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HELLENIC REPUBLIC
H.Q.A.
HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE
AND ACCREDITATION AGENCY

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

DEPARTMENT: School of English Language & Philology

UNIVERSITY: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki



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External Evaluation Committee

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the School of English Language and Literature of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki consisted of the following four (4) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by the HQA in accordance with Law 3374/2005:

1. *Prof Alexandra Georgakopoulou-Nuñez*

King's College London, UK

2. *Prof Emmanuel Vernadakis*

Université d'Angers, France

3. *Prof Effie Papatzikou Cochran*

The City University of New York, US

4. *Prof Olga Taxidou*

University of Edinburgh, UK

N.B. The structure of the “Template” proposed for the External Evaluation Report mirrors the requirements of Law 3374/2005 and corresponds overall to the structure of the Internal Evaluation Report submitted by the School.

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

Introduction

I. The External Evaluation Procedure

The present report has been written in accordance with the requirements of the Law 3374/2005 and the instructions and guidelines provided by the HQAA.

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) visited the School of English Language and Philology of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki from 17 to 19 of December, 2013. During the visit, the Head of School, several members of staff and students showed commitment to and faith in the evaluation process and extended their hospitality to the Committee. However, during the visit, the School’s teaching and staff premises were occupied by protesting students and we were therefore unable to access them. In addition, our initial briefing meeting with the University’s Vice-Principal (Education) was disrupted and, in the end, cancelled by a group of students who protested vigorously against the external evaluation process. Our visit on the first day was also disrupted by protests but further disruption was averted after the intervention of the University’s Rector and Senate. These disruptions notwithstanding, the rest of the visit was conducted in a very co-operative and collegial manner and it was completed in accordance with a detailed plan, prepared in advance by the Committee responsible for the production of the internal evaluation report. Partly due to the protests, the plan had to be modified and this resulted in two very full visit days. We are grateful to the staff in attendance and the Head of School for their patience, perseverance and resourcefulness throughout the evaluation process.

The EEC met the Head of the School, Prof. G. Kalogeras, the members of the Internal Evaluation Committee (IEC), the Heads of the four Departments, the administrative staff of the School, other members of the academic staff, and groups of students at undergraduate, MA and doctoral levels.

The EEC’s work is based on the Internal Evaluation Report as well as on a series of documents given to us during our visit to the site, including the School’s organizational chart. It is also based on such evidence that the EEC has been able to

collect and which demonstrates the quality and quantity of the work in the School. The EEC met and had discussions separately with groups of undergraduate and postgraduate students but was unable to observe any classes. The EEC also visited the 3rd 'Protypo Peiramatiko' (Experimental) School which is based in Evosmos and which was set up by the School of English. The visit was very successful and gave us wonderful insights into the daily life of the school and its pupils.

The EEC, as mentioned above, was unable to access facilities within the School and those within the Faculty that are related to the work of the School. In particular, we were unable to view classrooms, staff offices, meeting rooms, administrative staff offices, the Language Development Lab, the Phonetics Lab, and the Library, but we were provided with visual material related to some of these spaces.

II. The Internal Evaluation Procedure

The EEC considers the sources and documentation provided to be appropriate. To the extent that the objectives of the internal evaluation have been to offer the EEC a clear picture of the activities of the School, it can be said that they have been fulfilled. It is to be noted in connection with the report to follow that the evaluation took place at a time of major changes in process and of uncertainty, the future impact of which could not have been fully estimated or assessed either by the School itself or by this Committee. These changes are intimately linked with recent cuts in administrative staff and the freezing of new posts for teaching staff, resulting in staff reduction, as retiring staff are not being replaced. The IEC had expressed fears about the implications of these cuts for teaching, research and services standards in the internal evaluation report. Furthermore, in our discussions with members of academic staff other than the IEC and the Heads of Departments, concern was expressed by individual members regarding the evaluation process itself, in the face of adverse conditions faced by staff, in relation to their teaching and research duties. This Committee sees it fit to note those concerns raised.

A. Curriculum

APPROACH

The stated aims of the BA degree of the School mainly involve the creation of new ‘scientists with excellent and in depth knowledge in the main disciplines of the School, such as English language, linguistics, literature, translation and culture, as well as pedagogy’. Although there is no centralized information for alumni destinations, the majority have traditionally been employed as teachers of the English language in secondary and, more recently, primary education. Whilst taking this into account, the School’s BA degree is mainly premised on the humanistic values of scholarly rigour and deep engagement with fields of study and this is reflected consistently throughout the curriculum. Overall, the curriculum consists of an impressive list of modules on offer: the sheer breadth and variety are such that, especially at a time of financial adversities, it is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain them and a more rationalized approach particularly to optional modules would be useful. The first year of the BA programme comprises compulsory modules in Linguistics and English and American Literature and Translation and Cultural Studies that are seen as foundational. In the case of English and American Literature, the 1st year modules have been carefully designed to enable the transition from secondary to tertiary education, through a seminar-based and pastoral approach that introduces students to critical thinking and essay writing. This approach pays dividends and the students we met were highly appreciative of it. Nonetheless, the high numbers of students on the degree render the continuation of this type of curriculum delivery impossible and, as a result, survey courses are offered in Year 2. The students we met found this transition challenging. The Committee also observed that there was a conceptual leap between 1st year courses and subsequent years courses, particularly in the fields of Literature. The current approach is heavily reliant on National Literatures and this could be re-thought in favour of theme-based modules. At the same time, it is to be noted that the modules offered appear to be entirely appropriate in terms of content, and there is a systematic effort to update them in terms of bibliography. There is also a sustained effort to bring together theory with practice, as this is attested to by the pedagogical courses on offer and the internship (ELT practice), which requires considerable effort and staff time for its organization.

The Curriculum Committee is a commendable mechanism of quality assurance: the committee appears to be very rigorous in terms of ensuring lack of overlaps amongst modules as well as of ascertaining the appropriateness of any new modules. The Curriculum in most cases showcases close links of the staff research interests with their teaching. This ensures that the students are taught by specialists and in many cases scholars of international reputation in their fields. The positive results of this approach have over the years been attested to by the high quality of

the School's graduates, a lot of whom have excelled in postgraduate programmes of study abroad and become internationally reputable scholars in their own right. On the downside, this system has created a very close link of modules to teaching staff, which is currently posing a danger to the running and viability of vital modules, in cases of staff leave, retirement, etc. This is very much the case with two focal areas in linguistics, namely pragmatics and sociolinguistics, the continuing provision of which is vital for the overall place of linguistics in the curriculum of both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

The reputation of the School for the delivery of high quality programmes of study has very clearly been maintained, as evidenced in the high numbers of students that it continues to attract in a period of financial crisis, at BA, MA and PhD levels. The four MA programmes offered appear to be entirely consistent with programmes of their kind offered in the Anglo-American world and the staff are commendable for the resourcefulness, commitment and extra dedication that ensures the appropriateness of their curriculum. Staff on the MA literature programmes have also begun to reflect on latest social and cultural changes on the one hand and theoretical advances on the other and on how they can adjust the curriculum to take those into account. It is our belief that any further updates of MA programmes should be premised on effective coordination amongst the Departments of the School and open consultation with all stakeholders, outside of academia too, as key to their successful implementation.

IMPLEMENTATION

The linguistics provision remains very strong in the curriculum and there has been an exciting linking of applied linguistic modules with the School's recent commitment to outreach and impact, as the links with the Peiramatiko School in Evosmos demonstrate. The emphasis on formal and experimental linguistics, where the quality of staff and subjects is very impressive, could be usefully supplemented by the development of socio-culturally minded linguistic subjects, which are currently very well established internationally and sought after, particularly as part of programmes of study which offer literature and culture modules too. The recent joining of forces of English and American literature staff for the provision of an MA programme could be usefully expanded to the BA curriculum to ensure both the viability of subjects, at a time of staff reduction, and importantly, to cultivate entirely appropriate and needed synergies between subjects. The impressive strength and depth of expertise in linguistics can also serve as a basis for exciting synergies between literature and linguistic staff for the delivery of a 21st century curriculum that showcases interdisciplinarity where appropriate, alongside the School's longstanding commitment to in-depth and rigorous study of distinct fields, which should by no means be abandoned.

The delivery of the curriculum is enhanced tremendously by a sophisticated system of online resources and a platform for the submission of course material,

assessments, communication of staff with students, etc. The School needs to be commended for this forward thinking which places it at the forefront of institutions in Greece and allows it to address as effectively as possible the needs of exceptionally high student numbers in all degree programmes.

BA and MA module guides are well thought out: they include a general description of the course content and a useful separation of essential bibliography in the form of key-textbooks and supplementary reading. There is also a week-by-week module outline. There is an online facility for student registration for modules and effective dissemination of information for modules. This is a very efficient system for course delivery. In complicated cases, there is a dedicated Studies Advisor in place who, we were told, invests considerable amounts of time, particularly around registration time.

The PhD programmes of study do not contain a taught element and will therefore be dealt with under the section on Research.

Overall, the effective implementation of the Curriculum requires exceptional levels of commitment and dedication to its delivery that was very apparent throughout the evaluation process and that very frequently goes beyond the line of duty of individual members of staff.

RESULTS

Continuously high student numbers at all levels in a period of financial crisis and of serious unemployment amongst higher education graduates is both notable and commendable and a testament to the efficiency of programme delivery, dissemination and branding. Other indicators of effective curriculum delivery include: illustrious graduate career destinations, particularly for PhD graduates; high completion rates for PhD students; high retention rates (several BA students continue with MA studies in the School).

The BA programme of study is benefiting from several years of experience in trying out different systems of curriculum delivery and learning from what has not worked in the past to ensure present efficiency. The MA programmes of study have benefited from concentrated expertise in distinct subjects (e.g. linguistics) but at the same time innovative programmes have been set up (e.g. MA in Interpreting) that have, in better financial times, secured expansion of the School and new staff appointments for the delivery of the curriculum. All this is suggesting processes of internal assessment of programmes and ability and willingness to adapt the curriculum to societal and educational changes, where applicable.

IMPROVEMENT

The School's curriculum implementation and results are impressive in the context of current attrition of academic and administrative staff in key-areas as well as of hampering problems to do with the day-to-day running of the Departments, including the lack of appropriate teaching space. In the face of wider educational changes, the future viability of vital subject areas in the current curriculum delivery needs to be ensured. The EEC was made aware that the academic staff have not got much say in such changes. In that context, the suggested areas for improvement are offered here more as strategies for keeping afloat in the face of institutional constraints rather than as panacea.

Regardless of the shifting sands in the higher education in general, the School could usefully form a Strategic Planning Committee with fair representation from all involved Departments that will continuously assess the curriculum provision and decide jointly on future directions and areas of growth. The move to interdisciplinary provision that will be based on the collaboration of key-subjects in the School seems to be, both practically and in intellectual terms, an obvious way forward. At a concrete level, this can take the form of joint MA programmes, interdisciplinary modules with joint teaching from different specialisms, some re-designation of subject coverage from existing staff, etc.

An area worthy of consideration is the introduction of an agreed threshold of attainment vis-à-vis specific modules that could be posited as degree requirements for each of the represented subjects of the BA degree, so that balance is ensured amongst different areas and Departments in the overall curriculum.

Although there is a standardized and efficient procedure for the (re)design of the curriculum, the aim of readjusting the curriculum so as to reflect changes in societal and professional circumstances could be multiply served, mainly by means of: frequent and systematic analyses of the alumni destinations; ensuring students' wide participation in feedback processes for the teaching and syllabus of modules.

B. Teaching

The School's offerings are a solid variety of courses with the first year's being required introductory courses. The second year includes "required" and "required elective" courses and the third and fourth years offer a small number of "required" and "required elective" courses and a large number of pure electives that concentrate on the student's course of study.

APPROACH

- The department's instructional approach in the first year of required course of study is a rich programme of introductory offerings, a combination of lectures and seminars in English. This was viewed as positive by the students that we met.
- The average teaching staff /student ratio is approx.1:70.
- There is ample student/teacher collaboration in all years of study although difficulties may be encountered with very large student populations registered in the required and required elective courses.
- There is excellent use and incorporation of information technologies for most courses.
- The examination system is mostly via final written examinations, with the addition of quizzes and oral or written projects, when appropriate.
- The resources for teaching are overall satisfactory: with the various online resources, some funds for library books for students and for faculty research, there is not a paucity of source material. However, there is a dramatic lack of space necessary for the operation of the two linguistic labs as additional resources for teaching. This lack of space inhibits their full use, despite their state-of-the-art experimental equipment.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Overall, there is solid linking of research with teaching.
- There seems to be a constant updating of instructional material.
- There does not seem to be willingness on the part of the teaching staff to teach courses other than the ones in their discipline.
- The University applies the ECTS framework, which facilitates student mobility through the numerous ERASMUS programmes.

- Though regular in previous years, lately due to the switch into the electronic format for student evaluation of courses, instruction, and study resources, there has been a decline in the submission of student evaluation forms despite staff's efforts to encourage students to provide feedback. The School ought to work on methods that will ensure greater student participation in course evaluation.

RESULTS

As mentioned above, due to the student occupation of the School of Philosophy building, the EEC was unable to observe instruction in classrooms and see the students in action or to visit laboratories, as had been planned in the original schedule of our visit. However, the EEC was able to observe state-of-the-art interactive teaching methods at the experimental state school of Evosmos. There, the instruction is being delivered bilingually in Greek and English to native Greek students, starting at first grade. The instructional programme with the acronym of CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) is based on a solid interactive and participatory pedagogy of content-based and trans-languaging instruction. This is a true bilingual programme and an asset for the School (its students and graduates can intern or have practical training there).

There is no doubt that the areas covered by each Department are highly comprehensive and in some cases almost exhaustive and that the internship (ETL practice) itself is highly valued by the students. The School is also exceptionally active in participating in ERASMUS staff and student mobility programmes, which provide the opportunity to the most able students to experience and open their horizons in a different educational system for part of their studies. At the same time, the School has developed an efficient system of hosting students from a wide range of universities, increasingly from overseas: the integration of such students into the School's teaching and other activities is viewed as beneficial by the staff.

IMPROVEMENT

There was a good amount of discussion and a great deal of give and take between the staff and the evaluation team. There was consensus that there should not be a gap between the first and the second year, where after a caring and tightly supervised and guided instruction of the first year, students in the second year find themselves with much less structured guidance. This does not in any way mean that if the student seeks or requests such guidance or any other type of help, the staff will not be available. On the contrary, staff, to the extent that is possible, as well as the Chair and the Heads of the four Departments seem to have an open-door policy. The School should consider continuing with more structured courses in year two to foster continued student confidence in these initial years.

A propos of the four distinct Departments, an inter-departmental synergy for teaching would be more efficient and economical, thereby allowing staff more flexibility to teach new or each other's courses or team-teach. Year 1 is an excellent

example of an integration between the two Departments of the English and American Literatures and could serve as a template for further linking of courses.

The teaching in years 2-4 seems to focus more on the acquisition of knowledge and not on the development of critical and scholarly skills. It also tends to rely very heavily on the particular research interests of the staff, making it very difficult for courses to run, if staff are on leave or retire or made redundant. While the issue of staff replacement is crucial, as noted elsewhere in this report, for the purposes of undergraduate teaching, especially in years 1 and 2, staff should be more flexible and not solely wedded to their particular specialties. More integrated, team-taught courses will allow for more flexibility and will not necessarily be identified with a particular member of staff. While such courses may not be able to successfully bridge all four Departments of the school, they should at least be able to integrate two or three. At postgraduate level this integration has already been achieved in the newly proposed degree program between English and American Literature and in the existing Inter departmental postgraduate programs in European Literature and Civilization, and the program in Translation and Interpretation. These are examples of good practice, which clearly exhibit that the staff has reflected on the possibilities of interdepartmental integration.

It is our belief that further integration of the Departments, joint course design and teaching will provide coherence in the BA and MA degree programmes and will also be more pedagogically accessible for students. While this may prove quite labour intensive at the initial stage of course design, the aim would be ultimately to decrease the overall teaching workloads of staff.

C. Research

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

APPROACH

The School of English is constituted by a strong group of scholars, covering a wide spectrum of areas. Their research brings together a substantial critical mass of knowledge in three main fields:

- Science of language and education (theoretical linguistics, second language development and teaching issues),
- literature (British and American covering all periods and literary genres as well as gender and ethnic studies),
- and translation and intercultural studies.

The School has set up a fair research policy framework. However, although the progress within each area is quantifiable (e.g. through the research projects both completed and in progress, the seminars, colloquia, study days and publications), the individual members' research activity varies, as the main factor for this is less a consequence of internal policy and more of individual motivation and input. More specifically, the School intends to promote a research which combines theory and praxis, has an impact on society and can grant visibility. A close reading of the results shows that these goals are often outdone rather than attained - and perhaps sometimes by far so. However, important as individual prolific research output may be as an indicator, it is sometimes lacking in recognisability as research that emanates from a distinctive group or research unit. This may undermine the visibility of the output. To speak metaphorically, the research may directly point to individuals endowed with exciting personalities but deprived of a distinct identity.

IMPLEMENTATION

In spite of the current economic crisis which makes it more difficult to participate in international conferences and activities abroad, the research is rather fairly supported and interwoven into the system of promotions. Almost all of the teaching personnel is involved with research and several in more than one way. To begin with, individual research is being possible thanks to special grants offered to encourage promotion initiatives among the staff. Six-month sabbaticals can also be claimed every three years by all (it is almost held as a right) and most members of the staff benefit from this policy so as to produce one or more publications, take part in academic conferences that relate to their areas of research, etc. The sabbatical scheme seems therefore to be effective and

satisfactory. In spite of certain discrepancies in the output among the members, the number of scholarly publications of the School is remarkable. Staff present at the evaluation process wished there were adequate funding for travel expenses when presenting papers at conferences, for paying registration fees etc., as it was the case in the past.

Seminars, study days, colloquia, two laboratories, an “experimental” school and nineteen research programmes, both achieved and in progress, make up the impressive collective research of the School, subsidized by local, national, European and international structures. Most of the projects are very well funded, the ‘experimental’ school is housed in a beautiful and welcoming building and the two laboratories, although cramped, are well-equipped. When closely observed, this research, however, still seems to feed on individual initiative. A common strategy and long-term planning have still to be fully implemented.

RESULTS

The research outcomes of the staff are very impressive indeed. Although the School of English is currently having to produce research under more difficult circumstances than in the past, the CVs of the staff members still show that most of them are prolific writers of academic articles and books in both English and Greek. Most of the articles are published in peer-reviewed journals. It emerges from various indexes and web-based research that there are 1480 citations of their works. Further evidence for the significant productivity and the scholarly work produced in the School is the number of books published by highly regarded English or American publishing houses. The committee had also had the opportunity of a preview of both individual and collective research results, by visiting the well-conceived web site of the School. The School attracts a large number of postgraduate students. The PhD programme attracts high quality candidates and the completion rates are good within the contextual constraints. The School’s Postgraduate Committee further helps with the quality assistance and the overseeing of progression issues. The impact of PhD supervision needs to be taken into account within the general workloads of staff.

The two research laboratories and several among the ten research programmes in progress have provided postdoc positions. The career destinations of the PhD graduates are indeed very satisfactory, as many of them end up being employed in universities or in research centres. A lot of the current research is demonstrating high levels of impact, as we will discuss in Section D below.

IMPROVEMENT

The EEC occasionally felt that any issues with the School’s current research identity may be linked with the burden of its founders’ legacy. Senior staff have inadvertently shaped their research over the years on the basis of the institutionalized system of personal Chairs, which particularly in the past helped the School to stand out in more ways than one, including in research. More recent

appointments have brought into the School a plurality of research standpoints and topics that have yet to be integrated into a School-wide, coherent research strategy and vision and to be supported accordingly. Putting in place a mentoring system may assist in a creative process of ‘marrying’ established research areas and interests with emerging ones, and of encouraging plurality and openness in the School’s research policy.

The School also need to consider setting up a Research Strategy Committee which will have a dual function: to plan and manage inter-departmental research collaborations and to articulate a School-wide vision of research that will help with the formation of a collective identity. In this way, individual members’ research plans and career progression can be monitored and assisted, where necessary.

Although there is a system of postgraduate students’ representation in place, the workings of this are not always clear to the students. The cohort of PhD students should also be encouraged to engage in a constructive exchange of views and present their work in progress in ‘safe’ environments, through e.g. inter-departmental seminars.

The two existing labs have the potential to evolve and become recognized as Centres of Excellence and would need to be supported to this effect. The literature and translation departments should also seek ways in which to establish research labs that would help consolidate areas of research concentration and provide openings for areas of growth. The proposal for a Laboratory for Narrative Research is a very welcome step and entirely resonant with developments abroad.

D. All Other Services

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

APPROACH

The School offers highly specialized services to staff and students through a number of well-equipped facilities (library, laboratories, recourse centres, screening room, and technical support centres). These have been well integrated into the teaching approaches and research projects and comprise an integral part of the infrastructure of the School. Both students and staff are aware of these facilities and make good use of them.

The School has made an extensive effort to simplify administrative procedures by processing data electronically. This has had an impact on registration procedures and on the administration of questionnaires.

The School has made a concerted effort to make attendance compulsory for many courses; the internship (ELT practice) requires the active participation of students; furthermore, many cultural and outreach activities require the participation and cooperation of students across the school.

IMPLEMENTATION

The administration of the School is run by two separate offices: the Scool Office which deals with purely formal and administrative matters and the Office of Academic matters which deals with the organization of the teaching programme, room bookings, the student placements and the general day-to-day running of the School. The communication between the two sections seems to be functioning, and staff and students are aware of whom to address to resolve specific issues. The School also has a designated IT officer who deals with the specific needs of both students and staff.

The library resources seemed appropriate and sufficient to cover both the pedagogical and research needs of the School. The electronic resources available to staff and students were commended by both groups and, despite interruptions due to lack of funding, were easily accessible. The acquisitions are made in consultation with the academic members of staff, who are also informed by the research needs of their own postgraduates. In practice, this allows PhD candidates to also have input in the process of acquisition. However, there is a clear need for a centralized University Library. This is supported by staff and students alike.

The resource and laboratory facilities available seemed very good and valued by staff and students. These (The Computer Centre, The Resource Centre, The Screening Room, The American Studies Resource Portal) are used for both

pedagogical and research purposes. In particular, the Language Development Laboratory and The Phonetics Laboratory contain highly specialized equipment, which informs some of the staff research projects. However, space constraints make it difficult for the labs to be used for teaching purposes.

Although we did not have access to any of the teaching or resource facilities due to the student occupation, it became apparent from meeting with academic, administrative staff and students that the facilities in terms of buildings and estates were seriously lacking. The use of the above mentioned resource centres is compromised due to the lack of space. The teaching takes place in rooms that lack basic requirements like good acoustics, comfortable seats, proper lighting, and currently heating. The staff is personally responsible for the security of the rooms that are allocated to the School (locking, etc.) and this seems inappropriate.

The School has implemented the post of Academic Advisor who is for most students the first port of call and the overall link with the Department and the institution. The Advisor deals with administrative, academic and pastoral matters. At present, the post is staffed by two academics and this encounter mainly takes place at the start of the academic year. Considering the numbers of students this seems a huge undertaking for two members of staff. The School also seems to operate an efficiently run and managed induction system for any new and ERASMUS students.

RESULTS

Although the administrative and overall support services seem adequate and functional for the needs of the School, they are constantly threatened by cuts. The School has made a conscious and strategic effort to maintain the function of the laboratories, as they are crucial for both teaching and research. It seems that the School would benefit from a centralized system of administrative support. The Office of Academic Matters is only open two hours daily for the students.

With the increasing numbers of international students, the University might want to consider establishing an International Office that specifically handles issues pertaining to this cohort.

The Computer Centre, The Resource Centre, The Screening Room, The American Studies Resource Portal are all used for both pedagogical and research purposes. The Language Development Laboratory and the Phonetics Laboratory have contributed to substantial research projects and could be further integrated into undergraduate teaching, creating innovative and forward-looking pedagogical approaches.

It became clear in discussions with staff and students that while the staff does its best to introduce innovative approaches and equipment to facilitate teaching and research, the actual spaces that house these facilities seem to undermine their endeavours.

The commitment of staff in renewing, managing and integrating these facilities across the range of School activity has to be commended. Students were very aware of these facilities and these are well integrated into their learning experience. These facilities also enable collaborative research projects amongst staff across the Departments of the School and have been integral for postgraduate research.

IMPROVEMENTS

The School has a policy of expanding the electronic provision. Academic and IT staff are very committed to this and work hard to sustain it. It deserves institutional support and more funding.

As a response to cuts and insufficient administrative staffing, the School has taken the initiative of appointing part-time postgraduate students to keep all the support facilities active. This has been part of the overall scholarship scheme, and helps to further integrate the postgraduate researchers within the research culture of the School. However, this strategy might not be sustainable in the long term and needs institutional support in terms of spaces and funding.

The post of Academic Advisor is crucial for the smooth functioning of both the registration process and the channels of communication between the institution and the students. This post would benefit from administrative support (a student support officer). This would allow the members of staff to primarily deal with academic and pastoral matters.

There is a clear need for a central institutional library to accommodate all Departmental libraries. This will enhance the teaching and research culture of the whole University and will allow different cohorts of students to further interact.

Similarly, there is an urgent need expressed emphatically by staff and students for a centralized University secretariat to deal with administrative and other formal matters.

Collaboration with social, cultural and production organizations

The School has recently become increasingly active in establishing links with the community and it has begun to consciously integrate these into teaching and research. As one of the main aims and objectives of the School is to train teachers of English for the state and private sector, the concept and practice of external placements is very well integrated within the curriculum. This allows the School to be highly aware of and sensitive to the pedagogical demands of its target groups.

The existence of the Experimental School at Evosmos is an excellent example of integrating research and practice, the academy and public educational institutions. This in turn generates more research projects at PhD level, which further develop these links.

Creative Writing Workshop: This creates links between the Departments of English and American Literature and other Departments across the University. It acts as a forum of interdisciplinarity and creative interface with the public. It is integrated within the teaching and also incorporates innovative assessment methods (i.e. reflective portfolios, the production of plays, songs, choreography, text and video). A specific example of such a project, ‘Understanding Illness and Trauma through Narrative’ included the services of the Fulbright Visiting Scholar, members of staff, local artists, students from the Departments and from the School of Medicine. This is in line with the current interest in Medical Humanities. Another such initiative that bridges disciplines, departments and creates links with the community is The **Urban Environments in Transition Project**.

Workshop/Bald Theatre:

“The Bald Theatre, which is affiliated with the upper-level elective course ‘Theatre Workshop’, has been active for the past 30 years, attracting students from all Faculties of the University and often becoming the link between the School of English and the city or other cities. It has been a very essential space for rehearsing creativity and putting to practice ideas about the theatre taught in undergraduate literature and drama courses.

Members of staff individually contribute to public events that relate to their areas of research by taking part in lectures, debates, panels etc. across a variety of fora and media public institutions (museums, galleries, hospitals, many schools across the city and the region). Members of staff have helped establish national and international learned societies in their fields of research.

Bilingualism Matters: this prestigious research project also has a public aspect in the ways it researches bilingualism and engages bilingual communities. Part of its aim is to have impact on educational policy. This is an example of an inter University research project and network that integrates highly specialized research with direct and public application. Interestingly, although the project is located within the School of English it also involves speakers of Modern Greek. This

proves that some of the research undertaken in the Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics is not necessarily language specific but can have broader applications within the social and educational needs of Modern Greece.

The Phonetics Laboratory also offers services to the community in collaboration with the Thessaloniki Parents' Association of children who are hard of hearing.

E. Strategic Planning, Perspectives for Improvement and Dealing with Potential Inhibiting Factors

The Committee was very pleased to meet with a large number of faculty members and students, both in small group sessions and in larger meetings. The overall impression from these meetings was that (1) students were highly motivated to learn and overall satisfied with the quality of teaching and the guidance provided by academic staff in the School and (2) the teaching and administrative staff were committed to their work and often went beyond the line of duty in order to rise above serious challenges that are beyond their control. There is clearly an issue with the quality of services provided to the students, noted by both staff and students. The teaching rooms are unsatisfactory and, at the time of our visit, were reported to have no central heating. The School's office seems to be understaffed and in our meeting with the students, concerns were expressed about the inadequacy of administrative support for their studies and about limited access to the administrative staff. The School is clearly overstretched with a high number of students at all levels (undergraduate, taught and research postgraduate) and an unacceptably high ratio of staff-students. This prohibits the delivery of modules in seminar format and the regular writing of essays as well as the assessment by coursework, particularly at BA level. On its part, the current leadership in the School seems to be operating an efficient management of resources that ensures the avoidance of any waste in the day-to-day running of the School, so the feeling is that the School is offering a high value added for a low resource cost.

There is ample evidence of academic management structures within each Department and the inter-departmental Curriculum Committee seems to operate very efficiently. However, the current challenges present with a need for more co-ordination amongst Heads of Departments, with regard to both the delivery of programmes of study and the setting up of research priorities and plans. It is reassuring that two Heads of Departments from the School are currently sitting in Committees that are engaged in wider discussions about the School of Philosophy and the rest of the Foreign Languages Schools but these discussions should be conducted alongside School-internal strategic priorities planning. An agreed agenda with the School's research priorities and areas of growth with the full and transparent participation of all major stakeholders would be very beneficial in the formation of a strong collective identity for the School.

Most of the academic staff welcomed the opportunity for reflection on their activities that both the internal and the external evaluation process provided them with. The EEC hope that this process of reflection will continue alongside the development of a culture of effective dissemination, presentation and

communication of the School's numerous and notable achievements both at the level of teaching and at the level of research. The Committee in any case felt that it was contributing to a prior established discussion within the School.

Within the existing framework of constraints (i.e., state bureaucracy and decline of state financial support), the School needs to look critically through all of its resources and processes and see how it can achieve the best possible results.

F. Final Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC

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

The staff are commendable for their commitment to the longstanding culture of the School of high academic standards, quality of teaching and research. It is pleasing to see how this commitment has been recently extending to the undertaking of research activities with impact in the wider society.

It is highly commendable that, despite all the difficulties and limitations, the School is continuing to deliver high quality research, particularly in the areas of linguistics, evidenced by the total level of external funding, and the quality and output of publications. This is in some cases achieved through the exceptional efforts of individual faculty staff to initiate, develop and sustain research activities. Furthermore, the level of obtained external funding is significant by any measure, and the extent and quality of ongoing national and international research collaborations are more than satisfactory.

It is clear that within the current financial constraints, certain of our recommendations for improvement of services cannot be easily, if at all, implemented (e.g. the hiring of administrative staff; the replacement of retiring staff with new appointments). In general, the School may have to exercise a strong will for inter-departmental collaboration, local improvisation and resourcefulness so as to develop strategies for ameliorating the current situation. Certain achievable goals should still be set as part of a bottom up handling of the situation. For instance, the full digitization of documents relating to former graduates would help alleviate some of the current administrative workload. Some kind of formalization of a system for mentoring junior members of staff should be sought as part of the School's development of a strategic vision for the coming years. This could contribute to all members of staff being given opportunities for contributing to new teaching and research initiatives to the greatest possible extent.

The EEC specific recommendations are:

- The formation of a strategic planning committee. Putting in place processes for a development of a School collective and distinctive identity is much needed. The School will benefit from a consultative charting of its strategic vision.
- The philosophy of the curriculum needs to be looked at with a view to designing certain interdisciplinary modules with teaching input from staff

from the different Departments and with up to date reflections of the subjects taught. During our discussions, the staff were aware of the need for such synergies and even for the renaming and re-designation of areas of study. It was for instance noted that the distinction between ‘theoretical’ and ‘applied’ linguistics may need re-thinking. It was also acknowledged that the titles of literature modules should reflect the ways in which they are informed by contextualist, cultural, and post-national perspectives. Collaboration in modules offering could take several forms (e.g. core modules of one programme being open to another), which are currently being tried out in certain cases at MA programmes level. Cross-subjects methods modules could also be offered.

- The problems with the current provision of services, particularly the state of the classrooms, need to be addressed as soon as possible, possibly with the intervention and support of high-level management in the Institution. It is inconceivable that the students will continue to be taught in spaces with no heating and these are unacceptable, health hazard conditions for the staff too. The two existing labs need to be supported not least so as to enable staff to integrate them fully into their teaching.
- We recommend to the School the development of a research policy to form a shared vision in the form of a wider short- to medium- term strategic plan for the School. A research committee needs to be established, as part of the overall academic management structure across the Departments. This should include clear establishment and documentation of internal academic standards for the planning, assessment and recognition of research.
- The School needs to seek ways in which to set up –at its level- an effective teaching and research quality assurance and support mechanism. This would ideally serve as a wide-ranging platform that could, amongst others, provide mentoring of junior staff, assistance with grant proposal preparations, opportunities for teaching and research collaborations amongst staff from different disciplines and Departments, as well as a postgraduate research regulatory framework. Further integration of the Departments, joint course design and teaching will provide coherence between the sections and will also be more pedagogically accessible for students. The development of any new PG degree programmes ideally needs to be part of overall strategic planning.
- There is scope for the School to articulate clear statements about its mission, philosophy, and teaching and research commitments. It is believed and hoped that working towards the consolidation of a distinctive identity and an agreed vision about the future is the best – and probably the only- available means to staff at present for rising to challenging times whilst maintaining their scholarly integrity and zeal for contribution to the knowledge-base of their discipline and to the society they are part of, as members of a School with a legacy of teaching & research excellence.

The Members of the Committee

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