



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
HELLENIC REPUBLIC



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Accreditation Report
for the Undergraduate Study Programme of:

Theology

Institution: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
Date: 5 March 2023

Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the Undergraduate Study Programme of **Theology** of the **Aristotle University of Thessaloniki** 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 Undergraduate Study Programme of **Theology** of the **Aristotle University of Thessaloniki** comprised the following five (5) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

1. Professor Stephanos Efthymiadis (Chair)

Open University of Cyprus, Cyprus

2. Professor Andreas Müller

University of Kiel, Germany

3. Professor Predrag Dragutinović

University of Belgrade, Serbia

4. Professor Georgios Halkias

University of Hong Kong, China

5. Mr Spartakos Tanasidis

University of Ioannina, Greece

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

The Accreditation Panel (henceforth AP) received for consideration the review documentation provided by the Department of Theology of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki on 6 February 2023. Three of its members (SE, AM, and PD) had an onsite participation in the review procedure whereas the other two (GH and ST) participated remotely. HAHE provided all members with the following documents:

- a) Department's Proposal for Accreditation
- b) 2013 External Evaluation Report
- c) Study Programme (*Odigos Spoudon*) and description of courses offered in consecutive academic years
- c) HAHE Guidelines
- d) other relevant information about the Department (statistical data, samples of student questionnaires, strategic goals, etc.)

In addition to these, AP consulted the Department's webpage and received further documentation at later stages of the evaluation process.

The review took place from Tuesday 28 February to Sunday 5 March 2023. The Panel members first convened on Tuesday 28 February 2023 and, after they were informed of their role and mission, arranged the allocation of tasks among them and how interviews and meetings should be coordinated. Following this meeting, they attended the presentation of standards and guidelines of the accreditation process by Dr. Christina Besta, HAHE's Director General, and participated in the ensuing discussion.

The site visit to the Department of Theology, located at the campus of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, took place on two consecutive days, Wednesday 1 March (from 9.30 to 16.00) and Thursday 2 March 2023 (from 9.30 to 16.15). It consisted of various meetings with members of the MODIP, the teaching and administrative staff, students, alumni, and stakeholders, and comprised visits to lecture classes, offices, laboratories, the library of the Department as well as a Muslims' place of worship and the church of Holy Trinity. More precisely, AP had interviews with:

- a. The President of MODIP (Vice-Rector Prof. D. Koveos) and the Head of the Department (Prof. N. Maghioros)
- b. OMEA members and MODIP representatives

- c. Teaching staff members (10 DEP members)
- d. Eight (8) undergraduate students
- e. Nine (9) graduates
- f. Seven (7) external stakeholders from the public and private sectors

By the end of the second-day meetings AP had a closure session in which its own impressions, observations, and preliminary conclusions were presented to the MODIP and OMEA members. In the next days the AP members convened to work on and finalize the Accreditation Report.

It must be stressed that all meetings with the authorities of the University and the teaching and other staff of the Department of Theology were held in a spirit of collaboration, collegiality, and readiness to assist with the work of AP. Its members would like to acknowledge the MODIP and Department's hospitality.

III. Study Programme Profile

The Faculty of Theology in Thessaloniki has existed continuously since 1963. In 1983, the structure of the Department of Theology, which still exists today, was created with five Divisions. In 2020, a study reform was carried out with the goal of improving the curriculum and adapting it to the recent developments of the European Education System. Since then, the Study Programme provides for 41 mandatory courses with 198 ECTS. In addition, 42 ECTS can be collected in the mandatory elective area. 9 ECTS can be acquired in other departments. The Programme comprises 8 semesters and concludes with a diploma.

A total of 5,105 students are registered in the Department of Theology. Of these, only 730 appear to be active students and among them 258 are foreigners, i.e., international citizens. In the event, an exceedingly high number of students has no presence at the University. In terms of content, the programme follows the recommendations of “Tuning: Reference Points of the Design Delivery of Degree Programmes in Theology and Religious Studies”. Student-centred learning with open horizons towards learning is a central feature of the teaching philosophy of the Department. Not only are the mainstream theological disciplines represented, such as Old and New Testament, Church History, Dogmatics, Ethics, and Practical Theology provided for, but also courses in ancient and modern languages are offered focusing on the vocabulary and disciplinary jargon suitable for theologians (for instance, English, French and German). The Department also offers the opportunity to study Islam as an elective course.

Ecumenical theology and the study of foreign religions are also part of the Study Programme. In addition, numerous fields of theoretical and practical training are cultivated. These include liturgical studies, icon painting, Christian archaeology, and sociology. Pedagogics is also an important focus of the Department. For the support of precise fields separate laboratories are available. Studies are accompanied by stages of work experience in schools, communities, and public institutions. After graduation, students may find employment opportunities not only in the Greek Orthodox ecclesiastical domain and in secondary education as teachers of religion, but also in fields of work such as religious tourism and the press. The theology degree programme and related activities (e.g., courses, conferences, church services) are thus integrated into a broad social and cultural domain. This is in tune with the location of the Aristotle University, the largest university in Greece located within the city centre, and contributes to its cultural, social, and economic life.

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

Principle 1: Academic Unit Policy for Quality Assurance

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD APPLY A QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY AS PART OF THEIR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT. THIS POLICY SHOULD EXPAND AND BE AIMED (WITH THE COLLABORATION OF EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS) AT ALL INSTITUTION'S AREAS OF ACTIVITY, AND PARTICULARLY AT THE FULFILMENT OF QUALITY REQUIREMENTS OF UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES. THIS POLICY SHOULD BE PUBLISHED AND IMPLEMENTED BY ALL STAKEHOLDERS.

The quality assurance policy of the academic unit is in line with the Institutional policy on quality, and is included in a published statement that is implemented by all stakeholders. It focuses on the achievement of special objectives related to the quality assurance of study programmes offered by the academic unit.

The quality policy statement of the academic unit includes its commitment to implement a quality policy that will promote the academic profile and orientation of the programme, its purpose and field of study; it will realise the programme's strategic goals and it will determine the means and ways for attaining them; it will implement the appropriate quality procedures, aiming at the programme's continuous improvement.

In particular, in order to carry out this policy, the academic unit commits itself to put into practice quality procedures that will demonstrate:

- a) the suitability of the structure and organisation of the curriculum;*
- b) the pursuit of learning outcomes and qualifications in accordance with the European and the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education;*
- c) the promotion of the quality and effectiveness of teaching;*
- d) the appropriateness of the qualifications of the teaching staff;*
- e) the enhancement of the quality and quantity of the research output among faculty members of the academic unit;*
- f) ways for linking teaching and research;*
- g) the level of demand for qualifications acquired by graduates, in the labour market;*
- h) the quality of support services such as the administrative services, the Library, and the student welfare office;*
- i) the conduct of an annual review and an internal audit of the quality assurance system of the undergraduate programme(s) offered, as well as the collaboration of the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) with the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU).*

Study Programme Compliance

Under MODIP's auspices and instructions, the Department follows a Policy for Quality Assurance with regard to teaching and research. MODIP's instructions are in line with the requirements of HAHE and the European standards for Higher Education. In 2013 the

Department had its first evaluation ever and, since then, it has demonstrated a positive attitude towards receiving external feedback and encouragement for improvement.

The Internal Evaluation Committee (OMEA) is responsible for coordinating the efforts of the Department for the composition of internal assessment report submitted to MODIP. The latter collects findings and proceeds to making comments and suggestions. These are presented and commented on in the Department's Council meetings regularly held. Thereupon, the Department decides about revisions to be carried out and changes to be introduced in the curriculum.

As a Quality Policy, the Department has set as strategic priorities the high-level education in the field of theology and the study of religion according to international standards; it promotes interdisciplinarity and cross-scientific research; it supports the diffusion of knowledge and creation of ties and networks with society.

The Department feels that several such endeavours should be further pursued in order to achieve the above goals. These include the implementation of the mobility of the teaching staff and students to foreign universities, their participation in international conferences, and, by the same token, an openness to students coming from the Balkans and the Middle East. It extends to the updating and modernization of its curriculum, especially by means of introducing new areas of learning and methods of teaching. It acknowledges the need for reinforcing the student-centred system of learning by monitoring the progress of students, improvement of the practicum, and orientation of students towards pursuing postgraduate studies while registering the career-paths followed by the Department's alumni.

AP shares these concerns and endorses all initiatives that would enhance the visibility of the Department in international academic and other fora.

Panel Judgement

Principle 1: Academic Unit Policy for Quality Assurance	
Fully compliant	√
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

None.

Principle 2: Design and Approval of Programmes

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD DEVELOP THEIR 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.

Academic units develop their programmes following a well-defined procedure. The academic profile 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 National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education are described at this stage. The approval or revision process for programmes includes a check of compliance with the basic requirements described in the Standards, on behalf of the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU).

Furthermore, the programme design should take into consideration the following:

- *the Institutional strategy*
- *the active participation of students*
- *the experience of external stakeholders from the labour market*
- *the smooth progression of students throughout the stages of the programme*
- *the anticipated student workload according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System*
- *the option to provide work experience to the students*
- *the linking of teaching and research*
- *the relevant regulatory framework and the official procedure for the approval of the programme by the Institution*

Study Programme Compliance

The institutional strategy is well defined and easily available online on the website of the Department in the Student Handbook. The strategy is revisited and reviewed every three years in order to be improved and modified.

Students participate actively in academic procedures, in lectures, practical exercises, workshops, site-visits, and many other activities offered by the Department. Personal and psychological support from professional counsellors is also available to them. There is a number of specialized laboratories (εργαστήρια) which cover various fields that may be of interest to the students. The Department fulfils the highest standards of scholarly work and research. Worth noting is its capacity to provide work experience to the students in the very early stage of their studies. On the one hand, the Programme provides for the cultivation of theoretical

knowledge, and, on the other, for a continuous development of skills and social competencies. As a result, students have the opportunity to acquire work experience in state schools and parishes, and non-governmental organisations as well. This creative connection between theoretical knowledge and social engagement helps them to improve the quality of their relation to the needs of Greek Orthodox Church and society. In a similar vein, all these activities provide opportunities to find employment at the labour market, a fact which was confirmed by the representatives of the external institutions. The assessments of external stakeholders from the labour market with whom the Department collaborates within the framework of work experience sounded by all means positive and encouraging.

Students progress routinely throughout the stages of the programme, although a high number of them do not graduate. The official duration of the programme is 8 semesters and the maximum number of ECTS required in order to obtain the degree amounts to 240 ECTS. One full academic year of study is equivalent to 60 ECTS and a full semester is equivalent to 30 ECTS (1 ECTS = 25-30 hours of student workload). Each course is assigned the number of hours of study to be completed in order to fulfil the workload required from students to complete a course.

Regarding the relevant regulatory framework, there are two administrative boards for the internal control of the quality of the programme (OMEA and ΜΟΔΙΠ). These take care of the regularity of the official procedures for the approval of the programme by the institution. Both boards present and discuss the data and analysis of the evaluation with all Department members at the committee meetings of their Council.

The enthusiastic feelings of the students interviewed by the AP vis-à-vis the Department overshadowed any attempt of its members to pinpoint shortcomings or areas requiring improvement. The same enthusiasm was shared by the alumni and stakeholders involved in the process of evaluation.

AP feels that it would have a more faithful and comprehensive picture of the teaching staff and the students' concerns if interviews were conducted in a different way, for instance, individually and not as a group. HAHE must make arrangements in this respect, and it is not the Department's responsibility that interviews took place as they did.

Panel Judgement

Principle 2: Design and Approval of Programmes	
Fully compliant	√
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- The Department must seriously consider the reasons why a high number of students fails to graduate.
- A yearly survey of why students fail to do so must be diligently pursued.

Principle 3: Student- centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE 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.

Student-centred learning and teaching plays an important role in stimulating students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in the learning process. The above entail continuous consideration of the programme's delivery and the assessment of the related outcomes.

The student-centred learning and teaching process

- *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 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.*

In addition:

- *the academic staff are familiar with the existing examination system and methods and are supported in developing their own skills in this field;*
- *the assessment criteria and methods are published in advance;*
- *the assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary is linked to advice on the learning process;*
- *student assessment is conducted by more than one examiner, where possible;*
- *the regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances;*
- *assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures;*
- *a formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*

Study Programme Compliance

Undergraduate students are the main focus of the undergraduate programme of the Department and are systematically encouraged to become active participants in the learning process. Regularly and on a semester basis, they evaluate the quality and effectiveness of teaching. During the evaluation process, AP interviewed members of the teaching staff,

students, and graduates. Additionally, AP interviewed employers from various fields, such as secondary education, NGOs and members of the higher and lower clergy of various Christian denominations.

The Department offers both mandatory and elective courses. As a result, the design of the curriculum, which combines core and optional courses, is intended to enable the students to trace their own distinct trajectory, within clearly defined parameters. A concrete manifestation of that flexibility seems to be the Diploma Supplement, which allows students to shape their own curriculum in a way that suits their particular interests as well as their academic and professional goals. Interviewed graduates and undergraduates expressed their satisfaction vis-à-vis the curriculum. Employers shared the same satisfaction with the quality of the Department's graduates. Those students of various non-Orthodox denominations who were interviewed stated that they are treated with respect and on terms of equality. It is clear both from the written material received and from visits to the Department that the latter is deeply sensitive to the ethnic and religious diversity in the student body and its pursuits.

The University provides facilities to accommodate students with learning and other disabilities, and offices for psychological support, and ensures that all students have equal access to buildings, teaching staff, and materials of instruction and examination. The Department offers sufficient guidance to students. Study Advisors play a vital role, especially since they follow a proactive approach, starting from the first semester and during the whole period of academic study. By virtue of the practicum that it has integrated into its curriculum, the Department offers internship opportunities. Regarding the evaluation of their taught courses, student satisfaction is generally high. Students evaluate their learning experience in the end of each course by means of a questionnaire submitted electronically, including space for any kind of comments.

The outcomes of the evaluation are made available electronically. The weakness here lies in the low percentage of students who take part in the evaluation. This is due to the fact that, according to the regulation, evaluation is not mandatory. Students interviewed confirmed that the Department's Secretariat is efficient and ready to help in a timely manner. The online secretarial services are satisfactory and assessments and other documents are processed in a short time (within 48 hours at the latest). In cases of complaints and dissatisfaction, there are available opportunities for students to officially submit their grievances to the Department's Council or the Student Advocate.

Overall, AP is fully satisfied with the Department's commitment to the principles of student-centred learning and teaching. In addition, ample evidence was provided to the AP demonstrating the importance of enhancing students' motivation and engagement in the learning process. Ample evidence was available to AP that a crucial role is assigned to enhancing the students' motivation and engagement in the learning process. Related evidence can be drawn from the documentation provided by the Department, the presentation by its Head, and members of OMEA, as well as the meetings with the staff of the Department and undergraduate students.

Panel Judgement

Principle 3: Student-centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment	
Fully compliant	√
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

None.

Principle 4: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD DEVELOP AND APPLY PUBLISHED REGULATIONS COVERING ALL ASPECTS AND PHASES OF STUDIES (ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION).

Institutions and academic units need to put in place both processes and tools to collect, manage and act on information regarding student progression.

Procedures concerning the award and recognition of higher education degrees, the duration of studies, rules ensuring students progression, terms and conditions for student mobility should be based on the institutional study regulations. Appropriate recognition procedures rely on institutional practice for recognition of credits among various European academic departments and Institutions, in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

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).

Study Programme Compliance

Admission and certification processes are carried out by the Department in accordance with Greek state regulations related to higher education. Full information about the Study Programme and the organization of the Department are easily available to students. Both the Student Handbook and all information are displayed on the website. Regarding the certification of studies, the Diploma Supplement has been issued to all graduates, in Greek and/or English. There are currently about 730 active students at the Department, while a lot more are registered but remain practically inactive.

During the last Internal Evaluation procedure carried out in 2020 (Document B8) the following suggestions/recommendations for improvement were made: a. actions be taken to enhance the mobility of outgoing students, b. actions be taken to increase student participation in examinations. These actions may also end up reducing the rather long duration of study for more than four years; c. actions be taken to increase the quality index of courses and lectures; d. actions be taken to complete the Curriculum Evaluation Form. The Department actively promotes Erasmus mobility, and internationalization of students is one of its strategic goals in its quality management system. The Department has signed numerous agreements with Universities across Europe and, according to the students interviewed, there is substantial support from teachers on this matter. Although the teaching staff has benefitted from the

Erasmus programmes, only a few students seem to explore this opportunity. This is chiefly due to the fact that students face difficulties with regard to foreign languages. Personal reasons also play a certain role. Nonetheless, it must be stressed that the teaching staff has always been prompt to support Erasmus mobility among the students. Point b is still a problem and has been already mentioned (see above Principle 2). Regarding points c and d, an improvement has been noticed since the 2020 internal evaluation. In summary, low participation of students in teacher evaluations is a general problem for universities across the globe and requires further investigation.

The Study Programme offers the chance to optional/elective courses. There is a wide spectrum of such courses offered by the Department itself. Yet students can only select two courses from any other department of the University. AP strongly believes that the number of such free choices/options ought to be increased. Especially, students must be given the opportunity to select courses from the other Department of the Theological School.

In addition to providing theoretical knowledge, the Department's programme aims to develop students' skills and social competencies in order to enhance their employment prospects. It has been assessed that the Department has been successful in this regard in collaboration with external stakeholders from the labour market.

Panel Judgement

Principle 4: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	√
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- Increase the number of ECTS for elective courses.
- Establish stronger bonds with the Department of Social Theology and Christian Culture and other Departments mainly in the Humanities.

Principle 5: Teaching Staff

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ASSURE THEMSELVES OF THE QUALIFICATIONS AND COMPETENCE OF THE TEACHING STAFF. THEY SHOULD APPLY FAIR AND TRANSPARENT PROCESSES FOR THE RECRUITMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEACHING STAFF.

The Institutions and their academic units have a major responsibility as to the standard of their teaching staff providing them with a supportive environment that promotes the advancement of their scientific work. In particular, 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.*

Study Programme Compliance

AP met more than ten academic staff members of all professorial ranks. The deputy head of the Department gave the panel a presentation on the accomplishments of the Department, the challenges they face, and their goals on how to move forward into the future. Faculty interviewed were noted for their openness and honesty. For the purpose of better understanding the concerns of individual members, AP would have been better off holding individual meetings with teachers rather than holding them as a group. The following analysis of findings can be obtained from the meeting and from the relevant literature submitted to AP:

The openness and honesty of the faculty interviewed was noted. It would have been better if AP could have held individual meetings with teachers and not as a group to get a better sensing of the concerns of individual members. During the meeting and from the relevant literature submitted to AP the following analysis of findings can be assessed:

The teaching load of the faculty ranges between 6-9 hours per week and after 3 years of service they are entitled for a sabbatical leave. The faculty decide between themselves as to who will be taking sabbatical a given year or a semester, also considering the teaching needs of the

Department. There was a strong sense of support among the members of the group, and their decision-making process in the Department followed the principles of equal participation and democracy. The Department's available budget allows for travel expenses to be covered within Greece, but as communicated to AP, serious difficulties occur, given the reduction of government support, to cover international travel for the staff. Due to the limited budget available to ensure regular mobility via participation in conferences, some academic staff members have benefitted from Erasmus+ agreements and have thus facilitated their research activities. As far as other faculty are concerned, Erasmus+ agreements have enabled them to expand their networks and to teach across Europe, as well as to form bilateral exchange agreements with universities outside of Europe.

Although the School has close ties and connections with the Greek Orthodox Church, AP was told that the Greek Church does not bear any influence on the curriculum and the decision-making process of the Department. A pioneer feature of the Department is the way it reaches out to theological schools in other countries and continents (for instance, Africa) and assists them with the design of the curriculum. The Department had done exceedingly well in its research programmes, its network reaching internationally, and has a variety of research laboratories and activities (conferences, seminars, etc) including 4 journals published electronically. Noteworthy is the one concentrating on Slavic studies, but it is not clear how active these journals currently are as the website does not include entries beyond 2020-2021. The faculty has access to electronic services which they use effectively in their teaching and for sharing relevant research with their students.

AP was informed that they are currently two committees that assist teaching faculty with research grant applications, but it was not clear what kind of services they provide. Teachers are regularly evaluated by their students, but the problems of this process have already been assessed. It is also unclear to the AP whether there are uniform measures taken by all teachers equally concerning plagiarism of papers by the students, and whether routinely all student work is assessed through anti-plagiarism software like Turnitin. Considering emerging technological innovations, it is advisable that the school examines its assessment methods of student work to guard against plagiarism.

Budget issues are generally determined by government policies, while the Department appears to make very good and equitable use of its resources. It is lamentable that the budget allocated

by the Ministry of Education has been substantially reduced over the past years. The Panel did not have access to data concerning recruitments or the recruitment process of teaching staff and we were told that all recruitments follow government guidelines and are done according to fair and professional criteria. When asked if there any issues concerning the promotion of female teaching staff, the answer was that there was no gender discrimination and that they follow the guidelines of equal treatment set by the University. It would be also worth knowing and considering how many former doctoral students of the Department were later hired as members of the teaching staff. If a high number is thus assessed, it would imply a certain partiality which cannot always be beneficial to the Department's commitment to openness.

Panel Judgement

Principle 5: Teaching Staff	
Fully compliant	√
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- The Department must consider new initiatives to increase the number of students who are completing their teacher evaluations.

- If funds allow, the Department, with the central support of the University, must improve infrastructure to provide ongoing technical support and encouragement to the faculty in writing competitive ERC grants.
- Generate uniform criteria and procedures for the assessment of all submitted student work against plagiarism using current technologies.
- Follow transparent criteria in recruiting and promoting teaching staff.

Principle 6: Learning Resources and Student Support

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE ADEQUATE FUNDING TO COVER 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 funding and means to support learning and academic activity in general, so that they can offer to students the best possible level of studies. The above means could include facilities such as libraries, study rooms, educational and scientific equipment, information and communications services, support or 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 or international students, students with disabilities) and 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. However, the internal quality assurance ensures that all resources are appropriate, adequate, and accessible, and that students are informed about the services available to them.

In delivering support services the role of support and administrative staff is crucial and therefore they need to be qualified and have opportunities to develop their competences.

Study Programme Compliance

AP's comments on Learning Resources and Student Support are made with full awareness of the economic difficulties faced by Greek universities in the context of the financial crisis. AP visited lecture halls, staff offices, the e-classroom, laboratories, and the library. AP also visited the Muslims' place of worship and the church of Holy Trinity, which acts like a space of learning liturgical practices of the Orthodox Church.

In light of the site visit, AP is satisfied with the basic facilities of the Department. Buildings, offices, and laboratories occupied by the Department are functional. The Department makes use of two amphitheatres and two classrooms which are generally well-equipped and were recently renovated. The Secretariat is open to the public and students only for an hour every working day but most of its work is processed electronically. Library is in good condition and implemented with sufficient material for teaching and research. However, a serious issue to be met with is underfunding. The School's Library has been the recipient of book donations chiefly from retired professors of both its departments, yet it is lacking in acquisitions of new titles.

There is a good range of digital resources available to the staff and students (subscriptions to TLG, Jstor, etc.). The electronic catalogue of the library is generally helpful but looks rather outdated, especially if it must be consulted for specialized research (bibliography on a certain topic). Nonetheless, it was clear to AP that the staff of the Department in general feel supported in their research by electronic resources.

Every first or second week in October the Department welcomes first-year students organizing a special event. It is on this occasion that students are informed of the Department's facilities and resources, the ways they can be supported in case they face difficulties of any kind. Students interviewed expressed their satisfaction in this respect.

AP was pleased to note the general good implementation of the School but there are still issues to be resolved.

Panel Judgement

Principle 6: Learning Resources and Student Support	
Fully compliant	√
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- Financially support the School's Library and increase acquisitions of new books (either hard copies or e-books).
- Enhance the potential and resources of the electronic library catalogue.

Principle 7: Information Management

INSTITUTIONS 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.

Institutions are expected to establish and operate an information system for the management and monitoring of data concerning students, teaching staff, course structure and organisation, teaching and provision of services to students as well as to the academic community.

Reliable data is essential for accurate information and for decision making, as well as for identifying areas of smooth operation and areas for improvement. Effective procedures for collecting and analysing information on study programmes and other activities feed data into the internal system of quality assurance.

The information gathered depends, to some extent, on the type and mission of the Institution. The following are of interest:

- *key performance indicators*
- *student population profile*
- *student progression, success and drop-out rates*
- *student satisfaction with their programme(s)*
- *availability of learning resources and student support*
- *career paths of graduates*

A number of methods may be used for collecting information. It is important that students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.

Study Programme Compliance

The University has a comprehensive information system in which all important data about the student body is recorded. In 2011, a corresponding electronic system for quality control was introduced at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki as well as a system for evaluating courses. Since 2012, the Departments' reports on their quality control have been accessible online.

The system provides access to good overviews of the student population, which allow study histories with dropout rates and student satisfaction with their studies. As part of MODIP's efforts, relevant data will be automatically collected. An electronic study guide is available on the Department's website.

AP suggests that the existing data be evaluated more intensively. It would be important, for instance, to know not only the numbers and rates of the students' drop-out, but also the reasons

why they failed to continue their studies. Admittedly, the Department has made steps towards this direction. Judging from the reports of students who ought to stop their studies and turn attention to other activities, it can be inferred that drop-out is chiefly the result of their living conditions and economic difficulties related to their family and/or the crisis that the country has faced in the past years. These reasons led many of them to move away from their place of study. Student satisfaction questionnaires are regularly conducted but the students' response rate to this procedure is rather unsatisfactory. Yet this issue concerns the University as a whole.

Moreover, the Department has not yet developed mechanisms to gather systematically data on employability of its graduates and information about the opinion and demands of external stakeholders. However, it must be stressed that the Department put this process among its priorities and future plans. To this purpose, it closely cooperates with ΔΑΣΤΑ, the service which assists students and graduates of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in terms of Employment and Career Orientation.

The AP welcomes such initiatives and encourages the Department to expand them in the future.

Panel Judgement

Principle 7: Information Management	
Fully compliant	√
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- Conduct surveys that would pinpoint the reasons why the proportion of students dropping out remains high.
- Establish networks with the Department's alumni and inquire into the employability of its graduates and their career paths.
- Steadily encourage students to fill out evaluation questionnaires.

Principle 8: Public Information

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD PUBLISH INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR TEACHING AND ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES WHICH IS CLEAR, ACCURATE, OBJECTIVE, UP-TO-DATE AND READILY ACCESSIBLE.

Information on Institution's activities is useful for prospective and current students, graduates, other stakeholders and the public.

Therefore, institutions and their academic units provide information about their activities, including the programmes they offer, the intended learning outcomes, the qualifications awarded, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to their students, as well as graduate employment information.

Study Programme Compliance

AP assesses that the Department's website is informative and visitor-friendly providing information in Greek and English. It is used to publicize all its activities, including the teaching staff's contact details and CVs, the programmes, description of the offered courses, details about the Erasmus exchange programme, facilities for the students, etc. The Department's Policy for Quality Assurance and general information about the OMEA are also available on the School's website. All published information is presented in a clear, modern, and easily accessible way. Overall, the website is well-designed and fits its purpose.

AP noted that CVs and publication records have not been composed in a homogeneous fashion. Most of them appear only in Greek and not in English.

Panel Judgement

Principle 8: Public Information	
Fully compliant	√
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- The publications of the faculty should be made available on the website for other scholars and the students, as well as the CVs and publication record of each member should be accessible online.
- It should be straightforward to create an alumni email list that informs all past graduates of the school's current activities. It would be of benefit to the School if they actively maintain contact with all past graduates.

Principle 9: On-going Monitoring and Periodic Internal Review of Programmes

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE IN PLACE AN INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM FOR THE AUDIT AND ANNUAL INTERNAL REVIEW OF THEIR 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 study programmes aim to maintain the level of educational provision and to create 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. Revised programme specifications are published.

Study Programme Compliance

In its self-assessment and revision of its program, the Department has established precise criteria. All particulars that contribute to this evaluation are collected by MODIP with the assistance of the OMEA and the Secretariat of the Department. More specifically, students are invited to electronically evaluate their teachers by the close of the semester and prior to the exams. Once the data is processed by OMEA (the internal assessment team) and MODIP (the quality assurance unit), the teaching staff and the Head of the Department are notified of its outcomes.

However, the data provided cannot be regarded as comprehensive or as representative of the majority of students if only a small percentage of them participate in the evaluation process.

The Department periodically revises its curriculum introducing major and minor changes. As a matter of fact, since the 1980s it has undergone a long process of transformation. The last serious attempt to introduce revisions in the Programme was made in the years between 2016 and 2020. The Department provided a list of such revisions and changes so that the curriculum

becomes more functional (e.g., elimination of overlaps in the courses offered, integration of the practicum into the Programme, increase of the ECTS of the electives, etc).

AP would encourage that all these processes be carried out steadily and with the participation of all members of the Department (teaching staff, students, and administrative staff providing technical support).

Panel Judgement

Principle 9: On-going Monitoring and Periodic Internal Review of Programmes	
Fully compliant	√
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

None.

Principle 10: Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programmes

PROGRAMMES SHOULD REGULARLY UNDERGO EVALUATION BY COMMITTEES OF EXTERNAL EXPERTS SET BY HAHE, AIMING AT ACCREDITATION. 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 committee of independent experts. HAHE grants accreditation of programmes, 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 template's requirements, and as a catalyst for improvement, while opening new perspectives towards the international standing of the awarded degrees.

Both academic units and institutions participate in the regular external quality assurance process, while respecting the requirements of the legislative framework in which they operate.

The quality assurance, in this case the accreditation, is an on-going process that does not end with the external feedback, or report or its follow-up process within the Institution. Therefore, Institutions and their academic units ensure that the progress made since the last external quality assurance activity is taken into consideration when preparing for the next one.

Study Programme Compliance

The last external evaluation took place in 2013. This was an evaluation of all study programmes within the Department of Theology. The Panel took thorough note of the 2013 report. Substantial progress has been made since then. Only an English-language degree programme is yet to be established. If this is materialized, it would greatly contribute to the international visibility of the Department. AP was given plausible reasons for this, including the lack of staff and basic resources. The 2020 reform of the Study Programme has taken the essential recommendations of the last evaluation into serious consideration and has worked towards its implementation. It is not the Department's responsibility that its next evaluation had to wait for another ten years to take place. Several factors played a role to this delay (e.g., the recent pandemic).

All in all, the evaluation has proved to be an important process for the Department itself. A self-assessment contributes to a more intensive reflection on one's own practice and working methods and always proves to be very helpful. The comments made by AP were found to be constructive and the evaluation process was very much welcome.

Panel Judgement

Principle 10: Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programmes	
Fully compliant	√
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

Conduct regular evaluation at regular but shorter intervals with somewhat less effort. Self-reflection in particular is of great importance for academic institutions. The joint preparation of the evaluation by the Governing Board of the University, Quality Management and the Department would steadily contribute to achieving better strategic cooperation and significant results for the University as a whole.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

- A willingness to improve the programme and defend the good reputation of the Department through setting clear goals in collaboration with the University's relevant authorities (MODIP).
- Commitment to follow the Quality Assurances Policy and to improve the quality of teaching and services provided to students.
- Pursuit of interdisciplinarity thanks to a broad range of courses integrated into the Department's curriculum.
- Openness to areas of research and teaching that go beyond a Programme solely planned and formed upon denominational and ethnic criteria.
- Teaching staff committed to dedicate time and energy to the Department.
- Good infrastructure in terms of teaching classes, offices, and laboratories.

II. Areas of Weakness

- A high number of students dropping out of and failing to complete their degree Programme.
- A limited offer of elective courses taken from the other Department of the Theological School.
- Limited mobility of students to Universities abroad.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

- Increase the number of ECTS for elective courses across the other Department of the Theological School and/or other Departments of the Humanities.
- Increase of funding allocated to the Department for the support of research and teaching.
- Encourage students to benefit from Erasmus Exchange Programmes and other possibilities of academic visits abroad.
- Increase the participation rate of students in the evaluation of teaching.
- Creation of a network to sustain ties with the alumni of the Department.
- Reinforce and update the facilities of the School's Library.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: **1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10.**

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: **4.**

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are: **None.**

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

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

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname

Signature

1. Professor Stephanos Efthymiadis (Chair)

Open University of Cyprus, Cyprus

2. Professor Andreas Müller

University of Kiel, Germany

3. Professor Predrag Dragutinović

University of Belgrade, Serbia

4. Professor Georgios Halkias

University of Hong Kong, China

5. Mr Spartakos Tanasidis

University of Ioannina, Greece