



**ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ**  
HELLENIC REPUBLIC



**Εθνική Αρχή  
Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης**  
Hellenic Authority  
for Higher Education

Αριστείδου 1 & Ευριπίδου 2 • 10559 Αθήνα | 1 Aristidou str. & 2 Evripidou str. • 10559 Athens, Greece  
**T.** +30 210 9220 944 • **F.** +30 210 9220 143 • **E.** secretariat@ethaae.gr • [www.ethaae.gr](http://www.ethaae.gr)

# Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of:

**Business Administration**  
**Institution: Hellenic Open University**  
**Date: 6 February 2021**

Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the Undergraduate Study Programme of **Business Administration** of the **Hellenic Open University** 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 **Business Administration** of the **Hellenic Open University** comprised the following four (4) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

- 1. Professor Fragiskos Filippaios (Chair)**  
Norwich Business School, University of East Anglia, UK
  
- 2. Professor Evangelos Dedousis**  
The American University in Dubai, United Arab Emirates
  
- 3. Professor Diofantos Hadjimitsis**  
Cyprus University of Technology, Cyprus
  
- 4. Mr Fragiskos Gonidakis**  
Member of the Economic Chamber of Greece, Greece

## II. Review Procedure and Documentation

Because of the Covid-19 crisis and the different national lockdown procedures, all the meetings took place by teleconference using Zoom. From a technical point of view, everything worked well, and all the attendees were able to participate in the discussions without interruption. All the meetings took place between 3h00 PM (Athens time) and 9h00 PM (Athens time) in order to manage the time differences between participants and the Hellenic Open University (HOU) (Greece, Cyprus, United Arab Emirates and United Kingdom).

On Monday February 1st, evening, the Panel had a preliminary private meeting to discuss the documentation received and any initial observations regarding the accreditation process. A set of questions was drafted guiding the key meetings with HOU and stakeholders.

On Tuesday, February 2nd, afternoon, the Panel had its first meeting with the Vice-Rector and President of MODIP, Professor Efstathios Efstathopoulos, Dean of School of Social Sciences, Professor Athanasios Mihiotis, Study Programme Director, Professor Augustinos Dimitras as well as members of the OMEA and MODIP. The Panel was briefed on the HOU's structure, organization and goals as well as the programme's structure and quality assurance processes. During the meeting several documents were presented and delivered to the Panel members providing information on the curriculum, students, teaching methods, and research activities. Further, the meeting with the programme academic members covered various teaching and research issues as well as other issues and on-goings of the programme. In the evening, the Panel met with students, without the presence of programme faculty. Students revealed their experiences and the discussion with the Panel members was very informative. The students were open and frank about their experiences and views, and overall, very positive.

The next day started with a virtual University tour in which the Panel also met the professional services and technical staff. The University provided a video allowing a virtual visit to the infrastructure such as classrooms, lecture halls, the computer labs, staff offices, the library and meeting rooms. Overall, the Panel's view of the resources available to the HOU students was positive. Given the nature of studies offered by HOU (online & blended learning) the Panel felt that there was not adequate time to review all facilities and infrastructure in detail. The Panel, therefore, recommends that in future visits this session lasts at least two hours. This will allow future Panels to review in detail all the excellent support mechanisms offered by HOU to its students. Afterwards, the Panel also met with former students as representatives of the alumni of the programme. Most of the attendees have positions of significant responsibility and have provided excellent feedback for the programme. Next, the Panel met with stakeholders and social partners. They similarly provided useful insights. The common view for the HOU and of the programme under accreditation was very favourable.

Later in the same day, the Panel members met again with the HOU senior staff, MODIP and OMEA members, to provide preliminary feedback on the accreditation visit findings.

All meetings with teaching, technical and administrative staff, undergraduate students, alumni and external stakeholders were very useful and informative. They were conducted in a very sincere and constructive manner, and all Panel questions were answered sincerely and without avoiding any issue. The staff of the HOU have provided the Panel with detailed and comprehensive documentation that was required for the accreditation process. All attendees were very helpful and have understood and accepted the requirements, the principles and objectives of the external accreditation process.

### III. Study Programme Profile

The HOU offers undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral programmes. The University was created in 1992 and is currently based in the city of Patras. The programme of Business Administration was created in 2000 and is currently offered by the School of Social Sciences. The undergraduate programme leads to a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration. There is also one closely aligned postgraduate (Master's Degree) programme in Business Administration (MBA).

Currently the programme has 5016 active undergraduate students, with the last registered cohort amounting to 816 new students. The programme has an excellent gender balance with 54% of female active students. Thus far there are 6202 graduates (365 average per year).

The scope of the undergraduate programme is to provide a general business administration curriculum, considering the standards of similar good programmes in Greece and Europe. The key aim is to create graduates that combine theoretical and practical knowledge relevant to the management of modern businesses and organisations both in the private and public sector. The programme offers overall 15 thematic units while for the successful completion of studies and the award of Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration students must successfully complete 12 thematic units and obtain 240 ECTS. The core of the programme includes economic theory (micro and macro), strong quantitative methods (mathematics, statistics and econometrics) and applied field economic and business administration subjects. The programme offers the opportunity for the selection of optional thematic units on e-commerce and entrepreneurship, advanced marketing, capital markets, total quality management and industrial organization and labour markets. In total, students can select up to 3 optional thematic units in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year of studies.

The delivery is taking place in blended learning format with a substantial amount of time spent on-line and complemented with small group (average of 25,9 and a maximum of 28 students per group) tutorials. While the small group tutorials traditionally take place in a face-to-face format, currently due to Covid-19 restrictions these have also been moved online. It is the intention of the HOU to reintroduce face to face meetings as soon as we return to normal conditions.

The teaching method follows a student centric approach where the student engages in independent self-guided study and faculty act in a teaching and mentoring capacity. The University offers training to new faculty in fulfilling successfully this dual role. The programme is managed by the Director of Studies, supported by the 15 Coordinators for the thematic units. There are currently 412 adjunct faculty supporting the tutorial groups. The recruitment of adjunct faculty follows a robust process of external evaluations and their performance is monitored on an annual basis by the Director of Studies and the Coordinators.

## 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 organization 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

The programme has a clearly articulated Quality Assurance (QA) process that is in line with the QA process of the Institution. From the submitted accreditation documentation as well as the meetings with the Institution's and the programme's representatives it was evident that the two

units work closely, and the Institutional Unit (ΜΟΔΙΠ) offers continuous and substantial support to the programme.

There is a transparent annual review process for the evaluation of both the thematic units and the programme that starts with the students' evaluation of the individual thematic units. The results of this evaluation are discussed, in the Coordinators' group meeting and recommendations are being made for adjustments to specific thematic units. Coordinators also review the content of their thematic units annually integrating new research findings and management practices. There was no evidence in the quality assurance manual regarding to the consideration given to student performance in each thematic cycle and how this information is used in the annual quality assurance cycle.

Administration services, the Library and all other support services operate at a high professional level and support students excellently.

### Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 1: Institution Policy for Quality Assurance</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>X</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

### Panel Recommendations

While the QA process and the engagement with stakeholders are high, it appears that the programme committee is approaching the changes to the programme from the perspective of a thematic unit level and not strategically from the perspective of the programme. We have not seen evidence of a holistic review of the programme and despite the incremental changes to individual thematic units there could be a more systematic review process at the programme level that integrates programme learning outcomes, thematic units, teaching methods and assessment instruments.

## 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 programme consists of several core thematic units covering adequately key areas of the economics and business administration disciplines. The programme also offers a number of electives (in years 3 and 4). More specifically, the programme includes 15 thematic units in total. The first two years cover 6 compulsory thematic units. Years three and four offer 3 compulsory thematic units and 6 elective thematic units. The programme has a good quantitative and accounting element which has been commended by students, graduates and external stakeholders (businesses, local authorities, public organizations) as it prepares students for positions that require strong analytical skills.

There is a significant number of students (usually over 30% of total enrolled undergraduate students) that drop out after the first year of studies. The programme is arguably making every effort to reduce this number by offering personal tuition support to students.

The programme has an established mentoring scheme. Faculty act as mentors to undergraduate students offering academic and pastoral support. This system has reportedly clear benefits to students' engagement, retention and attainment.

The programme does not have an element of funded internships. Due to the nature of students admitted (most have full-time jobs) establishing an internship programme is not feasible.

The programme also offers opportunities for studying abroad through the Erasmus+ scheme. The number of collaborations and the uptake from students is rather limited. A key obstacle is related with the structure of the programme in thematic units which makes mapping against other international programmes rather complicated.

### Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 2: Design and Approval of Programmes</b>	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	<b>X</b>
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

### Panel Recommendations

While every effort has been made to comply with this principle fully, the Panel feels that the programme would benefit from some additional actions. More specifically:

- The programme would benefit from a more frequent systematic review. This systematic review would allow the programme to introduce new thematic units capturing recent developments in economics and business administration.
- The programme would benefit from developing an internationalization strategy and expand its Erasmus+ agreements. While the current structure creates challenges for student mobility this should not prevent faculty to engage in teaching activities abroad. The development of an internationalization strategy will also facilitate the exchange of best practices with institutions abroad and the enhancement of curriculum development.
- The programme has a significant degree of engagement with external stakeholders. However, this engagement is not formalized in any institutional structure. We recommend working with external stakeholders to establish an Advisory Board. This Board could consist of representatives of local companies, representatives of chambers of commerce and economics, representatives of local authorities and academic members from other national and international Departments of Economics and Business Administration. The Advisory Board could meet annually and provide feedback on the programme's strategic direction.

### 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

The undergraduate programme in Business Administration attracts the highest number of students among programmes of studies at the Hellenic Open University. The decline in the number of new students in the programme over the past 2 years is partially explained by the launch of related new programmes in the broader area of Business Administration. As classes are delivered online, the programme offers a high degree of flexibility to students, the vast majority of who are mature students with work commitments and family responsibilities. Flexibility in the delivery mode and in the pace students elect to complete their studies in

conjunction with the prospect of advancement in one's career are the major drawcards of the programme.

Detailed information about the overall objectives, learning outcomes, entry criteria, structure of the programme, description and objectives of each thematic unit as well as assessment criteria and methods is available on the HOU's website. Availability of detailed information prospective and current students may look for regarding academic issues and support services in the HOU's user-friendly website and the easy-to-use learning platform are much appreciated by students as it emerged during the Panel's discussion with them. Students had only positive comments and praise to offer regarding the speed with which their questions and requests are answered by faculty and professional services.

Looking at the student evaluation surveys over the past few years and taking into account student comments it is clear to the Panel that students are very satisfied with the quality of the teaching/learning process, the knowledge, guidance, and support of faculty throughout the course of their studies. Representative of the highly positive comments made by students regarding their learning experience is that not only did they acquire knowledge and develop new and useful skills but, significantly, they also developed new ways of thinking to apply in the work environment. Given students' high praise for faculty, perhaps the latter could be rewarded by being allowed to post a short bio next to their name highlighting their credentials and achievements. This would help to enhance the programme's and the Institution's reputation and visibility in the broader community. Students also expressed high satisfaction with the Library services, technical support, and services provided by other administrative units.

The results of student evaluation surveys are taken into consideration in the evaluation of faculty. For instance, adjunct faculty with consistently low evaluation scores are not offered renewal in the employment contract. The voice and comments of students appear to be considered with respect to minor changes and modifications to teaching. However, some rigidity appears to be present when it comes to addressing certain issues. For example, students mentioned the need for up-to-dating textbooks and teaching material. It may be noted that the same point was also raised by alumni. As mentioned by students, textbooks are close to ten years old in a few thematic units and the contents need to be up-to-dated to better reflect current developments in the marketplace.

Regarding employers' feedback, the Panel is pleased to note that employers were unanimous in expressing their full satisfaction with the level of education, skills and preparedness of the programme's graduates to smoothly fit with requirements of jobs. In the opinion of employers, graduates have a much sought-after combination of knowledge, skills, maturity, and familiarity with conditions in the marketplace giving them an edge over graduates of similar programmes in conventional institutions.

### Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 3: Student- centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>X</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	

Non-compliant	
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### **Panel Recommendations**

The close interaction with students while they complete studies appears to be lost after graduation. This is detrimental to the programme and the HOU particularly as several graduates have high profile positions of influence and prestige in society. Thus, the Panel recommends a much closer and systematic interaction with graduates, employers, and other key stakeholders with the view to developing new and innovative programmes of study likely to be in demand in future. For instance, alumni members of the business community may be called to be part of an Advisory Board offering insights regarding future trends in the labour market thus developing a proactive approach to market needs. Likewise, high profile graduates could well be promoted as “ambassadors” of the programme, for instance appear as case studies on the website.

## 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

All indications from the various focused groups carried out by the Panel – Vice-Rector, Dean, Study Programme Director, Faculty, Professional Services, graduates, students, stakeholders – indicated strong dedication of the faculty to the students and a very congenial environment bringing students and faculty very close.

Student admission: The HOU does not follow the admission criteria for the other public universities in Greece, in which Greek high school graduates enter the undergraduate programmes after succeeding to the national entrance examinations. Indeed, graduates of secondary school or equivalent or equivalent secondary school qualification at home or abroad are accepted. It is noted from the published documents on the programme website that knowledge of a foreign language, primarily English and the use of computer or e-mail and internet is an extra benefit for the students. The admissions criteria are publicised and are available on the website.

Based on the presentations made, the submitted paperwork and meetings with the students, it has been found that the incoming students (new entrants) are supported in many ways, i.e., via direct communication with the faculty through telephone, e-mail, on-site meetings, introductory and orientation seminars, well-defined navigation through the educational platform etc.

Student progression: The Panel considers that pre-defined and published regulations regarding student progression are in place and processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on student progression, are also in place. The educational platform (study.eap.gr) is well established and well used for the student progress monitoring both by the students and the faculty (permanent and adjunct)

Student recognition: The Panel found that pre-defined and published regulations regarding student recognition are in place. Moreover, the Panel notes that there is a satisfactory recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, which are essential components for ensuring the students' progress in their studies. Appropriate recognition procedures are in place and are being in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention's principles. The Panel noted a coherent recognition of the degree across the country helping the students' career (e.g., national public authorities/organisations). During the discussion with the graduates and stakeholders, it has been recognised that there is a great need to revise the programme of study to get more professional accreditations in other disciplines (e.g., auditors).

There is no practical training or internship integrated in the curriculum. Additionally, the Panel noted that HOU offers two types of scholarships either on a competitive basis or using specific criteria (e.g., social, economic etc.). Indeed, the HOU provided for the last three years (2017-2020) an impressive number of 869 scholarships in total.

Student mobility is encouraged in general, but, still, the number of students and faculty entering a European exchange programme is minimal (only 3 students and 1 member of staff for the last 3 years). Erasmus agreements with other universities are still low (only 3 agreements over the previous 5 years).

Student certification: The Panel found that pre-defined and published regulations regarding student certification are in place. Students receive a certificate explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content, and status of the pursued and successfully completed studies.

Module Study Guides for each thematic unit enable students to be aware of each module's content and learning outcomes and the expected workload.

From discussions with the currently enrolled students on the programme and the graduates, the Panel observed that they are overall satisfied with the programme. The students promoted the academic environment of the HOU and spoke positively about the teaching abilities of the faculty.

Student progress monitoring and certification processes are clearly defined and adhered to. Overall, the programme complies with all requirements of the HAHE and European and International standards regarding student admission, progression, recognition and certification.

### Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 4: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>X</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

## **Panel Recommendations**

- Although students and faculty are aware of the ERASMUS+ Programme, the Panel strongly recommends the faculty and the students become more active in participating in Erasmus programmes.
- Some students and graduates expressed the possibility to include in the syllabus as an optional, the inclusion of a diploma thesis. The Panel recommends taking into consideration the inclusion of a diploma thesis as an optional element in the curriculum. The latter could increase the motivation of the students to engage more heavily with research.
- The establishment of an Advisory Board will be an asset for the programme for re-evaluation and assessment of the curriculum. In addition, to advice on the structure and the content of the curriculum, such a Board could facilitate the efforts to raise the Programme to the next level in terms of both market placement and academic performance of graduates.

## 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 recognize 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

The general practice across the HOU is to rely heavily on employing human resources on contract rather than offering tenure. Thus, most of the faculty teaching on the programme, either tenured members of other universities in Greece or academically qualified people in industry, are employed on contract. The practice of employing a very small number of own tenured faculty to teach in the programme by essentially “subcontracting” to a large extent the teaching/learning process offers a high degree of flexibility. At the same time though the practice will likely have an adverse longer-term impact upon the development of the programme’s own tenured faculty with negative implications on the ability to innovate and even put at risk the survival of the programme.

Teaching positions are advertised with the view to hiring academically qualified and experienced faculty. As the main affiliation of most faculty is with other universities, where they hold tenured positions, the onus for providing opportunities for their development lies outside the HOU. A similar remark may be made about faculty who have positions in industry and a teaching contract with HOU. A major aspect of faculty development is engagement in research activities. Senior faculty at HOU stressed the importance of promoting research citing the example of contract faculty who are required to include their affiliation with HOU in academic publications. However, as far as the small minority of the programme’s own tenured faculty is concerned, and given the pressure of the workload they handle, it is doubtful that they can take advantage of opportunities to further their own academic development in research especially in the absence of any specific incentives to this end.

Being heavily dependent on contract faculty for the teaching/learning process, the raison d'être of an academic institution, can only have negative consequences turning the place into a purely teaching university unable to attract students beyond the narrow market niche that has been serving since it commenced operations.

### Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 5: Teaching Staff</b>	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	<b>X</b>
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

### Panel Recommendations

The Panel recommends bringing the teaching/learning process “home” by hiring faculty who are tenured members of HOU. The breakdown of tenured to contract faculty should gradually be increased to about 70/30% (permanent/adjunct).

## 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

The department and generally the university has adequate facilities for the effective delivery of the programme. There is also many Labs, which can be used for the effective delivery of specialist modules.

The programme shares the use of the library at the main campus. The library provides access to various databases, as well as electronic access to publications, books, and academic journals. These facilities seem to fit the needs of the programme.

Material for all thematic units is uploaded on the electronic learning platform, which contains useful learning material including lecture notes, articles, and other useful sources of information pertinent to the programme. This also provides a useful platform for communication between students and faculty for each thematic unit.

The students are informed about all available services in the beginning of their studies, during the university student induction process.

### Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 6: Learning Resources and Student Support</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>X</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

### Panel Recommendations

There are student support services available to the students: Enterprise Liaison Office, Counselling Services, Erasmus Office, which the university ought to develop more.

## 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 analyzing information and planning follow-up activities.*

### Study Programme Compliance

The Business Administration undergraduate programme of the HOU has established an information system for the management and monitoring of data concerning faculty, students, course structure and organization, teaching and provision of services to students as well as to the academic community.

The Panel noted that there are effective procedures in place for collecting and evaluating information on study programmes and human resources (students and employees) continually updated by professional services. There is an implemented specific method, which is used for analysing information and is important that both students and faculty are involved the process to provide information, and follow-up all the necessary procedures. Information Management requires special attention, because of the General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 (EU regulation) and the university should prohibit the collection of personal data without permission.

The University collects useful statistical information: i. satisfaction of students for the programmes and courses they attend, which help for the evaluation of the faculty ii. Students' timely completion or abandonment of studies, iii. the profile of the student body, which offer useful information about the characteristics and the needs of the students.

The results of the student evaluations are examined at the programme coordinators' meeting, so that all members of faculty are informed and participate in the improvement process.

### Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 7: Information Management</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>X</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

### Panel Recommendations

The Panel recommends a more comprehensive data collection process for the career of graduates, which is going to give the programme a better understanding of its alumni basis. Also, those data can be used for promotion and advertisement of the programme.

## 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

The programme provides useful and detailed information about its activities including curricula and syllabi of thematic units, which is disseminated to students, faculty, as well as other stakeholders. It was however noticed that confusing terminology is used in some cases. For instance, what is labelled as learning outcomes (Μαθησιακά Αποτελέσματα) in ΔΕΟ 31 and ΔΕΟ43 it is actually broad areas of study while in several thematic units there is a long list of what are erroneously called “μαθησιακά αποτελέσματα” that would be impossible to measure.

The programme and the University have a webpage ([www.eap.gr](http://www.eap.gr)) and related materials are available on the website. The programme makes available information about its activities to the public through the website. The site is updated, and it provides useful information about the various programmes of study and courses but is a bit out-of-date (old-fashioned).

Study guides are posted the website, as well as posts announcements about the programme. The absence of biographical notes of faculty was noticed by the Panel.

The university also uses social media platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn to publicize its activities and it welcomes direct communication with all stakeholders.

### Panel Judgement

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

### Panel Recommendations

- The department should have direct communication with companies and employers and in addition, graduate employment information should be available to students.
- The website should be also available in English in all subject fields.

- A standardized template for writing syllabi is used across all thematic units and Bloom's taxonomy of learning domains is used to write syllabi.
- Bios of faculty are posted on the website.

## 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

The programme of studies is coherently structured and well-designed and is built on a stable system of student accompaniment and monitoring of students' progression. The faculty are outstanding, with excellent academic records and ongoing international research projects. Regarding quality assurance, there is a structure and regulations that enable both faculty and students to have a clear view of the procedures concerning assessment, academic malpractice, plagiarism, etc.

The Panel found that there is in place an internal quality assurance system for the annual review of the programme which is based on the established mechanisms and decision-making procedures of the HOU. Indeed, the ongoing monitoring and review of the programme of study is based on the internal evaluation procedures which are carried out at the level of the HOU, Schools and programme of study.

The competent Units/Offices, such as The Internal Evaluation and Training Unit (MEAE), Office of Strategic Planning & Development, The Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP) that cooperate and carry out actions for the operation of the Internal Quality Assurance System are collaborating well. The annual internal evaluation of each School is completed with the Annual School Assessment Reports which include, in the form of tables, aggregated data on curricula, educational and research work, as well as on the other services offered by the Schools during an academic year. Data is collected from the information systems of the MEAE, which are linked to the Databases of the Student Registry and produces the requested reference reports. The Panel noted that the implementation of this transparent internal evaluation process enables

collection and recording of difficulties as well as improvement proposals resulting in the creation of a plan for future enhancements and re-assessment of the programme of study.

The Programme of study and the School have quality assurance mechanisms to ensure that teaching is at the required level. The primary tool is the student evaluation of faculty. The latter works well, and the School takes appropriate action once problems are identified. The Panel found that student feedback is sought on each thematic unit based on a questionnaire (e.g., curriculum, educational material, quality of teaching etc.) Students are invited to complete an evaluation form, anonymously and electronically, using the standard web browsers (Internet Explorer, Firefox, Google Chrome etc.). Students and thematic unit coordinators have access to the electronic evaluation of the staff.

The Panel found that there is in place a process of re-evaluating and updating the material in paper or electronic form. The organisation and coordination of the material in each thematic unit are initiated by the teaching staff team (ΟΔΠ). Specific examples that have led to improvements in the achievement of the learning outcomes of the Programme of study are well presented in the proposal document (30-03-2020) (e.g., DEO34 "Economic analysis and policy).

During the online meetings with the students, graduates and stakeholders, the Panel noted that the students' workload, progression and completion, the effectiveness of procedures for assessing students, student expectations, needs and satisfaction concerning the programme are well understood. However, it has been found that there is a great need to revise the programme to comply with some national professional accreditation bodies. The Panel observed a lack of engagement of the existing network of stakeholders during the review. Finally, the Panel noted that a major revision of the programme in a holistic perspective had not taken place since 2013 (external evaluation of the School).

### Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 9: On-going Monitoring and Periodic Internal Review of Programmes</b>	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	<b>X</b>
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

### Panel Recommendations

- The Panel recommends that the programme of study is periodically reviewed to take into account the changing needs of society, needs for professional accreditation in other disciplines, and needs to integrate research findings from funded projects into teaching. This could involve students, alumni society, stakeholders and an Advisory Board. The aim would be to update the programme's curriculum to include the latest theoretical and application developments.

- The Panel strongly recommends the HOU/School/Programme to include stakeholders' engagement and creating an Advisory Board.
- The Panel recommends establishing an Alumni Office with Student Ambassadors for this Programme of study, which will promote further the development and visibility of the Programme.

## 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

This is the first external accreditation of the programme. Under these circumstances, this principle cannot be examined.

It is essential to highlight that an external evaluation of the School took place in December 2013. The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the School of Social Sciences of the Hellenic Open University consisted of five (5) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by the HQAA in accordance with Law 3374/2005. Indeed, the Evaluation Committee in 2013, mentioned several important points for improvement.

### Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 10: Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programmes</b>	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	<b>X</b>
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

## **Panel Recommendations**

The Panel recommends for the Programme of Study to reconsider the following aspects from the 2013 evaluation as reference also for future improvement:

### Page 13/20-12-2013 Report

Undergraduate Programme in Business: 'Students contribute to changes indirectly through comments on individual modules but there is no formal mechanism to involve them in updating the curriculum. In the future, the school may need to more formally include students in the curriculum change process. Furthermore, the involvement of representatives from the public and private sector may be very helpful, through the establishment of an Advisory Board. By having an advisory board, the School will be able to receive feedback from important stakeholders about the necessary knowledge and skills needed by organizations that will employ their graduates in the future...'

### Page 52/20-12-2013 Report

E. Strategic Planning, Perspectives for Improvement and Dealing with Potential Inhibiting Factors: 'The Committee finds it useful to urge the School to consider the following issues when thinking about setting plan and actions for improvements: (a) The internationalization of the educational programmes offered by reaching to foreign markets would not only increase visibility but will bring about some additional financial resources. Seeking to raise its international profile, the School should aim at building academic bridges with other universities internationally, exchanging students and Faculty members and undertaking joint research and education'.

### Page 55/20-12-2013 Report

#### F. Final Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC

The School has a good grasp of the problems it faces and the solutions to these problems. The Committee firmly believes that the School is ready and capable to take actions to improve within the confines of the current operational framework. However, this requires additional full-time faculty. At a minimum all the programme coordinators should be full-time faculty members.

## **PART C: CONCLUSIONS**

### **I. Features of Good Practice**

The Panel found evidence of good practice in quite a few areas of the study programme of the Hellenic Open University:

- The excellent quality of both permanent and adjunct faculty and the robust procedures for the selection of adjunct faculty.
- The student support offered by faculty and professional services.
- The quality of the Virtual Learning Environment leading to high student satisfaction.
- The sustainably high level of student evaluations for the programme and the faculty.
- The extensive use of Turnitin as a tool to combat plagiarism and ensure academic integrity.

### **II. Areas of Weakness**

The Panel notes a few areas of weakness that should be given attention:

- Despite the existence of a network of external stakeholders there is a lack of significant formal engagement with them both in the continuous development and review of the programme.
- There is lack of engagement with the programme's alumni.
- The internationalization strategy of the programme is relatively weak. This manifests in the lack of Erasmus agreements (currently only 3), the limited student and faculty exchanges and the lack of an international dimension in the curriculum.
- The small number of permanent faculty (DEP) poses a threat for the future development and sustainability of the programme.

### **III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions**

The Panel recommends that the programme should consider:

- The creation of an Advisory Board (mainly external academics, stakeholders and partners from the private and public sector) to offer advice on the structure and the content of the curriculum.
- To develop a vision for the programme taking into consideration internationalization aspects (Erasmus mobility for faculty and students). This will ensure the future financial and other sustainability of the programme.
- To develop an active alumni association for the programme and engage alumni as ambassadors for further promotion.
- To undertake a holistic review of the programme, by engaging key stakeholders, in order to address modern market needs (entrepreneurship, innovation, sustainability) and align the programme with international and national professional qualifications.

- Given the high quality of the faculty to further integrate research into teaching and explore synergies between publications, research grants and curriculum development.

#### **IV. Summary & Overall Assessment**

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: 1,3,4,6,7,8

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: 2,5,9,10

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are: None

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are: None

<b>Overall Judgement</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>X</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

## The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

**Name and Surname**

**Signature**

**1. Professor Fragkiskos Filippaios (Chair)**

Norwich Business School, University of East Anglia, UK

**2. Professor Evangelos Dedousis**

The American University in Dubai, United Arab Emirates

**3. Professor Diofantos Hadjimitsis**

Cyprus University of Technology, Cyprus

**4. Mr Fragkiskos Gonidakis**

Member of the Economic Chamber of Greece, Greece