



**ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ**  
HELLENIC REPUBLIC



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Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης**  
Hellenic Authority  
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# Accreditation Report for the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS)

**Institution Name: Hellenic Open University**

**Date: 28 November 2020**



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



Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the  
**Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS)** of the **Hellenic Open University**  
for the purposes of granting accreditation

## List of Acronyms

<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus disease 2019
<b>DEP</b>	Academic Teaching staff (civil servants)
<b>EEAP</b>	External Evaluation and Accreditation Panel
<b>EEYEM</b>	Establishment of a Laboratory of Educational Materials and Methodology
<b>ERASMUS program</b>	European Student Exchange Program
<b>HAHE</b>	Hellenic Authority for Higher Education
<b>HOU</b>	Hellenic Open University
<b>IEGs/OMEA</b>	Ομάδα Εσωτερικής Αξιολόγησης
<b>IQAS</b>	Internal Quality Assurance System
<b>MODIP</b>	Quality Assurance Unit
<b>QAU</b>	
<b>SEP</b>	Collaborating Teaching Staff/partnering scientific staff /temporary under contract personnel
<b>ELKE</b>	Ειδικός Λογαριασμός Κονδυλίων Έρευνας
<b>ΜΕΑΕ</b>	Μονάδα Εσωτερικής Αξιολόγησης και Επιμόρφωσης Internal Quality Assurance and Training Unit
<b>ΟΠΕΣΠ</b>	Ολοκληρωμένο Πληροφοριακό Εθνικό Σύστημα Ποιότητας (National Integrated Information Quality System)
<b>ΕΣΔΠ</b>	Εσωτερικό Σύστημα Διασφάλισης Ποιότητας
<b>ΕΑΠ</b>	Ελληνικό Ανοικτό Πανεπιστήμιο
<b>ΕΘΑΑΕ</b>	Εθνική Αρχή Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης
<b>ΜΟΔΙΠ</b>	Μονάδα Διασφάλισης Ποιότητας
<b>ΣΕΠ</b>	Συνεργαζόμενο Εκπαιδευτικό Προσωπικό (με σύμβαση)
<b>ΔΕΠ</b>	Διδακτικό Ερευνητικό Προσωπικό (μόνιμο προσωπικό)
<b>ΕΛΚΕ</b>	Ειδικός Λογαριασμός Κονδυλίων Έρευνας
<b>ΟΠΣ</b>	Οργανωμένο πληροφοριακό σύστημα/integrated information system

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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 **Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS)** of **Hellenic Open University** comprised the following four (4) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

- 1. Prof. Kiki Ikossi (Chair)**  
George Mason University, U.S.A.
  
- 2. Prof. Evangelos Dedousis**  
The American University in Dubai, United Arab Emirates
  
- 3. Prof. Michael Kokkolaras**  
McGill University, Canada
  
- 4. Prof. Evangelos Milios**  
Dalhousie University, Canada

## II. Review Procedure and Documentation

The IQAS review of the Hellenic Open University (HOU) was performed on November 23 through November 28, 2020. The review was virtual via the Zoom platform due to the pandemic travel restrictions. The members of the panel were Prof. Kiki Ikossi, Prof. Evangelos Millios, Prof. Evangelos Dedusis, and Prof. Michael Kokkolaras.

On Thursday, November 19<sup>th</sup>, a virtual zoom orientation meeting took place. HAHE were the director of HAHE, Dr. Besta, presented the HAHE objectives for the accreditation and discussed the IQAS accreditation process.

On Monday, November 23<sup>rd</sup> the panel meet virtually to briefly discuss the proposal reports and allocate tasks.

On Tuesday November 24, the panel had a video teleconference with the HOU rector Prof Odysseas Zoras, vice rector, Prof. Efstathios Efstathopoulos, associate professor Konstantinos Karamanis and associate Professor Georgio Skroubis. In that meeting a short overview of the institution history, academic profile and current status was briefly discussed.

Following the meeting with the rectors a teleconference with the Quality assurance unit and MODIP took place. Present were the Vice-Rector/President of MODIP, Prof. Efstathios Efstathopoulos, the MODIP representatives: Prof. Vassilia Hatzinikita, Associate Prof. Irene Mavrommati, Associate Prof. Dimitrios Kalles, Assistant Prof. Dimitrios Stergiou, Assistant Prof. Dimitrios Filippis. Also present were the MODIP staff, Ms. Eleni Panitsa, Ms. Vasiliki Katsina, Ms. Irene Mavrommati, MODIP staff – MEAE staff, Mr. Nikos Karousos, MODIP staff and from Strategic Planning, Mr. Serafeim Karaiskakis. The quality culture and the institution policy for quality assurance, as well as the management style and self-assessment process were discussed.

On Wednesday November 25<sup>th</sup> meetings with the Deans, Department Heats, and internal evaluation groups took place. The following HOU personnel were scheduled to be present. Prof. Ioannis Kalavrouziotis, Prof. Athanasios Mihiotis, Deputy Dean Prof. Emmanouil Koutouzis, Internal Evaluation Groups (IEGs/OMEA) representatives, Prof. Stylianos Zerefos, Prof. Maria Hadjinicolaou, Prof. Charalampos Anthopoulos, Assistant Prof. Dimitrios Filippis, MODIP staff – MEAE Mr. Nikos Karousos. The objective of the meeting was to understand the self-assessment process; and discuss relationships of IEGs/OMEA with QAU/MODIP.

Following the meeting with the Department representatives, a teleconference with the students took place. The objective of the meeting was to discuss the student's study experiences at HOU. The students were in general pleased with the University and forthcoming with their experiences. The discussion was lively, and the students were very enthusiastic with the high quality of education they received at HOU.

The next meeting was with the chief administration officers. The following HOU personnel were scheduled to meet with the External Evaluation and Accreditation Panel (EEAP). Chief of administration officers Mr. Ilias Gkotsopoulos, Deputy Head of the Student Registry Department, Mr. Kyriakos Petropoulos, Deputy Head of the Installations & Project Execution Department Mr. George Bousios, Deputy Head of the Special Funds Department Ms. Konstantina Vetsi, Deputy Head of the Department of Academic affairs Ms. Olga Bousiou, Deputy Head of the Public and International Relations Ms. Eirini Barkoula, Deputy Head of the Library Ms. Panagiota

Papanikolaou, Representative from the Department of Education, Ms Dimitra Paraskevopoulou, Representative from the Personnel Department Ms. Alexandra Christakopoulou. The discussion involved clarifications for the internal evaluation process.

The day concluded with a teleconference Zoom meeting with the HOU alumni. The following were present: Ms. Dimitra Kouvari, employee at the marketing department on health and beauty matters, Mr. Karachalios Theodoros, Hellenic Air Force, Mr Konstantinos Dimitriadis, military (retired), Mr. Nekatarios Milios, Head of the laboratory center of physical sciences at Thira, Mr. Galazios Dimitrios, private lessons in physics, chemistry, Java and mySql, Ms. Aikaterini Stamatopoulou, Ministry of education/secondary education, Mr. Angelopoulos Evangelos, Elementary school teacher, Mr. Michail Skoumios, Associate Professor at the Aegean University, Ms. Bolika Amalia, Industrial Design, Mr. Spyridon Charitatos, Accredited Mediator Ministry of Justice, Legal Advisor, Crisis Management Consultant, Journalist (freelancer), Mr. Konstantinos Bourletidis, Quality Assurance Department of the Kapodistrian University. The HOU Alumni were all extremely enthusiastic with the high quality of education they received that positively changed the trajectory of their professional careers. The day concluded with a brief private EEAP meeting.

On Thursday November 26<sup>th</sup> a teleconference via zoom with the external stakeholders took place. The discussion was very informative, and all present were positively impressed with the contributions of the HOU to innovation, entrepreneurship and the Universities' economic and cultural contributions to western Greece. The following distinguished gentlemen were present. Mr. George Stamatis, General Secretary of the Ministry of Labour, Mr. Fokion Zaimis, Vice Regional Head of Western Greece, Prof. Vasileios Anastasopoulos, President of the Science Park of Patra, Mr. Spyros Kabiatis, President of the Ionian channel group, Mr. Athanasios Koustas, Director of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Achaia, Mr. Andreas Tsiliras, Consultant of the Cultural and Social Innovation Organization, Mr. Spyros Arsenis, Business Banking of the National Bank of Greece, Mr. Platon Marlafekas, CEO of the soft drink company "Lux" SA, President of the Chamber of Achaia.

Following the meeting with the stakeholders, presentations and a video online tour of the Institution took place. The following HOU personnel were present: President of MODIP Prof. Efstathios Efstathopoulos MODIP representatives, Prof. Vassilia Hatzinikita, Associate Prof. Irene Mavrommati, Associate Prof. Dimitrios Kalles, Assistant Prof. Dimitrios Stergiou, Assistant Prof. Dimitrios Filippis MODIP staff, Ms. Eleni Panitsa, Ms. Vasiliki Katsina MODIP staff – MEAE, Mr. Nikos Karousos MODIP staff – Strategic Planning, Mr. Serafeim Karaiskakis Teaching Staff Member, Prof. Ms. Maria Hadjinicolaou Administrative/Technical staff members, Mr. George Bousios, Mr. Elias Stavropoulos Administrative/Marketing staff member, Ms. Georgia Mara. The link to access the video is as follows: [www.eap.gr/video-presentation](http://www.eap.gr/video-presentation).

After a brief break the EEAP had a debriefing closure meeting with Vice-Rector/President of MODIP Prof. Efstathios Efstathopoulos, MODIP representatives Prof. Vassilia Hatzinikita, Associate Prof. Irene Mavrommati, Associate Prof. Dimitrios Kalles, Assistant Prof. Dimitrios Stergiou, Assistant Prof. Dimitrios Filippis, MODIP staff Ms. Eleni Panitsa, Ms. Vasiliki Katsina, MODIP staff – MEAE Mr. Nikos Karousos, MODIP staff – Strategic Planning Mr. Serafeim Karaiskakis.

The visit concluded with a teleconference meeting with the Rector & the Vice Rector/President of MODIP EEAP, Rector & Vice-Rector/President of MODIP Rector, Prof. Odysseas Zoras and the Vice Rector/President of MODIP, Prof. Efstathios Efstathopoulos. The EEAP members were very positively impressed with the high professionalism and high quality of the presentations made by

all the MODIP and faculty members. The presentations were critical in appreciating the high quality of education provided by HOU.

On Friday, November 27<sup>th</sup> and Saturday, November 28<sup>th</sup> the EEAP members met to write this report.

The usual material was available by HAHE and by the University. In addition, pdf copies of the HOU presentations and additional information were requested and promptly provided by HOU on 11/24, 11/25, and 11/26 and 11/27 2020. Specifically:

The HOU provided several documents and other material (including videoclips) to the HOU, which were reviewed by the Panel. The most important documents included:

1. HOU's proposal for the Accreditation of its IQAS
2. The Quality Manual of the IQAS
3. Several Internal Regulations:
  - a. Studies guide
  - b. Doctoral studies guide
  - c. General regulations concerning Graduate Diploma Theses for 6-month units
  - d. General regulations concerning Graduate Diploma Theses for 12-month units
  - e. Regulations concerning plagiarism
  - f. Regulations regarding scholarships
  - g. Mobility regulations
  - h. Regulations regarding staff stipends for travel and personal expenses
  - i. Regulations regarding student stipends for studies and practice
  - j. Library regulations
  - k. Internal operations regulations
  - l. Operation regulations for the Unit of Self-Assessment and Education (MEAE)
4. Quality Policy
5. IQAS quality targets
6. 2020-2024 Strategic and Operational Planning
7. 2015-16 Data for the National Integrated Information Quality System (ΟΠΕΣΠ)
8. 2016-17 Data for the National Integrated Information Quality System (ΟΠΕΣΠ)
9. 2017-18 Data for the National Integrated Information Quality System (ΟΠΕΣΠ)
10. Progress report (also addressing the 2016 Evaluation Recommendations)

In addition, HOU provided the following documents per the request of the external evaluation panel:

- The slides of all presentations presented during the 3-day review meetings concerning:
  - i. Institution administration units

- ii. IQAS
  - iii. Unit of Self-Assessment and Education (MEAE)
  - iv. Office of Strategic Planning
  - v. IQAS Processes
  - vi. Team of development and introduction of new courses
- An abundance of data regarding the 2018-2019 year for the institution as a whole and for its four schools individually
  - Quality indicator data for the years 2017-2020
  - Evaluation data per department for 2018-2019
  - Teaching evaluation statistics including standard deviations (not just means) for 2019-2020
  - Contract template for partnering scientific staff (ΣΕΠ)
  - Samples of study guides for thematic units
  - Regulations regarding laboratories
  - HOU's study and request for the foundation of a new Research Center
  - Budget, Account, and ΕΛΚΕ balance sheet for 2018
  - Answers concerning specific panel questions

### III. Institution Profile

The Hellenic Open University (HOU) was founded in 1992 as an independent and fully self-governing Higher Education Institution, with the mandate to offer distance education for life-long learning at the undergraduate and graduate level. HOU is based in Patras, and, by decision of the Senate, it can establish branches and study centres both within Greece and abroad. HOU was founded on the concept of total quality assurance, and commitment to continually improve the effectiveness of the Quality assurance mechanisms of the institution.

HOU is dedicated to both the transmission and the advancement of scientific knowledge, innovation and social responsibility. Educational innovations implemented by HOU include: (1) The use of Programs of Study (Προγράμματα Σπουδών), as flexible structures that can be easily adapted to changing social, economic and educational needs. (2) The use of Thematic Units (Θεματικές Ενότητες), the scope of which corresponds to up to three normal university courses (3) the establishment of an Internal Quality Assurance and Training Unit (MEAE) (4) The establishment of a Laboratory of Educational Materials and Methodology (EEYEM).

The HOU is composed of four Schools, (1) the School of Humanities (2) The School of Applied Arts (3) The School of Science and Technology (4) The School of Social Sciences. The Schools offer studies at the undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral level, as well as training with short and special-purpose programs. So far, the HOU has educated 18,182 graduates with undergraduate degrees, 34,736 graduates with postgraduate degrees. It currently has 31,142 active students (who took at least one thematic unit in the year), 24,464 undergraduate and 16,678 postgraduate students. HOU employs 2,685 teaching staff, of which 41 are full-time Teaching and Research staff (ΔΕΠ), and 2,644 Collaborating Teaching Staff (ΣΕΠ). The students attending a single thematic unit are divided into sections of approximately 25 students, each led by an instructor (ΔΕΠ or ΣΕΠ). HOU offers 2,573 sections, 8 undergraduate programs (6 with year-long thematic units and 2 with six-month-long thematic units), 45 postgraduate programs (22 with year-long thematic units and 15 with six-month-long thematic units), 9 inter-institutional programs, 10 short programs of study (7 within the School of Natural Sciences and Engineering, 3 within the School of Humanities), and one special program of study by the School of Social Sciences. HOU is the only Higher Education institution in Greece offering exclusively distance education.

Issues that HOU faces include: (1) difficulty in developing an active university community with physical participation of the students (2) students pay tuition fees (3) some programs receive few applications (3) the uncertainty in securing professional rights for the graduates of some programs of study. HOU is practically financially self-sustaining based on student tuition. Strategic goals in the next few years include becoming a model of effective management in higher education, excellence in research and innovation, internationalization, and liaison with external stakeholders.

## PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

### Principle 1: Institution Policy for Quality Assurance

**INSTITUTIONS SHOULD APPLY A QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY AS PART OF THEIR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT. THIS POLICY SHOULD BE DEVELOPED AND ADJUSTED ACCORDING TO THE INSTITUTIONS' AREAS OF ACTIVITY. IT SHOULD ALSO BE MADE PUBLIC AND IMPLEMENTED BY ALL PARTIES INVOLVED.**

*The quality assurance policy is the guiding document which sets the operating principles of the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS), the principles for the continuous improvement of the Institution, as well as the Institution's obligation for public accountability. It supports the development of quality culture, according to which, all internal stakeholders assume responsibility for quality and engage in quality assurance. This policy has a formal status and is publicly available.*

*The policy for quality is implemented through:*

- *the commitment for compliance with the laws and regulations that govern the Institution;*
- *the establishment, review, redesign and redefinition of quality assurance objectives, that are fully in line with the institutional strategy.*

*This policy mainly supports:*

- *the organisation of the internal quality assurance system;*
- *the Institution's leadership, departments and other organisational units, individual staff members and students to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance;*
- *the integrity of academic principles and ethics, guarding against discriminations, and encouragement of external stakeholders to be involved in quality assurance;*
- *the continuous improvement of learning and teaching, research and innovation;*
- *the quality assurance of the programmes and their alignment with the relevant HAHE Standards;*
- *the effective organisation of services and the development and maintenance of infrastructure;*
- *the allocation and effective management of the necessary resources for the operation of the Institution;*
- *the development and rational allocation of human resources.*

*The way in which this policy is designed, approved, implemented, monitored and revised constitutes one of the processes of the internal quality assurance system.*

### Institution Compliance

The HOU is fully compliant, as it has a highly developed institution policy for quality assurance since its founding in 1992. The policy is well documented, and focuses on HOU's main area of activity, which is education and training. The policy is clearly articulated and contains all necessary elements; all information is made publicly available via the very elaborate web site of ΜΟΔΙΠ. Students are invited to participate in the quality assurance process, and their role is defined. Continuous improvement of the process is promoted through annual internal reviews of both student and faculty evaluations, and of the IQAS itself. The policy is clearly communicated every year through the self-assessment process and posted on the HOU website.

The Panel wishes to commend the fact that the quality assurance process for the hiring of SEP seems to work very well, maintaining an overall very high standard of teaching, as evidenced by the student evaluations, and the discussions with both the students and the alumni of the HOU.

## Panel Judgement

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

## Panel Recommendations

- Continue to use the Internal Quality Assurance System.
- As the HOU strengthens its engagement in research, expand the scope of the IQAS to incorporate research quality.
- In the communication of the results of the quality assurance process, include executive summaries of the findings, and translate them into mission statements to strengthen the adoption of quality assurance culture by every member of the institution.

## Principle 2: Provision and Management of the Necessary Resources

**INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ENSURE APPROPRIATE FUNDING FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING ACTIVITIES, RESEARCH, AND ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES IN GENERAL. RELEVANT REGULATIONS SHOULD BE IN PLACE TO ASSURE THAT ADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES FOR TEACHING AND RESEARCH ARE AVAILABLE AND READILY ACCESSIBLE (E.G. CLASSROOMS, LABORATORIES, LIBRAIRIES, IT INFRASTRUCTURE, PROVISION OF FREE MEALS, DORMITORIES, CAREER GUIDANCE AND SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES, ETC.).**

### Funding

*The Institution ensures adequate funding to cover not only the overhead and operational costs (regular budget and public investment budget) but also costs related to research, innovation and development (Special Account for Research Funds, Property Development and Management Company). The financial planning and the operation of an effective financial management system constitute necessary tools for the full exploitation of the resources.*

### Infrastructure

*Based on the requirements and needs arising during its operation, the Institution has determined ways to define, allocate and maintain all the necessary resources to ensure its smooth and proper functioning, i.e. teaching, research and auxiliary facilities, equipment and software, support facilities (cleaning, transportation, communication) etc. The scope of the IQAS should include a suitable managing and monitoring system to safeguard the infrastructure. Compliance to the internal regulations is also necessary.*

### Working environment

*The Institution ensures -as far as possible- that the working environment has a positive effect on the performance of all members of the academic community (students and staff). Factors that are taken into consideration towards the creation of such a favorable environment are, among others, the sanitary facilities, the lighting/heating/ventilation system, the cleanliness and the overall appearance of the premises, etc. The scope of the IQAS should include an appropriate managing and monitoring system to promote a favorable working environment and to ensure compliance with the existing provisions.*

### Human resources

*The Institution and the academic units are responsible for the human resources development. The subject areas, as well as the competences and tasks of the staff members are defined by the corresponding job descriptions that are established within the operation scope of each academic or administrative unit. These posts are filled following the requirements set by the law, on the basis of transparent, fair and published processes. The continuous training and evaluation of the staff is considered necessary for the enhancement of the performance, which is recorded and monitored as provided in the context of the IQAS.*

*The Institution should acknowledge and provide the necessary resources for the implementation of the IQAS, its enhancement and the provision of services that assist the satisfaction of the quality assurance requirements. Moreover, the Institution (Quality Assurance Unit-QAU) should properly organise the administrative structure and staffing of the IQAS, with a clear allocation of competences and tasks to its staff members.*

## **Institution Compliance**

### Funding

The Hellenic Open University (HOU) is a Public University that is funded in part by the Greek Government in the form of salaries for the permanent teaching personnel, administrative and technical personnel, and related support for facilities. The HOU receives funding from mainly two sources: The Greek government's annual budget and from the students who are charged tuition. Allocation of the funds is managed by the Hellenic center for investment ELKE. ELKE ensures compliance with legal regulations.

There is a clear process for making decisions in reference to allocating funds for the operation of the University. The University reported that adequate funding is available to hire over 2,500 teaching personnel with temporary contracts to support the teaching and research activities. In addition, facilities maintenance, student services, and personnel training are provided. Specifics of the relevant funding numbers needed to sustain the operations were provided for 2018. HOU mentioned that starting in 2020 the University is 100% self-supported. HOU reported that the main income source for the university's functions, is the tuition the students are charged. The financial model the University operates under appears to be working very well with sizable surpluses of funds at the end of the year.

### Infrastructure

A suitable monitoring system is in place to monitor and safeguard the suitability of the infrastructure. Because of the unique function of the HOU as a remote learning institution the need of access to physical buildings is limited. Offices for the teaching personnel are available as needed. The contacted virtual tour of the university allowed the EEAP to verify that suitable and well-maintained facilities are in place for the HOU functions. Facilities in the main campus in Patra are well maintained with clean new buildings. The facilities EEAP observed in the video in Athens were centrally located and in excellent condition. The university electronic installations for fast access to the web for remote teaching are suitable and available to the students and faculty. Of great importance is the laboratory spaces which are well equipped for the courses needing a lab. HOU also hosts the students including providing meals during their stay for completing the lab requirements. This is extremely considering on behalf of HOU and a great value to the students. The HOU library is a significant asset for the university community. The electronic access to research journals and books is very convenient for the students. Of particular importance is that some parts of the library can also be accessed by the general public. The university mails to the students the books needed for the courses they take. For this purpose, there is a sizable well runned operation that supplies the books to all students in due time.

The HOU is planning for further development with the support of the Greek government. They reported that new buildings are being constructed in several locations around Greece to better serve the needs of the students. In addition, an ambitious plan to build a research centre for 6 new research disciplines has just been approved by the Greek government. The research center will definitely make a big difference on the University's image and a positive impact to research, innovation and the development of the Greek Nation.

### Working environment

There is a clear process for monitoring and improving the working environment. HOU ensures that the work environment has a positive impact on the performance of all members of the academic community. The hiring of the teaching personnel and staff is based on merit. The personnel have training opportunities mainly for adjusting to the unique remote teaching environment of the University. HOU has a student advocate service, a health department and psychological support for the faculty and the students. The graduate students made extremely positive comments with regards to the support they have from the teaching personnel. The panel had the opportunity to make very limited observations on the interactions of the HOU personnel. However, we found them all being contacted with mutual respect and consideration and at the highest professional level.

The EEAP found that the institution provides a virtual social environment that is conducive to high quality academic work. From the conversations with staff, students and stakeholders, the EEA Panel can confirm that HOU is an environment characterized by respectful relationships for all, enabling a culture of "quality".

The HOU has a good environmental strategy that includes well-structured energy conservation and recycling plans.

### Human resources

The Human resources are well managed and have clearly defined processes. The duties and responsibilities are well defined for all staff (teachers, and administrators, both permanent and contracted). The recruitment policy is transparent and is based on meritocratic and ethical values. It also recognizes the importance of continuing development of its human resources for the qualitative enhancement of teaching. HOU continuously evaluates the performances and developmental needs of the staff, encouraging and offering a variety of opportunities for everyone to grow in his/her professional role. The continuous training and evaluation of the staff is safeguarded through the quality assurance process. For example, the newly hired teaching personnel are trained on the remote teaching techniques and advised and monitored by experienced coordinators. All personnel have the option to enrol for degree earning classes at HOU, collaborate on research with HOU colleagues and other Universities and participate in the ERASMUS program.

HOU is distinguished for its success to afford a satisfactory low ratio of about 24 students per teaching faculty member. The favourable rate of student to academic faculty at HOU is beneficial to both the student and faculty members and allows for a very personal and productive work environment. The teaching staff of the HOU has remarkable credentials. Most have distinguished careers and notable research. The Review Panel is concerned that with the expected total self-sufficient financing may adversely affect this very favourable ratio in the future. HOU has clearly defined processes for making decisions regarding financial planning, infrastructure, and personnel. However, there are issues to be addressed that require an improvement to the mechanisms. Some of the issues identified in the 2016 evaluation were not adequately addressed. For example, the persistence of old texts that some are not relevant with current education standards was an issue then and also identified as such, during the current EEAP visit. Furthermore, the HOU budget reports EEAP received, shows a significant surplus from the university operations. Consequently, it appears that there are no excuses for not allocating funds for adequately addressing the textbook issue. Another example is the students complaining about some of the teaching personnel performance not acted upon. Since the students are paying

tuition the expectations are higher than a traditional public University. This requires innovative adjustments to the quality assurance system. In addition, the students are not actively involved in the decision making. These are some indications that while the system has established processes the processes require adjustments and improvements. HOU has succeeded in a very short time to establish itself as a premier University in the remote learning area and offer the Greek Nation a unique opportunity in educating its citizens and contributing to the economic development of the Nation.

The financial model it has been operating under can provide an alternative way of financing a self-sufficient higher educational system.

HOU experience and resources in the remote education system have been invaluable for the traditional educational systems during the pandemic.

Finally, the EEAP believes the distinction between “DEP / civil servants” and “SEP/temporary” under contract personnel, and the disproportionately large number of SEP temporary employees, is a threat to the continuing success of the university. It restricts the retention of highly qualified personnel and erodes the academic environment.

### Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 2: Provision &amp; Management of the Necessary Resources</b>	
<b>2.1 Funding</b>	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	<b>X</b>
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
<b>2.2 Infrastructure</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>X</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
<b>2.3 Working Environment</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>X</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
<b>2.4 Human Resources</b>	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	<b>X</b>
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

<b>Principle 2: Provision &amp; Management of the Necessary Resources (overall)</b>	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	<b>X</b>
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

### Panel Recommendations

- *The EEAP recommends maintaining the current favourable student/faculty ratio in view of HOU's plans to become a totally self-sufficient institution.*
- *The disproportionately large number of ΣΕΠ, temporary employees, vs ΔΕΠ, permanent employees, is a threat to the continuing success of the university*
- *The HOU has significant funds in the bank. It needs to develop a plan on how to use these funds to further develop the goals and mission of the university. For example,*
  - i. Invest in fully digitizing and upgrading the textbooks, and*
  - ii. Address the legal issue in having the textbooks available in source format (e.g., MS Word or LaTeX) to allow annual updating.*
- *Faster reaction to low ΣΕΠ evaluations.*
- *The EEAP recommends considering establishing an action team that can act swiftly to the identified issues by the student evaluations and timely implements efficient and effective solutions.*
- *The absolute value of a performance number used for this decision to renew or not the contract of a SEP may be best if it is adjusted on the average of all the teaching personnel performance considering the standard deviation of the performance ratings.*
- *Establish a retraining/ improvement plan for low performing personnel.*

### Principle 3: Establishing Goals for Quality Assurance

**INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE CLEAR AND EXPLICIT GOALS REGARDING THE ASSURANCE AND CONTINUOUS UPGRADE OF THE QUALITY OF THE OFFERED PROGRAMMES, THE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION ACTIVITIES, AS WELL AS THE SCIENTIFIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES. THESE GOALS MAY BE QUALITATIVE OR QUANTITATIVE AND REFLECT THE INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGY.**

*The Institution's strategy on quality assurance should be translated into time-specific, qualitative and quantitative goals which are regularly monitored, measured and reviewed in the context of the IQAS operation, and following an appropriate procedure.*

*Examples of quality goals:*

- *rise of the average annual graduation rate of the Institution's Undergraduate Programmes to x%;*
- *upgrade of the learning environment through the introduction of digital applications on .....*;
- *improvement of the ratio of scientific publications to teaching staff members to .....*;
- *rise of the total research funding to y%*

*The goals are accompanied by a specific action plan for their achievement, and entail the participation of all stakeholders.*

#### **Institution compliance**

The institution has explicitly quantified goals and specific actions to achieve them described in its Internal Quality Assurance System for 2020.

The institution has had a unit charged with collecting a wide variety of quality indicators since its founding in 1992, the unit for internal quality assurance and training (MEAE), which more generally appears to have the role of an institutional data analytics unit. MEAE feeds digested institutional data and associated reports to the quality assurance unit (ΜΟΔΙΠ), which was established more recently by law for all higher education institutions in Greece, and in particular for the HOU in 2019. MEAE performs sophisticated analysis using text mining techniques on the free text comments of the student evaluations of instruction. In addition, it compiles a special report on the outliers of the student evaluations. MEAE is capable of producing specialized reports on request, such as the thorough quality assessment of the on-line examinations necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

ΜΟΔΙΠ promptly compiled in 2019 a very detailed Quality Assurance Manual, describing quality assurance processes and key performance indicators.

Data collection, including completion of various forms, as well as generation of various quality assurance reports is supported by an integrated information system (ΟΠΣ). It is worth noting that in addition to detailed reports, ΜΟΔΙΠ publishes a summary of the quality metrics in an infographics format.

Strategic goals of the institution for 2020-2024 are described in a strategic planning document, compiled by the Office of Strategic Planning and Development.

A detailed progress report compiled in 2020 describes in detail how the recommendations of the 2016 external review were addressed.

A plan for the establishment of a Research Centre of the HOU to fulfil the research and innovation mandate of the HOU was submitted to the government. The following six research institutes are

proposed: (1) Human Genetics, (2) Archaeological Culture, (3) Distance education, lifelong learning, training and work (4) Climate change (5) state transformation and digital government (6) Humanities.

### Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 3: Establishing Goals for Quality Assurance</b>	
<b>3.1 Study Programmes/ education activities</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>X</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
<b>3.2 Research &amp; Innovation</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>X</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
<b>3.3 Administration (funding, human resources, infrastructure management)</b>	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	<b>X</b>
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
<b>3.4 Resources (funding, human resources, infrastructure)</b>	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	<b>X</b>
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

<b>Principle 3: Establishing Goals for Quality Assurance (overall)</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>X</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

## Panel Recommendations

- Given that students rate administration and technical services significantly lower than teaching, it may be worth establishing and tracking performance indicators for these services with measurable outcomes and develop actions to improve them. A ticket system would help collect data on the effectiveness of these services, identify weaknesses and ways to correct them.
- On the research front, we recommend finer grained performance indicators, to capture specifically publications by HOU students based on their postgraduate and doctoral theses, collaborative publications with other institutions, publications authored by HOU students supervised by ΣΕΠ, and publications joint with external stakeholders (e.g., industry).
- Provide Guidelines to DEP and SEP on how to advance the research reputation of HOU. Focus on publications out of HOU theses.

## Principle 4: Structure, Organisation and Operation of the IQAS

**INSTITUTIONS SET UP AND ESTABLISH AN INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM, WHICH INCLUDES PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES COVERING ALL AREAS OF ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES AND FUNCTIONS. SPECIAL FOCUS IS GIVEN ON THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING, INCLUDING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT, RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND GOVERNANCE.**

*The key goal of the internal quality assurance system (IQAS) is the development, effective operation and continuous improvement of the whole range of the Institution's activities, and particularly, of teaching, research, innovation, governance and relevant services, according to the international practices - especially those of the European Higher Education Area - and the HAHE principles and guidelines described in these Standards.*

### Structure and organisation

*In each Institution, the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) holds the responsibility for the administration and management of the IQAS. The QAU is set up according to the existing legislative framework and is responsible for:*

- *the development of specialised policy, strategy and relevant processes towards the continuous improvement of the quality of the Institution's work and provisions;*
- *the organisation, operation and continuous improvement of the Institution's internal quality assurance system;*
- *the coordination and support of the evaluation process of the Institution's academic units and other services, and;*
- *the support of the external evaluation and accreditation process of the Institution's programmes and internal quality assurance system in the context of the HAHE principles and guidelines.*

*The Institution's IQAS and its implementation processes are determined by the decisions of the competent bodies, as provided by the law, and are published in the Government Gazette, as well as on the Institution's website. The above are reviewed every six years, at the latest.*

*To achieve the above goals, the QAU collaborates with HAHE, develops and maintains a management information system to store the evaluation data, which are periodically submitted to HAHE, according to the latter's instructions. The QAU is responsible for the systematic monitoring of the evaluation process and for the publication of evaluation-related procedures and their results on the Institution's website.*

*The QAU structure has been approved by the Institution's competent bodies, as provided by the law, while all competences and tasks accruing from this structure are clearly defined.*

### Operation

*The Institution takes action for the design, establishment, implementation, audit and maintenance of the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS), taking into account the Standards' requirements, while making any necessary amendments to ensure fitness to achieve its aims.*

*The above actions include:*

- *provision of all necessary processes and procedures for the successful operation of the IQAS, as well as implementation of the above processes and procedures on all of the Institution's parties involved ;the Institution's areas of activity can constitute the IQAS processes, e.g. teaching, research and innovation, governance, services etc. An IQAS process is an area of activity including data input, data processing and outputs. A procedure defines the way an action is implemented and includes a course of stages or steps, e.g. the curriculum design procedure;*
- *determination of how the IQAS procedures / processes are audited, measured and assessed, and how they interact;*
- *provision of all necessary resources to enable the IQAS function.*

### Documentation

*The IQAS documentation includes, among other things, a series of key documents demonstrating its structure and organisation, such as the Quality Manual, which describes how the Standards' requirements are met.*

*The Annexes of the Quality Manual include:*

- *the Quality Policy and the Quality Assurance Objectives;*
- *the necessary written Procedures, along with the entailed forms;*
- *the necessary Guides, External Documents (e.g. pertinent legislation), as well as any other supporting data;*
- *the standing organisational structure of the QAU, with a detailed description of the competences, the required qualifications and the goals for each post. The organisational chart is structured in a manner that ensures that the IQAS organisational requirements are fully and properly met.*

## **Institution Compliance**

The internal quality assurance system (IQAS) of the HOU covers all academic, administrative, and other activities with the objectives of establishing high quality standards across the operations of the Institution and initiating processes aiming at improving areas where possible deficiencies have been identified. In order to attain, sustain, and improve high standards of quality specific quality targets, expressed in quantitative as well as qualitative terms, have been put in place by IQAS.

The Quality Manual of the HOU is up-to-date and comprehensive, states the quality policy of the Institution, identifies goals to be achieved, and describes mechanisms to follow to improve and sustain quality standards across activities taking place at the Institution. Further, the Quality Manual specifies necessary actions that ensure the effective planning, implementation, and control of the processes required to achieve quality targets that are all supported by necessary documentation.

For each of the steps of the process, the quality manual describes specific input data including the latest external evaluation report, internal assessment reports and other relevant documentation. The output of the process is the assessment of the quality policies of the University. The strategy followed in order to improve the quality of a particular process is to modify the input data and examine the impact on the resultant policy.

In addition to the establishment of IQAS focusing on internal assessment by means of self-evaluation reports the Quality Manual provides for the Institution's evaluation by external experts as these are appointed by HAHE.

Drawing on the extensive range of documents including many descriptive and analytical statistics and informative presentations by HOU members, the Panel has concluded that the IQAS processes are carried out as planned. It may also be mentioned that inputs for each step of the process are specified and related to outputs. This makes it possible to examine what impact modifications/changes in the input data may have on a policy (output).

In addition to its relatively small number of full-time permanent faculty and staff, the HOU serves a very large number of students and contract faculty. Taking into account that measuring, implementing, maintaining and improving quality standards is primarily the responsibility of MODIP but in close cooperation with MEAE-as the two independent units have partly overlapping areas of responsibility- the Panel believes that the human resources of MODIP are sufficient for it to carry out its responsibilities.

## Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 4: Structure, Organization and Operation of the IQAS</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>X</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

## Panel Recommendations

- The impressive production of volumes of various statistical data be more closely linked to action plans at regular intervals.
- Data on quality at HOU be collected from external stakeholders, for instance the business community with which the University interacts.
- Include student representation in the decision-making process. Provide incentives to engage students, for example provide course credit for engagement (with deliverables, i.e., a report from the student's point of view).

## Principle 5: Self-Assessment

**THE INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM COMPRISES PROCEDURES PROVIDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ANNUAL SELF-ASSESSMENT OF THE INSTITUTION'S ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS, ADDRESSING AREAS OF OVERSIGHTS OR SHORTCOMINGS, AND DEFINING REMEDIAL ACTIONS TOWARDS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE SET GOALS, AND EVENTUAL IMPROVEMENT.**

*The QAU conducts, on an annual basis, a self-assessment of the IQAS, following the written procedure provided for each area of activity, which is implemented by a certain academic or administrative unit, as appropriate. The procedure determines the timing, the participants, the data under consideration, and the expected outcomes. The self-assessment aims at a final estimation of the suitability of the IQAS in force, as well as at basing decisions concerning the necessary remedial or precautionary actions for improvement.*

*The data considered in the context of the self-assessment of a programme may, for example, include:*

- *students performance;*
- *feedback from students / teaching staff;*
- *assessment of learning outcomes;*
- *graduation rates;*
- *feedback from the evaluation of the facilities / learning environment;*
- *report of any remedial or precautionary actions undertaken;*
- *suggestions for improvement.*

*The outcomes of the self-assessment are recorded in internal reports drawn up by the QAU. The reports identify any areas of deviation or non-compliance with the Standards, and are communicated to the interested parties (if appropriate). The Institution's resolutions concerning any modification, compliance, or enhancement of the IQAS operation might include actions related to:*

- *the upgrade of the IQAS and the pertinent processes;*
- *the upgrade of the services offered to the students;*
- *the reallocation of resources;*
- *the introduction of new quality goals, etc.*

*The outcomes of the self-assessment are recorded and, along with the source data, are archived as quality files.*

*A special procedure is followed for the compliance check of newly launched programmes (of all three cycles), or programmes that are to be reviewed shortly, prior to the institutional approval of the programme.*

## Institution Compliance

The QAU of the HOU is reviewing regularly the academic and administrative units of the institution by means of annual reports regarding student performance, teaching evaluations from students, performance evaluations from colleagues, graduates, research outcome, the operability of facilities, and the state of the learning environment. In addition, annual quality data are collected and submitted to the National Integrated Information Quality System (ΟΠΕΣΠ). Furthermore, the IQAS is reviewed annually in parallel with these reviews to identify areas where correction or improvement are necessary or possible, respectively.

The self-assessment procedure of the academic and administrative units is described very clearly and effectively in the QM (process 4) and involve all stakeholders of the institution. The QM lists several outcomes of the self-assessment procedure to guide the process; these are then recorded in the form of minutes of the QAU meetings, QAU reports to the administration of the institution, list of ongoing corrective/improving actions, proposals for further corrective/improving actions, and, last but not least, not only a continuous updating of the Quality Policy, but also an outlined strategy for its implementation.

The findings of the self-assessment process are shared with the appropriate units of the institution. Action plans are then developed not only to take corrective action but also to prevent repetition of the same or similar issue(s) in the future. The implementation of these action plans is inspected by the QAU, the Unit of Self-Assessment and Education (MEAE), and the Office of Strategic Planning and Development to monitor their efficacy. It should be mentioned that the existence of the MEAE from the institution’s foundation has instilled a high culture of continuous quality assurance and improvement and facilitated associated processes and protocols.

Finally, the website of the QAU is very well organized and contains more than adequate material on the elements described above. It is evident that all relevant material (QP, QM, etc.) is reviewed frequently including crediting previous administration and staff.

### Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 5: Self-Assessment</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>X</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

### Panel Recommendations

- It would be interesting to post on the QAU’s website “success stories” of corrective/improving action taken as the result of the self-assessment processes.
- From numbers to actions: qualitative interpretation of self-assessment, and connection with actions, in the form of mission statements and executive summaries.

## Principle 6: Collection of Quality Data: Measuring, Analysis and Improvement

**INSTITUTIONS ARE FULLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND USE OF INFORMATION IN AN INTEGRATED, FUNCTIONAL AND READILY ACCESSIBLE MANNER, AIMING AT THE EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF THE QUALITY DATA RELATED TO TEACHING, RESEARCH AND OTHER ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES, AS WELL AS OF THOSE RELATED TO THE ADMINISTRATION.**

*The QAU should establish and operate an information system to manage the data required for the implementation of the Internal Quality Assurance System.*

*The QAU measures and monitors the performance of the various activities of the Institution, through appropriate procedures established in the context of the IQAS structure, and assesses their level of effectiveness. The measuring and monitoring is conducted on a basis of indices and data provided by HAHE in the pertinent guidelines and forms, which are part of the National Information System for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NISQA). These measurements may concern: the size of the student body, the size of the teaching and administrative staff, the infrastructure, the structural components of the curricula, students' performance, research activity performance, financial data, feedback on student and faculty satisfaction surveys, data related to the teaching and research activity, services, infrastructure, etc.*

*The QAU makes use of the figures and presents the results for consideration using statistical analysis. Outcomes are displayed through histograms and charts. This sort of information is used by the Institution for decision making, at all levels, pursuing improvement, as well as for setting, monitoring, assessing and reviewing the Institution's strategic and operational goals.*

### Institution Compliance

HOU has developed and implemented their data collection measurement and analysis system, according to the HAHE requirements. The HOU internal evaluation system and MODIP measure and monitor the performance of the various activities of the institution through the appropriate procedures and assesses their level of effectiveness.

HOU is surprisingly large with regards to student numbers and faculty. However, it is a very well managed institution. Despite the fact HOU is required to implement processes and procedures rather developed for traditional public universities, it is successful in implementing the quality assurance to its unique virtual environment.

The Hellenic Open University has a robust system of collecting and analyzing data for the study programs and all related educational activities. It is important to note that state of the art analysis of the available data are always part of all decision-making processes and procedures. HOU had its own internal evaluation procedures that were highly developed in accordance with European and International standards from the very beginning. Implementing the HAHE criteria was relatively straight forward.

The HOU activities related to the administration (funding, human resources, infrastructure management) are collected regularly and analysed with the most advanced scientific manner. Data analytics and clear visualization of the results are offered to the suitable administrators for action. The HOU research activities are equally well monitored and documented.

The HOU data regarding the teaching personnel are religiously collected and analysed. The students evaluate their teachers. The teachers evaluate their students and their coordinators. The coordinators are evaluated by the teachers and their supervisors. In short, each HOA member evaluates each other. The results are collected and analysed with the most advanced analytical

tools available. Unique attributes and techniques implemented by the HOA personnel allow for on the spot visualization of the results. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data mining techniques are implemented in all data collected. The EEAP was positively impressed by the abilities of the HOU data analytics teams. The results are utilized for decision making in reference to improving the teaching material and class content. Personnel decisions are also made on the results of the analysis. For example, personnel that are not performing and are on a contract basis may not have their contract renewed.

The EEAP feels the absolute value of a performance number used for this decision may be best if it is adjusted on the average of all the teaching personnel performance considering the standard deviation of the performance ratings.

External stakeholders, alumni and particularly students spoke highly of the presence of a spirit of “care” within the University. An example of the “care” the university has is the gratitude the students expressed when they receive their books in time for their classes. Of particular importance was the external stakeholders’ comments on the impact HOU has with scholarships to the underrepresented minorities of the community. In addition, HOU’s active involvement with innovation exhibits and competitions helps the economic development of Western Greece.

While the graduate students and the alumni were extremely enthusiastic with their experience with HOU the undergraduate students were more critical. The fact the textbook vintage was identified in the 2016 IQAS and it still concerns the students is troubling. The University has a significant surplus of funds from its operations and maybe is best to invest in updating and digitizing the textbooks. Providing digital copies to the students will also reduce the cost.

Automation in data collecting and analysis for student evaluation has its benefits and drawbacks. A relevant example was students who commented that they were reprimanded in their written assignments work because they copied themselves. Maybe giving clear instructions and exercising more humanity in reading automated evaluations will eliminate this issue.

Students also commented that they were not able to see the improvements during their studies despite the fact they were reporting the issues they encountered. The EEAP recommends considering establishing an action team that can act swiftly to the identified issues and implements efficient and effective solutions. For example, if one of the teaching professionals receives complaints from the students, maybe counselling and/or re-training and of the teaching personnel will work much faster than waiting to not renew a contract. Sadly, this also points to the fact the reluctance to re-train and help improve non-permanent personnel has unintentional effects on the students’ educational experience.

Student evaluations of administrative and technical services are lower than teaching, hence there is room for improvement there, via collection and analysis of relevant data, for example by using a ticket system to respond to student complaints.

As the HOU aims to extend and improve its research profile, collecting more detailed data on the research productivity of HOU graduate students and SEP is worthwhile.

## Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 6: Collection of Data: Measuring, Analysis &amp; Improvement</b>	
<b>6.1 Study Programmes / education activities</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>X</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
<b>6.2 Research &amp; Innovation</b>	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	<b>X</b>
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
<b>6.3 Activities related to the administration (funding, human resources, infrastructure management)</b>	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	<b>X</b>
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
<b>6.4 Human Resources</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>X</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

<b>Principle 6: Collection of Data: Measuring, Analysis &amp; Improvement (overall)*</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>X</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

## Panel Recommendations

- Continue and extend qualitative analysis of free-text comments using artificial intelligence and text mining.
- Provide more specific guidelines and criteria on plagiarism, to ensure decisions are consistent across schools, thematic units and sections.
- Establish and track performance indicators for administration and technical services with measurable outcomes and develop actions to improve them.

## Principle 7: Public Information

**INSTITUTIONS SHOULD PUBLISH INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR TEACHING AND ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES IN A DIRECT AND ACCESSIBLE MANNER. ALL PERTINENT INFORMATION SHOULD BE UP-TO-DATE, CLEAR AND OBJECTIVE.**

*The QAU publishes data related to IQAS structure, organisation and operation. Furthermore, the QAU publishes data pertinent to the institutional quality policy and objectives, as well as information and data relevant to the Institution's internal and external evaluation. In the context of the self-assessment process, the QAU verifies that adequate information regarding the teaching activities and, particularly, the programmes' profile and the overall institutional activity is publicly available. QAU makes recommendations for improvement, where appropriate.*

### Institution Compliance

From the viewpoint of prospective students' information about undergraduate and graduate programs of study, curricula, course syllabi including assessment items and detailed study guides are available in the webpages of HOU and the Institution's search engine can offer extra help. The focus of information provided for the benefit of students is on the short description of programs of study and learning outcomes while relatively little is found on contents that is, the topics for discussion. It may also be noted that several links lead to empty webpages such as the link to the dissertation handbook for MBA or the link about faculty, under the headings "Education" and "Programs of study", that produces a blank webpage without any CV's of faculty.

HOU prides itself as a vibrant member of the local community and is indeed interacting closely, with it taking part in joint exhibitions, collaborative seminars, MoU's and other activities. The outward looking orientation of HOU was stressed in the presentations delivered to the EEA Panel with examples of distinctions earned by HOU's members taking part in different competitions, for instance in innovation, waste management, and entrepreneurship. However, scarcely any information and publicity can be found on HOU's webpages to make visitors aware of such activities and distinctions.

Part of HOU's mission refers to promoting scientific research and developing technology and know-how in the area of distance education, the latter being the very reason for the establishment of the Institution and its core competency. In this connection it may be mentioned that, although the existence of a budget item specifically dedicated to research for regular faculty members (DEP) was mentioned during the presentations to the Panel, anything related either to the promotion of scientific research or to advances in distance education, does not appear on the Institution's webpage.

MODIP and MEAE are independent units of HOU with partly overlapping objectives, as an objective of the former is to ensure high quality education standards and effective operations of the Institution while an objective of the latter is to evaluate the learning process at HOU including thematic units, learning material, faculty and administrative services. The website of MODIP, provides very detailed information on the unit's work, internal evaluation reports and reports of external assessment. MODIP also regularly produces a multitude of data regarding student distribution and average grades achieved across thematic units, mode of attendance, and other aspects of the educational process.

It should be noticed that, although certain webpages are available in English, for example the webpage about graduate studies, there is no single dedicated website in English covering the

entire Institution. Furthermore, the few web pages available in English provide the bare minimum of information and are in need of up-to-dating.

### Panel Judgement

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

### Panel Recommendations

On the basis of presentations and discussions with internal and external stakeholders it is evident that HOU is an outward-looking and active member of the community engaging with it in various collaborative and mutually rewarding activities. The President's aspiration to have HOU being viewed not only as "a second chance" academic institution but move to also become a "first chance" university that will stand on an equal basis with other universities was noted by the Panel. In order to promote HOU's work and expand its exposure, the Panel offers the following recommendations:

- Update HOU's public web page regularly to include information about faculty CV's, and all aspects related to thematic units.
- Make the University's webpage user-friendly requiring less time to get the information one needs.
- Have the University's webpage available in English and perhaps one more European language.
- Give publicity to faculty and student research such as papers, conferences, business publications.
- Give publicity to collaborative projects with outside stakeholders.
- Establish an alumni liaison office and alumni network.
- Establish a media office.

## Principle 8: External Evaluation and Accreditation of the IQAS

**INSTITUTIONS SHOULD BE PERIODICALLY EVALUATED BY COMMITTEES OF EXTERNAL EXPERTS SET BY HAHE, FOR THE PURPOSE OF ACCREDITATION OF THEIR INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS (IQAS). THE PERIODICITY OF THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION IS DETERMINED BY HAHE.**

*External quality assurance, in the case in point external evaluation aiming at accreditation, may act as a means of verification of the effectiveness of the Institution's internal quality assurance, and as a catalyst for improvement, while opening new perspectives. Additionally, it can provide information with a view to public acknowledgement of the positive course of the Institution's activities.*

*The Higher Education Institutions engage in periodic external quality assurance which is conducted taking into consideration any special requirements set by the legislation governing the operation of the Institutions and their academic units.*

*Quality assurance, in this case 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 ensure that the progress made since the last external quality assurance activity is taken into consideration when preparing for the next one.*

### Institution Compliance

The institution was evaluated externally as a whole (not only its IQAS) in 2016 and has reacted to that external evaluation with an elaborate progress report, including a detailed list of outcomes of action taken to address comments and suggestions. There is no doubt that all of the institution's relatively small-sized teaching and research staff (ΔΕΠ) are not only aware of the importance of the IQAS external review and its contribution to improving the institution's mission, but they are enthusiastically active in their participation and deservingly proud of their efforts.

Moreover, all stakeholders, especially the students, are engaged in the IQAS external review. This also includes a broad variety of government and commerce officials who are evidently actively engaged with the institution's efforts towards QA. The panel was impressed by the sincerity, relevance, and pragmatic yet optimistic nature of the general comments provided by various stakeholders during the evaluation process.

### Panel Judgement

Principle 8: External Evaluation & Accreditation of the IQAS	
Fully compliant	<b>X</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

### Panel Recommendations

- Need to establish an Advisory Board to include internal and external stakeholders, to provide high level guidance on the institution's strategic planning on an annual or more frequent basis.

## **PART C: CONCLUSIONS**

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

- Leadership in distance education
  - HOU has succeeded in a very short time to establish itself as a premier University in the remote learning area and offer the Greek Nation a unique opportunity in educating its citizens and contributing to the economic development of the Nation.
  - HOU experience and resources in the remote education system have been invaluable for the traditional educational systems during the pandemic.
  - The strategic goals of the institution for 2020-2024 are well described in a strategic planning document, compiled by the Office of Strategic Planning and Development.
  - HOU's faculty, students and stakeholders are very enthusiastic and exhibit sincerity, relevance, and very optimistic views of the value and the future of HOU.
  - HOU's leadership is visionary and energetic working towards a bright future for the University.
- Quality assurance
  - The Internal quality assurance system is clearly defined and well documented.
  - The Quality Manual of the HOU is up-to-date and comprehensive. It states the quality policy of the Institution, identifies goals to be achieved, and describes mechanisms to follow to improve and sustain quality standards across activities taking place at the Institution.
  - The self-assessment procedure of the academic and administrative units is described very clearly and effectively in the QM (process 4) and involves all stakeholders of the institution.
  - Finally, the MODIP website of the QAU is very well organized and contains more than adequate material on the quality assurance elements.
  - The HOU data regarding the teaching personnel are religiously collected and analysed.
  - State of the art techniques like artificial intelligence and text mining are implemented in all data collected. The abilities of the HOU data analytics team are indeed outstanding.
- Financial
  - The financial model the University operates under appears to be working very well with sizable surpluses of funds at the end of the year.
  - The financial model HOU has been operating under can provide an alternative way of financing a self-sufficient higher educational system.
- Personnel
  - The personnel recruitment policy is transparent and is based on meritocratic and ethical values.
  - The favourable low rate of student to academic faculty at HOU is beneficial to both the student and faculty members and allows for a very personal and productive work environment.
  - Despite HOU's relatively small number of full-time permanent faculty and staff, it has a large number of contract faculty and serves a very large number of students.
- Research and Innovation
  - The HOU is planning for further development and the addition of a research center with the support of the Greek government.
  - HOU's active involvement with innovation exhibits and competitions helps the economic development of Western Greece.

- Community engagement
  - Of particular importance was the external stakeholders' comments on the impact HOU has with scholarships to the underrepresented minorities of the community.
  - HOU is an outward-looking and active member of the community engaging with it in various collaborative and mutually rewarding activities.

## II. Areas of Weakness

No Weaknesses were identified with respect to IQAS.

## III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

- Quality assurance
  - Continue to use the Internal Quality Assurance System.
  - As the HOU strengthens its engagement in research, expand the scope of the IQAS to incorporate research quality.
  - In the communication of the results of the quality assurance process, include executive summaries of the findings, and translate them into mission statements to strengthen the adoption of quality assurance culture by every member of the institution.
  - The EEAP recommends to consider establishing an action team that can act swiftly to the identified issues by the student evaluations and timely implements efficient and effective solutions
  - Given that students rate administration and technical services significantly lower than teaching, it may be worth establishing and tracking performance indicators for these services with measurable outcomes and develop actions to improve them. A ticket system would help collect data on the effectiveness of these services, identify weaknesses and ways to correct them.
  - On the research front, we recommend finer grained performance indicators, to capture specifically publications by HOU students based on their postgraduate and doctoral theses, collaborative publications with other institutions, publications authored by HOU students supervised by ΣΕΠ, and publications joint with external stakeholders (e.g., industry).
  - The impressive production of volumes of various statistical data be more closely linked to action plans at regular intervals.
  - Data on quality at HOU be collected from external stakeholders, for instance the business community with which the University interacts.
  - Include student representation in the decision-making process.
  - Provide incentives to engage students in the quality assurance process, for example provide course credit for engagement (with deliverables, i.e., a report from the student's point of view).
  - It would be interesting to post on the QAU's website "success stories" of corrective/improving action taken as the result of the self-assessment processes.
  - Continue and extend qualitative analysis of free-text comments in the quality assessments using artificial intelligence and text mining.
  - Provide more specific guidelines and criteria on plagiarism, to ensure decisions are consistent across schools, thematic units and sections.
  - Establish and track performance indicators for administration and technical services with measurable outcomes and develop actions to improve them.

- From numbers to actions: qualitative interpretation of self-assessment, and connection with actions, in the form of mission statements and executive summaries.
- Financial
  - The HOU has significant funds in the bank. It needs to develop a plan on how to use these funds to further develop the goals and mission of the university. For example, invest in fully digitizing and upgrading the textbooks and address the legal issue in having the textbooks available in source format (e.g., MS Word or LaTeX) to allow annual updating.
- Personnel
  - Maintain the current favourable student/faculty ratio in view of HOU's plans to become a totally self-sufficient institution.
  - The disproportionately large number of ΣΕΠ, temporary employees, vs ΔΕΠ, permanent employees, is a threat to the continuing success of the university.
  - The absolute value of a performance number used for this decision to renew or not the contract of a SEP may be best if it is adjusted on the average of all the teaching personnel performance considering the standard deviation of the performance ratings.
  - Establish a retraining/improvement plan for low performing personnel.
- Research and Innovation
  - Provide Guidelines to DEP and SEP on how to advance the research reputation of HOU. Focus on publications out of HOU theses.
- Publicity and Community engagement. In order to promote HOU's work and expand its public exposure, the Panel offers the following recommendations:
  - Update HOU's public web page regularly to include information about faculty CV's, and all aspects related to thematic units.
  - Make the University's web page user-friendly requiring less time to get the information one needs.
  - Have the University's web page available in English and perhaps one more European language.
  - Give publicity to faculty and student research such as papers, conferences, business publications.
  - Give publicity to collaborative projects with outside stakeholders.
  - Establish an alumni liaison office and alumni network.
  - Establish a media office.
- Leadership in distance education
  - Need to establish an Advisory Board to include internal and external stakeholders, to provide high level guidance on the institution's strategic planning on an annual or more frequent basis.

#### IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are:

- Principle 1: Institution Policy for Quality Assurance
- Principle 3: Establishing Goals for Quality Assurance
- Principle 4: Structure, Organization and Operation of the IQAS
- Principle 5: Self-Assessment
- Principle 6: Collection of Data: Measuring, Analysis & Improvement
- Principle 8: External Evaluation & Accreditation of the IQAS

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are:

- Principle 2: Provision & Management of the Necessary Resources
- Principle 7: Public Information

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are: None

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are: None

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

## The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname

Signature

- 1. Prof. Kiki Ikossi (Chair)**  
George Mason University, U.S.A.
- 2. Prof. Evangelos Dedousis**  
The American University in Dubai, United Arab Emirates
- 3. Prof. Michael Kokkolaras**  
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