programme. Programmes are reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders. The information collected is analysed and the programme is adapted to ensure that it is up-to-date.

Relevant documentation

- Procedure for the re-evaluation, redefinition and updating of the curriculum
- Procedure for mitigating weaknesses and upgrading the structure of the UGP and the learning process
- Feedback processes on strategy implementation and quality targeting of the new UGP and relevant decision-making processes (students, external stakeholders)
- Results of the annual internal evaluation of the study programme by the QAU and the relevant minutes

Study Programme Compliance

The undergraduate programme of study is periodically reviewed by a Curriculum Committee. The course material is under constant review in order to be in line with current educational needs as well as trends in international scientific research and market requirements. The review takes place every academic year.

Students are requested to evaluate the attended courses using an electronic questionnaire. Each questionnaire includes 36 course-related questions: 15 on the course laboratory-related, 5 on the course assignments, 7 on the instructors, 3 on distant-learning approach, 1 open-ended question, and 5 on students-related needs. The student uses a 5-point Likert scale that allows comparisons of students' opinions through time. Student participation in the evaluation process was 5.8%, which is very low. However, during the meeting between EEAP and the students, the latter mentioned that they are very satisfied with their studies.

An External Advisory Board could assist in the revision of the study programme based on new research directions and market needs.

Panel Judgement

Principle 10: Periodic internal review of the new study programmes	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

To enhance adherence to Principle 10, the EEA Panel recommends the following:

- Develop strategies that will increase course/instructor evaluation participation (i.e., demonstrate the value of evaluation, allow time to complete questionnaires during class, or organize special sessions).
- Consider establishing an External Advisory Board to assist in the revision of the study programme based on new research directions and market needs.
- Perform multivariate statistical analysis of all information embedded in the questionnaires to identify associations among the students, the Faculty, and the Programme.
- Post course evaluation summaries on the Department's website along with related actions for improvement.

Principle 11: Regular External Evaluation and Accreditation of the New Undergraduate Programmes

The new undergraduate study programmes should regularly undergo evaluation by panels of external experts set by HAHE, aiming at accreditation. The results of the external evaluation and accreditation are used for the continuous improvement of the Institutions, academic units and study programmes. The term of validity of the accreditation is determined by HAHE.

HAHE is responsible for administrating the programme accreditation process which is realised as an external evaluation procedure and implemented by a panel of independent experts. HAHE grants accreditation of programmes, based on the Reports submitted by the panels, with a specific term of validity, following to which revision is required. The accreditation of the quality of the programmes acts as a means of verification of the compliance of the programme with the Standards, and as a catalyst for improvement, while opening new perspectives towards the international standing of the awarded degrees. Both academic units and institutions must consistently consider the conclusions and the recommendations submitted by the panels of experts for the continuous improvement of the programme.

Relevant documentation

- *Progress report on the results from the utilisation of the recommendations of the external evaluation of the Institution and of the IQAS Accreditation Report.*

Study Programme Compliance

The EEAP was unable to evaluate this principle as the Department is newly established based on a new transition law of the former TEI departments to a University Department and therefore the current department has never had another external evaluation before. The lack of a previous evaluation report does not contribute efficiently to the verification of the programme's continuous evolution and improvements. However, the EEAP evaluated the specific principle considering the HAHE documentation under evaluation, the internal review report assessment of some of the principles and the three different positive overall evaluations from 10 years ago of the three TEI departments that have been combined into the current department.

MODIP has produced a report including all major strong points and deficiencies of the Department. The regular internal review of the programme is vital for the newly established undergraduate programme. The programme success will greatly benefit from the inclusion of all representative stakeholders (academic and administrative staff, students, social partners, primary sector, retail-wholesale trade, industry, etc.).

Panel Judgement

Principle 11: Regular external evaluation and accreditation of the new undergraduate programmes	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

To enhance adherence to Principle 11, the EEA Panel recommends the following:

- Due to the fact that no prior external evaluation report was available for the assessment by the EEAP, the Department should update its four-year plan and perform an intermediate internal review of its undergraduate programme under the light of the recommendations made by this EEAP.

Principle 12: Monitoring the Transition from Previous Undergraduate Study Programmes to the New Ones

Institutions and academic units apply procedures for the transition from previously existing undergraduate study programmes to new ones, in order to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Standards.

Applies in cases where the department implements, in addition to the new UGPs, any pre-existing UGPs from departments of former Technological Educational Institutions (TEI) or from departments that were merged / renamed / abolished.

Institutions should implement procedures for the transition from former UGPs to new ones, in order to ensure their compliance with the requirements of the Standards. More specifically, the institution and the academic unit must have a) the necessary learning resources, b) appropriate teaching staff, c) structured curriculum (courses, ECTS, learning outcomes), d) study regulations, award of diploma and diploma supplement, and e) system of data collection and use, with particular reference to the data of the graduates of the pre-existing UGP. In this context, the Institutions and the academic units prepare a plan for the foreseen transition period of the existing UGP until its completion, the costs caused to the Institution by its operation as well as possible measures and proposals for its smooth delivery and termination. This planning includes data on the transition and subsequent progression of students in the respective new UGP of the academic unit, as well as the specific graduation forecast for students enrolled under the previous status.

Relevant documentation

- *The planning of the Institution for the foreseen transition period, the operating costs and the specific measures or proposals for the smooth implementation and completion of the programme*
- *The study regulations, template for the degree and the diploma supplement*
- *Name list of teaching staff, status, subject and the course they teach / examine*
- *Report of Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) on the progress of the transition and the degree of completion of the programme. In the case of UGP of a former Technological Educational Institution (TEI), the report must include a specific reference to how the internship was implemented*

Study Programme Compliance

The Department was created in 2018 by Law 4559/2018 as a result of the transition of the Department of Agricultural Technology (which in 2013 merged the three independent departments of Crop Production, Animal Production, and Floriculture – Landscape Architecture) of the former Technological Educational Institute (TEI) of Epirus to a University Department. The Department has been in operation from the academic year 2019-2020. Relative to former TEI students, the new Department supported these students in coursework and laboratory exercises by its own teaching staff. In this context, the University prepared a plan with the courses included in the undergraduate programme for the transitional period. Several old TEI students have already graduated as Agronomists TE, but what percentage of the more than 400 TEI students have not graduated yet is not known. However, all former TEI students who have not graduated, have taken all required courses and laboratories; thus, all instructional needs have been satisfied and the students only need to repeat examinations, which the new Department supports.

The Department also supports students of the Department of Agricultural Technology who wish to obtain a university-level degree based on the requirements of the Law 4589/2019. These students are required to attend and successfully pass an additional year worth of courses, which are provided in one academic year (separate list of courses for the TEI students of each former TEI department). Only a few students have already graduated which had transferred to the Department from former TEI departments, after following the provisioned procedures to graduate with a University degree (i.e., students in transitional study programme).

A proposal for a University-level degree with an integrated Master’s (level 7 of the National and European Qualifications Framework) will be submitted following the completion of the accreditation process.

Panel Judgement

Principle 12: Monitoring the transition from previous undergraduate study programmes to the new ones	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

To enhance adherence to Principle 12, the EEA Panel recommends the following:

- Improve faculty/student ratio, mainly by increasing the number of faculty members. The EEAP agrees that the reported ratio of 1:20 is very good.
- The academic unit must create an improved system for the collection and use of data, courses, work and professional development of graduates of the former TEI departments.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

- The Department has implemented compliant, efficient mechanisms for monitoring and ensuring high quality of work and services. Quality assurance policies are already implemented regarding teaching delivery, assessment, and student progression. The existing quality assurance and continuous improvement policy aims to align practices with the strategic objectives the Department and the Institution.
- The faculty and staff are enthusiastic and dedicated to their mission. The students' overall experience is very positive. The enthusiasm of current students, employers, and other stakeholders was evident.
- The faculty and research staff are conducting research of regional, national, and international significance. The Department has developed collaborative research projects with other Universities and Research Centres.
- The participation of women in teaching, research, and administration is valued and recognized. The student gender ratio is balanced; more than half the student representatives that met with the EEAP were women.
- A collegial and friendly atmosphere between faculty, staff, and students.
- The local labour market in the area of Epirus sees a clear need for Department of Agriculture graduates. There will be a great students' exposure to the new University Research Centre, the proposed AGDIET excellence Centre, and the new Meat Excellence Centre.
- Well-equipped laboratories located in several good facilities. Significant student hands-on experience. Students' engagement in funded research projects with potential payment.
- An overall student-to-faculty ratio of 20 to 1 that needs to be maintained.

II. Areas of Weakness

- Student participation in course/instructor evaluations is very low; the Department should make an effort to substantially increase student participation in the evaluation process.
- There are deficiencies in the English version of the Department's website.
- Lack of flexibility in offering elective courses.
- Lack of specialization of the Teaching Research Staff in various subjects (e.g., Plant Pathology, Entomology).
- Some courses are not compatible with a Department of Agriculture and its purposes.
- The theoretical component of some courses is taught by faculty outside their specific specialization and/or without holding a Doctorate.
- Significant lack of information in the English version of the Department website which is considered necessary to attract Erasmus international students.
- Modest funding and research output by several faculty.

- Faculty mobility is limited.
- There are no post-graduate studies programmes (PSP) exclusively offered and administered by the Department.
- The students' admission base is low, and this has an impact on the graduation rate and the inhomogeneity in student performance. This fact, in conjunction with transfers from departments with a particularly low admission base, poses a threat to the Department's sustainability.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

Curriculum:

- Increase the number of elective courses, making them available for all winter or spring semesters.
- Reduce the number of courses in the area of Horticulture - Landscape Architecture, while new courses could be added in the areas of plant protection, new agricultural technologies, and climate change. Introduce courses related to Artificial intelligence (AI), Analytics, Coding and Modern Design of Experiments.
- Reconsider courses with a subject area that is incompatible with an Agriculture Department and its purposes.

Teaching Staff:

- Avoid teaching theoretical courses by scientists who do not hold a doctorate degree.
- Teaching staff should have sufficient research experience in the subject of the course they teach.
- Recruit faculty with expertise in the subjects of Entomology, Phytopathology, Plant Physiology, Plant Genetic Improvement, Viticulture, Agricultural Economy, Poultry Breeding, Sheep/Goat Breeding, Cattle Breeding, new Agricultural Technologies, Data Management and Statistical Analysis.
- Recognize excellence in teaching and research.

Research:

- Orient the Department's research towards Agricultural and Biological Sciences.
- Define research agenda with areas of prioritization having stakeholder input as they will be willing to fund aspects of their research needs.

Sustainability Across the Curriculum:

- Integrate sustainability principles and concepts throughout the programme's curriculum, emphasizing the interconnectedness of social, economic, and environmental dimensions.

Synergies and Extroversion:

- Attract academic personnel from abroad through short and long-term appointments to deliver state of the art seminars, as well as to participate in teaching and research.
- Enhance student engagement and participation in local, national, and international professional development activities (i.e., seminars/webinars, stakeholder events, ERASMUS+ network programme).
- Establish presence in professional social media (e.g., LinkedIn) and teach students how to showcase additional skills and certifications that can help them with job searching.

Environmental Policy and Regulation:

- Ensure that the curriculum incorporates updates on environmental policies, regulations, and international agreements.

Advisory Board:

- Establish a formal External Advisory Board which will guide the continuous revision and further development of the curriculum, as well as the prioritization of applied research.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: **2, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, and 12.**

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: **1, 6, 7, and 9.**

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are: **3.**

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

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

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname

Signature

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2. **Professor, Andronikos Mauromoustakos**
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