



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ

HELLENIC REPUBLIC

Α.ΔΙ.Π.

H.Q.A.A.

ΑΡΧΗ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ

HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY

ΑΝΩΤΑΤΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ

FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT SCIENCE

UNIVERSITY OF THESSALY

APRIL 2010

External Evaluation Committee

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the Department of Physical Education and Sport Science of the University of Thessaly consisted of the following four (4) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by the HQAA in accordance with Law 3374/2005 :

1. Dr. Nikos Ntoumanis (President)

University of Birmingham, United Kingdom

2. Prof. Theodore Angelopoulos

University of Central Florida, United States

3. Dr. Nikos Chatzisarantis

National Institute of Education, Singapore

4. Dr. Stefanos Volianitis

Aalborg University, Denmark

Introduction

- Dates and brief account of the site visit.
- Whom did the Committee meet ?
- Reports, documents, other data examined by the Committee.
- Facilities visited by the External Evaluation Committee.

The external examiners (“we” thereafter) visited the Department of Physical Education and Sports Science at the University of Thessaly between 22nd and 24th March, 2010. The campus of the Department is located at Trikala, a few kilometres outside the city centre. We met the Rector and the Vice-Rector of the University, the Head and Vice-Head of the Department, as well as faculty members representing various academic disciplines (physiology, psychology, sports practicals, etc.) and academic ranks, samples of undergraduate and postgraduate (MSc and PhD) students who were willing to talk to us, as well as post-doctoral researchers, lab technicians, and support (clerical) staff. The departmental staff representatives who were in charge of the evaluation were fully co-operative with us. They made available all module boxes, their undergraduate and postgraduate curricula, books and journal publications, as well as a host of other information related to teaching and research activity. We felt that we had access to any material we thought was important for the undertaking of our duties. In addition, oral presentations were made in relation to the structure and development of the Department, its research output, productivity and objectives, its teaching and learning structure (both at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels), and its vision and long-term objectives. In addition, we were offered a tour of the campus and had the opportunity to see seminar rooms, lecture theatres, laboratories, the library, computer room, catering, and sports facilities. Furthermore, we visited the Institute of Human Performance and Rehabilitation (Departmental Affiliate) located within the premises of the Department.

We are happy with the documentation provided by the Department, both in terms of quality and in terms of quantity. Having said this, we felt that more time should be given by the HQAA in the future for similar evaluations. Perhaps the whole evaluation process should have taken place at Trikala as this would have facilitated the expeditious writing of this report. In terms of the self-evaluation document, we felt that some of the provided answers were descriptive and not sufficiently critical and self-reflective.

A. Curriculum and Teaching

A1. Curriculum

APPROACH

Undergraduate

The department has set three objectives for the next 5 years. The first objective is to promote and advance physical education and sport science through basic research, applied research, and high quality teaching. A second objective is to “equip” students with the necessary skills and qualities that will allow them to compete in the national and international market. A third objective of the department is to contribute to the advancement of sport science, promote the idea of Olympism, and improve health and quality of life in the society.

The objectives of the department are decided collectively by faculty members who take into consideration the needs and aspirations of the local community and the state, research strengths of members of staff, and international standards of research and good practice. The curriculum is in line with contemporary trends and standards and has been developed after a rigorous procedure. There is a committee that comes together once a month and reviews the undergraduate programme. There is also a general meeting once a year in which more general issues related to the curriculum are discussed. Students also participate in those meetings.

Our impression from our short visit is very positive. There are indeed rigorous and flexible systems in place at departmental level that secure an efficient functioning and implementation of the curriculum. A hindering factor in the department’s efforts is the relatively large number of modules at the undergraduate level. Although the Department makes an effort to make changes in the curriculum, it encounters difficulties in implementing these changes. The main difficulty is the legal framework that slows down the implementation of departmental decisions as approval is required by the Ministry of Education and this often takes a long time. We propose that policy makers at the Ministry support and encourage a more bottom-up style of management in which university departments are in the “driving seat”.

Postgraduate level (Master’s level)

The department is offering four Masters courses: (i) a Masters in exercise

and health (ii) a Masters in exercise and quality of life (iii) a Masters in exercise psychology, and (iv) Erasmus Mundus programme in sport and exercise psychology. The Masters courses build well on the undergraduate programme and aim to promote the value of physical activity, health and psychological well-being in the society. They also aim to develop scientists that base teaching and research on empirical evidence. This aim is in line with current policies adopted by Western Universities that centre on evidence-based practice.

The Erasmus Mundus programme is an important asset for the department because it provides local students with the opportunity to study abroad for a fixed period of time. The monitoring system that oversees the efficient and effective functioning of the Masters courses is the same as that for the undergraduate course.

Postgraduate Program (PhD)

The PhD programme is offering a number of taught courses on research methods. Students are also required to conduct empirical research and write a thesis. Students are also expected to publish their research in peer reviewed journals. This might be a very difficult target for some students which perhaps can lead to publications in low quality journals. We think that this requirement should be relaxed and that the students should be encouraged but not expected to publish their research. This will help to raise the overall threshold of quality of publications in the department (see also the Research section). The system that oversees an efficient and effective functioning of the PhD programme is the same as that for the undergraduate courses.

IMPLEMENTATION

- How effectively is the curriculum implemented?:
- Is the structure of the curriculum realistic?
- Is the curriculum coherent and functional?
- Is the course material coordinated?
- Are there necessary resources and appropriately trained staff to implement the curriculum?

Implementation

The Curriculum was last updated very recently (2008). Policies related to the implementation of the curriculum are the same for undergraduate, Masters and PhD

programmes. The module leader is required to produce a module outline that stipulates the aims and objectives of the module. In addition, the module outline indicates in great detail procedures leading to the achievement of these objectives. The curriculum implements well the goals and objectives of the department. The curriculum is also coherent and functional. Students and faculty members reported that the structure of the curriculum is rational and clearly articulated. Students reported that they find the knowledge that they gain from the various modules very useful and relevant to the job market. Overall, the structure of modules is appropriate and complies with national and international standards.

RESULTS

There is evidence that the department has already achieved a number of goals and objectives. The department has developed textbooks in sport and physical education for primary and secondary schools. The department is offering four Masters courses and a PhD programme. These postgraduate courses create a vibrant environment that enables students and academics to develop and flourish. Another strength of the department is the experience of faculty members in developing taught courses and their willingness to establish joint courses with other Departments, such as the Department of Physical Education and Sport Science in Komotini, and European universities from the Erasmus Mundus program. Another strength of the department is the development of novel employability programmes that enable students to gain valuable working experience in the community. This initiative is very important because it (i) allows students to formulate a clearer picture about their career prospects, (ii) contributes directly to the development and well-being of the community, and (iii) informs the community about scientific developments, enhancing the prospects for external funding.

IMPROVEMENT (use of the self-evaluation conclusions)

- Does the academic unit know how it can improve?
- What initiatives does it take in this direction?

The Department's strategy for the future involves the creation of a School for Kinesiology with two Departments: Physical Education and Physical Activity and Health. We strongly support this initiative as it will differentiate teaching along two different curricula and will change the perception that Sport Science Departments are there just to train future PE teachers and sport coaches. The emphasis on

physical activity and health is in line with contemporary developments in the curricula of leading US and European institutions and can attract students who perhaps would not consider studying at Trikala or another similar department in Greece.

We also have the following suggestions to make:

- The number of modules taught is too high and out of line with similar degrees offered internationally. We strongly recommend that it is reduced by about 20%-30%. Further, there should be a better distribution of modules across the years.
- One way of applying the above suggestion is to reduce the number of hours in the curriculum devoted to sport practicals (as a proportion of the whole curriculum). Similarly themed sports could be grouped into one module (e.g., water sports), as opposed to offer separate modules for each sport. Further, assessment in all practical modules should not be based on athletic performance and competence (as we were told by some student that is the case in some modules) but on ability to teach, as the purpose of these modules is to prepare future teachers/coaches and not athletes.
- Although existing legislation for higher education allows students to progress from one year to the next without passing all modules, this creates the paradox of students taking modules in subsequent years that have pre-requisites modules in previous years that the students have not passed. To address this problem, it is important that certain modules are not available to students until they pass their respective pre-requisites or alternatively that students are asked to pass a large percentage of modules before they are allowed to take modules in subsequent years.
- There should be a mentoring system whereby senior staff members (associate professors and professors) mentor new members of staff and help them develop in module development and teaching.
- All PhD students should participate in annual reviews of their progress which could consist of interviews with a faculty committee and evaluation of reports prepared by the student and his/her main supervisor.

A2. Teaching

APPROACH: Please comment on :

- Teaching methods.
- Teaching staff-student ratio.
- Teacher-student collaboration
- Adequacy of means and resources.
- Use of information technologies.
- Examination system.

- *Teaching methods used*

The methods used are lectures, seminars, laboratory demonstrations, practical experiences and work placements (e.g., at schools and sport organisations), and research dissertations. In most modules there is combination of more than one teaching method. The methods are deemed appropriate.

- *Teaching staff/student ratio*

The ratio for the undergraduate studies is 1/18 (for lectures) and 1/30 (for laboratories). We think that the ratio is appropriate and in line with international standards.

- *Teacher/student collaboration*

There is evidence of teacher/student collaboration during office hours and beyond. However, this is not a homogenous practice across all faculty members. It is felt that it may be helpful if the department develops a more structured approach to ensure a consistent practice in terms of staff availability, at least during office hours.

- *Adequacy of means and resources*

The rooms dedicated for instructional purposes are adequately furnished,

however, more and bigger rooms are needed. Larger lecture rooms will reduce the administrative load required in the planning of the teaching timetable. There is lack of adequate space for seminars and computers, as well as private study room in the library.

- *Use of information technologies*

There is a software for the student evaluation of the courses offered that enhances the effectiveness of the evaluation process and ensures the anonymity of the student participants.

Also, there is a software (Centra) designed for video-conferencing that facilitates interactive long-distance learning and enhances the quality of the shared postgraduate study programme that is offered in collaboration with the Physical Education and Sports Science Department at the University of Thrace. This is a truly innovative learning tool.

- *Examination system*

The examination procedure operates sufficiently well. However, there was no evidence of a systematic feedback process following the publication of the examination results. Based on what we were told by some students, it is also suggested that more information covered in the lectures is included in the written exams in order to improve lecture participation.

Last, it is strongly advised that efforts should be made to follow the Examination Rules more strictly as stated on pg. 23 of the Study Guide.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Quality of teaching procedures.
- Quality and adequacy of teaching materials and resources.
- Quality of course material. Is it brought up to date?
- Linking of research with teaching.
- Mobility of academic staff and students.
- Evaluation of teaching by students.

- *Quality of teaching procedures*

The quality of teaching is primarily discussed during regularly scheduled departmental meetings. Adjustments are made at the end of each academic year. We encourage the department to consider student opinion in this process. It is not clear how student feedback of modules is taken into consideration in subsequent years.

- *Quality and adequacy of teaching material*

The textbooks used are deemed suitable and well-written. However, in some cases, there is a considerable delay in the delivery of the textbooks by the Ministry of Education, as noted by some of the students we met.

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

Course material is appropriate and is brought up to date regularly.

- *Linking of research with teaching*

In some modules, there is no evidence that the teaching is driven by, or includes, the research interests of the academic members of staff. It is suggested that examples from the research output of the faculty members is included in module outlines. In addition, the dissertation should be mandatory, if adequate resources are in place.

- *Mobility of academic staff and students*

There is evidence in the self-evaluation document that there is mobility (or availability of it) for both academic staff and postgraduate students. Of course attracting foreign members of staff is hindered by the fact that the instruction language is Greek (at the undergraduate level). At the post-graduate level there is an effort for some teaching in English.

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

Dedicated software has been developed by the department for the evaluation of the above elements via student feedback. However, there is no evidence of the extent that this feedback is taken into consideration from the Department.

RESULTS

- Efficacy of teaching.
- How are discrepancies in the success/failure percentage between courses justified?
- How are differences in time of study completion and in degree grades justified?
- Does the Department realize the reasons of such positive or negative results?

The students are very satisfied with the competence and knowledge of the academic staff. However, this seems to be more the case for the permanent members of staff as opposed to teachers on annual transfer from schools. Both staff and students recognise that one critical limitation in the effectiveness of learning is the long hours of the weekly timetable. In many cases, the students are physically tired after many hours of participation in sport activities and are unable to focus their attention during some demanding lectures on theoretical modules in the afternoon. Therefore, the practical lessons should be prioritised so that their number is decreased.

Teaching practices adopted by staff members are very effective. Students reported that they found most modules and use of technology very useful. One strength of the department is that it uses problem-based teaching methods. Problem based teaching methods help students develop a critical mindset that helps them evaluate practices on the basis of evidence. There does not seem to be a large discrepancy between success/failure percentages across modules. Of particular importance, many students seem to complete their degrees on time.

IMPROVEMENTS

- Does the Department propose methods and ways for improvement?
- What initiatives does it take in this direction?

The Department's strategy for teaching is described in the self-evaluation document and is in the right direction. In addition to what the Department suggests, we have a number of recommendations to make:

- Teaching innovation should be encouraged and rewarded. This should be made explicit in the department's policy.
- Evidence of good practice exists, however, mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that examples of good practice and teaching innovation are shared among staff.
- An internal peer observation scheme should be introduced to monitor teaching procedures and their implementations. Each faculty member should be subjected to a peer review of one of his/her teaching session every 3 years by fellow faculty members. Further, at the end of each academic year, the module boxes should be scrutinised for compliance with departmental regulations.
- Each module organiser should respond to the main points raised by student feedback explaining how changes will be made in the future as a result of the feedback, or if not, why.
- The reduction in the number of practical modules (suggested in the Curriculum section) will have the associated effect of reducing the reliance of the department on PE teachers on short-time annual transfers from schools who often do not have a PhD. In the future it would be beneficial if the condensed practical modules were taught by permanent members of staff who have a PhD and a research interest in one of the main theoretical subjects (physiology, psychology, etc..).
- Assessment should be carried out in a more transparent way. A sample of examination scripts or coursework assignments from each module should be moderated by a member of staff with relevant knowledge of the subject.
- At the end of each academic year all modules should be reviewed in order to examine success/failure rates and mean grades across modules. Any large discrepancies from mean scores should be subjected to internal scrutiny.

B. Research

APPROACH

- What is the Department's main objective in research?
- How does the Department promote research?
- Quality and adequacy of research infrastructure.

It is very evident that the department has made significant efforts to promote academic research. Early research was focused on athletic performance, however, more recently significant research efforts have been undertaken in the area of health and chronic disease prevention. The department recognises the importance of the role of physical activity and its implications on health and chronic diseases and continues to foster research in this area. Research in other areas is also evident. There are three research laboratories in the Department of Physical Education and Sports Science at the University of Thessaly: 1) The Laboratory of Research and Evaluation of Physical Performance, 2) The Laboratory of Sport and Exercise Psychology, and 3) The Laboratory of Sports Management and Recreation.

Research is driven by the motivation and interests of the faculty members. To our knowledge, there are no mechanisms or procedures to systematically guide, support and reward research endeavours.

The Department's research infrastructure is rather poor. The department does not have the facilities or the instrumentation to support research in applied sport sciences. Research is facilitated mainly through the productive and relatively well-equipped Institute of Human Performance and Rehabilitation (IHPR). Therefore, the IHPR is a valuable asset for the Department of Physical Education and Sports Science. This is particularly important for faculty in the research areas of Exercise, Health, and Human Movement. It is almost impossible to conceive any research effort in these areas without the resources available in the IHPR. Therefore, it may be important for the department to secure and allocate funds to build its own infrastructure. This will eventually establish the infrastructure and autonomy that is necessary for research sustainability.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Scientific publications.
- Research projects.

- Research collaborations.

The Department has been very active with significant contributions in the scientific literature. Some of these publications appear in peer reviewed journals with high impact factors. Although we commend the efforts and accomplishments of the research active staff at the department, we feel that the quality of some of the research output (e.g., status of publication outlets) must be improved. Having said this, the quality of publications has increased overall in the recent years. It is obvious that there is commitment for high quality research by some of the faculty. However, we also noted that some faculty members have made minimum contributions in the research efforts of the department. This discrepancy in research efforts among faculty requires attention and needs to be addressed because it may be important for the department's development, growth and viability. If this discrepancy is not rectified, it might hinder the department's potential to attract young as well as established investigators. It does not appear that the department has set internal standards for assessing research. Although, this is probably due to the fact that the department is very diverse, there is a need to establish a research committee with the mission of implementing internal standards for assessing research.

Research efforts are mainly supported by funding received from National and EU programmes. It is anticipated that these trends will help the department to build a strong research culture. Some faculty members have been very active in pursuing funding to support their research efforts. The amount of received funding and the number of funded applications has increased constantly over the years. However, the department recognises the need to secure additional funding. We also believe that more faculty members should participate in efforts to secure research monies. Of particular importance, some faculty in the Department have established strong research collaborations (i.e., University of Thessaly Medical School, and various universities from the EU). These collaborations greatly enhance funding opportunities and may help the department in recruiting faculty and graduate students.

RESULTS

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

The Department has clearly articulated its research objectives. As it has been noted above the research productivity of the department in terms of published research articles is notable. Of particular importance, the department has produced several quality publications that appear in prestigious journals. Further, certain faculty are members of editorial boards or editors of international journals, elected members of committees of international organisations, have organised major international conferences, and have well-cited research output. It is also noteworthy that the department publishes its own journal, books that are used in the national curriculum for physical education teachers, and for various educational initiatives (Olympic education, inclusive education, etc.). These trends are very encouraging because they underscore the department's potential. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the department has reached some of its research objectives. The existing collaborations have brought success in some areas, but further collaborative efforts may be key to high impact research. It is important that the Head of the department and senior faculty continue to emphasise the importance of quality publication to junior faculty. It is our firm belief that the department has the capacity and the desire to launch more focused research efforts on a limited number of specific thematic areas of high impact. In addition, senior departmental leaders should mentor junior faculty towards the development of research focus. This has the potential to drive the research efforts towards projects of higher quality and thus may greatly enhance the visibility of the department.

IMPROVEMENT

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

The department has made some significant accomplishments in research, although the variability in research output among faculty members is quite substantial. Those who have contributed in these efforts need to be commended for their motivation and zeal. The recommendations noted below, if implemented, may help the department achieve prominence and distinction.

1. Allocation of resources. There are limited resources (i.e., equipment, space, consumables) in the department. The lack of resources does not affect equally all disciplines since the department is very diverse. Presently, the department benefits from the presence of IHPR but in the long-term the department should develop self-sufficiency.
2. Develop research focus. The department should develop research foci by prioritising

areas for research and should attempt to attain prominence in these areas. This will allow a better and more effective allocation of resources (staff and funding) internally, the development of a distinct research identity nationally and internationally, and will help to develop a strategic appointments culture by recruiting investigators that “fit” in the department’s research agenda (obviously, funding from the Ministry of Education should be made available for this purpose).

3. Implement a faculty mentorship programme. There is no evidence that such a formal programme for new faculty staff exists at the present time. Such a programme should last for at least a year and would require independent reports from both the mentee and the experienced mentor.
4. Facilitate research excellence. To enhance research quality and productivity the department should allow faculty with established research agendas, or young investigators with promising research potential, a reduced teaching and administration load. Such a reduced load could be given as an incentive for enhancing research productivity. Presently, there are no incentives for staff to “take the extra mile” (e.g., attempt to publish in a top journal as opposed to a mediocre one; submit several applications for external funding) in terms of research productivity. In brief, an incentives scheme (e.g., reduced teaching and administration load, funding for conference attendance) should be developed to encourage and reward research excellence.
5. Assemble a research committee. This committee will provide strategic vision and guidance for the development of a high quality research environment. This committee should also establish standards in terms of publication outputs, external grant applications and supervision of postgraduate students, should incentivise research and ensure that progression to the highest academic ranks is restricted to cases where research excellence has been demonstrated.
6. Develop a research culture among students. A postgraduate research day could be organised during which MSc and PhD students could present findings from their research in brief oral communications or in poster format. A similar research day for final year undergraduate students could be organised so that they also have the opportunity to present in a poster format their research findings and receive feedback prior to officially submitting their dissertations for marking. Such initiatives will strengthen the perception among the student cohort that the department wants to develop and sustain a strong research culture.

C. All Other Services

APPROACH

The department feels that it offers satisfactory services to teaching staff and students, but it acknowledges current constraints due to gaps in funding, staffing and infrastructure. We believe that it would be useful for the department to organise a survey among its staff and students in order to obtain more concrete data on the levels of satisfaction for the provided services. Some of the students we met felt that the opinion of students not affiliated to political parties is not taken into consideration. This survey could identify areas of priorities for immediate action. Our experience from talking to staff and students in the Department is that they are proud to be associated with the Department and relatively happy to work or study there.

We are not aware of any departmental procedures to simplify administration. It is acknowledged that to some extent the Department is bound by national legislation for Higher Education, however, when and where possible, it is advisable that a review of administrative procedures is undertaken. Teaching staff use electronic procedures for collecting student feedback, communicating with students and among themselves and for making available teaching and learning material. Interactive e-teaching material (e.g., Blackboard) would be a useful addition. Student presence in lessons is monitored and, in many subjects is compulsory.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Organization and infrastructure of the Department's administration (e.g. secretariat of the Department).
- Form and function of academic services and infrastructure for students (e.g. library, PCs and free internet access, student counseling, athletic- cultural activity etc.).
- Collaboration with social, cultural and production organizations.

The department has a clear administrative structure. The department could benefit from having a more formal allocation of responsibilities for key roles by developing small and flexible committees that would focus on a) Research Strategy and Monitoring and b) Teaching and Learning Quality and Enhancement.

Administrative staff complained to us about outdated IT software provision. In terms of staffing, the current numbers of administrative staff seem adequate, however the number of laboratory technicians should be increased.

Academic services and infrastructure for students are satisfactory, by and large, but there is room for improvement. The students use a well-equipped library that offers access to a large variety of printed and electronic material. There is also a small computer cluster which offers free wireless internet access and has many essential software for preparing student coursework.

In terms of improving the current infrastructure for student services, we believe that the department needs:

1. More and larger lecture theatres.
2. Halls of residence for students with low income. It is surprising that there is no university offered accommodation at Trikala.
3. Better and more sports facilities for teaching and recreational purposes.
4. Space for private studying in the library.
5. More computers in a larger computer cluster.
6. An annual careers fair in which employers will be invited to present employment opportunities in the sport and leisure industry. Further, graduates of the department who have taken diverse career paths could be invited to share their experiences and offer their advice.
7. To facilitate access to and use of the building facilities by physically disabled individuals.

Some of the students we met also felt that the quality of the food provided by the refectory was good but could be improved. It is important that the department prioritises the development of a tutor-tutee mentoring system by which each member of academic staff is responsible for dealing with welfare problems of a number of undergraduate and postgraduate students.

RESULTS

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

As explained above, the administrative services are, by and large, satisfactory.

Student support services have considerable room for improvement to meet international standards. The department recognises the need for improvement in terms of student services and infrastructure.

IMPROVEMENTS

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

The department has not identified any ways or methods to improve the services it provides to students. However, no such questions were asked by the H.Q.A.A. in the self-evaluation document. Having said this, it is important that a systematic plan is developed to improve and monitor the quality of student experience. Student satisfaction surveys with a) the overall course and b) the quality of provided services, could be carried out at the end of each academic year.

- Collaboration with social, cultural and production organizations

The department has some collaborations with the industry, local education and administrative authorities and cultural organisations. Such links are important, in particular as far as the training of students in teaching physical education is concerned. It is recommended that such links are strengthened, especially in cases where there is reciprocal benefit (e.g., in terms of knowledge transfer to local society).

D. Strategic planning, perspectives for improvement and potential inhibiting factors

- Short-, medium- and long-term goals.
- Strategies, programming and actions.
- Potential inhibiting factors at state, institutional and departmental level.

The goals and strategic priorities and actions of the department are in the right direction and, if implemented successfully, can increase its research status, teaching provision and improve the quality of student experience. In particular, the plan for a new school of kinesiology is in the right direction as it will separate those students

who want to specialise in physical education and those who want to focus on theoretical subjects. The plans for research are relatively broad and should be made much more specific; further they should be linked to an internal research monitoring scheme. A common observation across all articulated objectives is the lack of a mechanism that will evaluate how these plans will be implemented and assessed.

Inadequate funding is a major inhibiting factor at a state level. In particular, funding for research purposes is almost non-existent. The Department has had some success in securing external income from non-state sources (industry, EU) and is strongly encouraged to intensify its efforts to secure more funds from such sources. Another inhibiting factor at the state level is the lack of autonomy of the Department, and the University at a more general level, to make decisions of substantial importance as such decisions have to be ratified by the Ministry of Education. We strongly recommend that Universities are offered greater autonomy to make strategic decisions about future priorities as it is common practice in North American and Western European countries. At the very least, where state approval is required, the state should undertake the responsibility of responding to University requests within a short period of time. At the institutional level, an inhibiting factor is the scattering of the University across various towns as this limits somewhat cooperation across departments. The geographical location of the department at Trikala is another inhibiting factor as it was reported to us that many school students prefer major cities for undergraduate studies. We suggest that the department undertakes a marketing campaign to attract more students from outside the area of Thessaly. However, geographical location does not seem to be a limiting factor as far as attracting postgraduate students is concerned. At the departmental level an inhibiting factor is shortage of staff; we were told that the last academic appointment was made four years ago. Also, it seems that cross-staff collaboration is somewhat limited and not based on any systematic approach. The mentality of a small minority of staff regarding evaluation of their research and teaching productivity and effectiveness is also another major limiting factor. We believe that evaluation should start internally through policies that ensure appropriate monitoring and incentivising mechanisms.

E. Conclusions:

- Conclusions of the E.E.C. and recommendations on:
 - (a) the development of the Department to this date.
 - (b) the Department's quality assurance.

We feel that the department has made a very good effort since its inception to establish itself as a leading institution for physical education and sports science in Greece, and as a respected institution at an international level. Those in charge of the Department have important aspirations, dedication and motivation to lift the Department to higher levels of efficiency, performance and recognition. Faculty members are strongly encouraged to develop stronger teaching and research collaborations, both internally and externally. Problems with lack of funding for adequate infrastructure, equipment, space and staffing (faculty positions and lab technicians) need to be rectified. We refrain from repeating our detailed recommendations for curriculum development, infrastructure, teaching, and research; these are outlined in great detail in the respective sections of this report.

The University seems to support the department's development which is especially important given the latter's geographical isolation. We hope that this support continues in the future as the department is a valuable asset for the University. We are not aware, however, of any specific long-term plans from the University to support the department.

At a wider level, it is imperative that the Ministry of Education gives more autonomy to Universities and Departments to develop their strengths, while obviously utilising appropriate monitoring mechanisms. Bureaucracy and centralisation will not help universities to compete at a global level.

The HQAA is to be congratulated for undertaking this audit and is important that is followed-up by another level of assessment in which all Physical Education and Sport Science Departments in Greece are evaluated by the same team of auditors to identify relative strengths and weaknesses and to propose a harmonised set of good practices for teaching, curriculum innovation and research.

