



**ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ**  
HELLENIC REPUBLIC



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# **Accreditation Report** **for the Internal Quality Assurance System** **(IQAS)**

**Institution Name: University of Western Macedonia**

**Date: 19 December 2020**

Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the  
**Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS)** of the **University of Western  
Macedonia** 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 **Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS)** of the **University of Western Macedonia (UoWM)** comprised the following five (5) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

- 1. Prof. Dr. Anthimos Georgiadis, (Chair)**  
Leuphana Universität Lüneburg, Germany
- 2. Assoc. Prof. Michael Kokkolaras**  
McGill University, Montreal, Canada
- 3. Prof. Christos Politis**  
Kingston University, Kingston Upon Thames, United Kingdom
- 4. Prof. Emeritus Nicolas Spyrtos**  
Université Paris-Saclay, Paris, France
- 5. Prof. Christos Tsinopoulos**  
Durham University, Durham, United Kingdom

## **II. Review Procedure and Documentation**

The Panel reviewed the material provided by HAHE in advance of its first private briefing taking place as teleconference (on Zoom) on Monday, 14 December 2020. The Panel discussed the provided material, allocated tasks, and prepared a list of issues for the accreditation procedure. All meetings were arranged as teleconferences. On Tuesday, 15 December 2020, the first teleconference was with the Rector and the Vice-Rectors for a short overview of the institution regarding its history, vision, mission, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and academic profile. (Prof. Spyrtou Anna was absent, because of healthy reasons but a video presentation of her was provided). Further presentations provided useful information about UoWM's current status, quality assurance strategy, strengths and possible areas of concern. In the following teleconference with the Quality Assurance Unit (QUA/MODIP) – Vice-Rector of Academic and International Affairs and MODIP members – the Panel investigated the degree of compliance of the Internal Quality Assurance System to the Standards for Quality Accreditation. Prof. Tsinopoulos and Prof. Politis, members of the Panel were absent for a short time during these teleconferences. The Panel received further documentation and supporting material related to the presentations given by QUA/MODIP to facilitate their decision regarding the UoWM's IQAS accreditation. After a break, the Panel held a teleconference with the Deans of the Schools, Heads of Departments and Internal Evaluation Groups (IEGs/OMEA) representatives. This facilitated the understanding of the internal evaluation review process, adequacy of resources and possible areas of weaknesses. In addition, discussions took place about the formulation of relationships among the IEGs/OMEA with QUA/MODIP.

In the evening, the Panel met in private teleconference to reflect on the discussions and prepare for the second day of the visit.

On Wednesday, 16 December 2020 the program consisted of teleconferences with the Undergraduate and Postgraduate students to gain an insight of their study experience and campus facilities, and their input in quality control and decision making; discuss their priority issues concerning student life, welfare, grants, mobility, research and career opportunities, and their views on recruitment, learning, progression, assessment.

A teleconference with the Chief Administration Officers of the UoWM followed afterwards to discuss the role of Institutional strategic documents (strategic plan, QA manual etc.) in the development of Institution, and special issues arising from the internal evaluation process.

After the break, a teleconference with Alumni to discuss their learning experiences at UoWM and their career paths.

The next teleconference was with external stakeholders to better understand their relations with the Institution.

The last teleconference of the day was about an on-line tour accompanied with the vice rector for academic affairs and president of the MODIP as well as further representatives' members of the MODIP, teaching staff and administrative staff members. An overview of the institution was

given based also on videos (facilities of all cities, classrooms, lecture halls, libraries, laboratories etc.). Discussions took place about the presented facilities.

The Panel held first a debriefing teleconference on next day, Thursday, 17 December 2020, to discuss the outcomes of the on-line review and begin drafting the oral report. After that, a teleconference took place with the Quality Assurance Unit (QUA/MODIP) members to review several points and findings. The Panel received further clarifications.

A closure teleconference followed with the Rector and Vice-Rector/President of MODIP where the Panel presented their key findings briefly.

The Panel, after that, continued on drafting of the accreditation report (AR) on a private teleconference.

The next three days 18, 19 & 20 December 2020, the Panel continued preparing the draft AR using private teleconferences following the procedures provided by HAHE.

### III. Institution Profile

The University of Western Macedonia was founded in Kozani in 2003. In 2015, after the first elections for a Rector, the University of Western Macedonia became a self-governing institution, and ran courses in 2 cities, Kozani and Florina, with 3 Schools and 6 Departments.

In 2019, the University of Western Macedonia was merged with the Technological Education Institute (TEI) of Western Macedonia. The TEI of Western Macedonia ran courses in 5 Schools and 11 Departments in 5 cities in Western Macedonia. The central campus was located in Kozani.

The new University of Western Macedonia runs 7 Schools and 22 Departments in five cities in Western Macedonia (Kozani, Florina, Kastoria, Grevena, and Ptolemaida) offering 19 undergraduate and 27 graduate study programs. Further, the university provides 6 PhD programs. The main campus is located in Kila, Kozani, and accommodates the University Administration authorities, department administration offices, the School of Economics, 2 of the 5 departments of the School of Engineering, the library, the Hall of Residence, a student restaurant (there is a second restaurant in the city centre), and the university gym.

- Three Departments of the **School of Engineering** (Departments of Mechanical Engineering, Electrical and Computer Engineering, and Chemical Engineering) are located off-campus, in separate buildings in Kozani, and two on campus (Department of Mineral Resources Engineering and Department of Product & Systems Design Engineering). The Department of Mechanical Engineering is housed in two buildings, one with the department administration service, lecture rooms (also shared for Chemical Engineering courses), teaching staff offices (Bakola & Sialvera street), and a second with laboratories and engineering machine shops (13, Argyrokastrou street).

The Departments of Mineral Resources Engineering, and Product and Systems Design Engineering are located on the main campus in Kila, Kozani.

The School of Engineering is going to be soon relocated to a new campus on the outskirts of Kozani (in construction).

- **The School of Economics** runs 7 Departments, of which 4 (Accounting and Finance, International and European Economic Studies, Regional and Cross-border Development Studies and Management Science and Technology) run courses in Kozani. The Departments of Business Administration, and Statistics & Actuarial Science, and the Department of Economics run courses in Grevena, and Kastoria, respectively.
- **The School of Humanities and Social Sciences** is located in Florina (3<sup>rd</sup> km Florina-Niki) and Kastoria. The School runs 4 Departments in Florina (Primary Education, Early Childhood Education and Psychology), and one in Kastoria (Communication & Digital Media), where there is also a student restaurant and library.

- **The School of Agriculture** is located on the University farm in Florina, where there are the administration services building, the main building, the hall of Residence and student restaurant, the library and sports facilities.
- **The School of Fine Arts** is located in Florina (3<sup>rd</sup> km Florina-Niki), and in the village Psarades, Prespes, where there are laboratories and exhibition areas. The School is going to be relocated in a new campus building in Florina.
- **The School of Science** runs courses in Kastoria (Fourka) in 2 Departments, the Department of Mathematics and the Department of Informatics.
- **The School of Health Sciences** is located in Ptolemaida and runs 2 courses in the Department of Midwifery and the Department of Occupational Therapy.

There are 2 student restaurants in Kozani (on campus and at 20 Constantinople Street), 2 in Florina (in the buildings of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences and the School of Agriculture), in Ptolemaida, and on campus in Kastoria and Grevena. Free accommodation is offered in the Halls of Residence in Kozani (campus), Grevena and Florina.



## 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

In its young age as a recently fused Institution under new administration, the UoWM has not only established a Quality Assurance (QA) policy, but it has also gone through the process of reviewing it. This demonstrates that the QAU (MODIP) strives to make its QA policy appropriate for the Institution. However, the QA policy does not yet take into account explicitly the challenges posed by the geographic dispersion of the 5 campuses.

The QA policy allows review of KPIs and objectives and it includes commitments both to continuous improvement (as evidenced, e.g., by relevant explicit questions in questionnaires and surveys) and to satisfy all applicable requirements.

The Institution has defined and made available all the necessary information for supporting its IQAS by various means, including documentation posted on the QAU website, an elaborate and functional IT system, and the Quality Manual. The role of all stakeholders (students, faculty, and staff) in the IQAS implementation is well defined through a clear and transparent description of all related processes. However, there is evidence of resistance due to the administrative burden and additional workload. It should be emphasized that, according to the OPESP data, the IQAS has only been institutionalized in 2020. The administrative personnel of MODIP consists of two persons only, which is small for the size and structure of the UoWM.

The Panel was pleased to see that students are not only represented but also engaged actively in the QAU. It is also worthwhile mentioning that the Institution has just conducted electronic student elections providing the ability to its students all over the country to vote so that student representation is ensured; this resulted in higher election participation.

Continuous improvement is promoted in numerous communications and meetings and incentivized through a target setting process. It was evident by all meetings with faculty, staff, undergraduate and graduate students, as well as alumni that they all take pride in their affiliation with the Institution and its continuous growth not only in terms of quantity but also in terms of quality.

Finally, the QA policy and its importance are communicated, as mentioned above, more than adequately to all stakeholders with explicit presentations of both benefits and, possibly grave, consequences in terms of non-compliance.

### Panel Judgement

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

### Panel Recommendations

- The QA policy takes explicitly into account the coordination challenges of the IQAS posed by the geographic dispersion of the 5 campuses.
- The QA policy and the IQAS processes are such as not to be perceived as mere bureaucracy.
- The QA policy considers reinforcement of the MODIPs personnel.

## 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

The daily operations of the institution are primarily covered by the regular public investment funds. There is evidence that the administration of acquired funds is well-performed and according to the specified tools.

The management of these funds i.e., public funding, research project overheads (ELKE), from renting out buildings (restaurants, coffee shops) and land (agri land) of the University is done by the administration of the institution. However, investment related to research, innovation and development is very low related to the size of the UoWM and is no such a mechanism to support this.

The infrastructure is deemed satisfactory in most cases. There is a main campus in Kozani and other smaller are dispersed in different cities, which makes access a bit difficult for the students as sometimes there is no reliable and continuous public transportation. There exists sufficient IT infrastructure (e.g., computers, software) and other specialised lab equipment that supports the needs of the faculty and students. There are libraries in every city that the University operates at as well as smaller intradepartmental libraries. They are equipped with a database of scientific journals which is used by the faculties and students active in research.

There are restaurants offering meals for all students and during the pandemic food is delivered out to students. There is a gym albeit not yet adequately equipped. There is student accommodation for part of the student population and plans for creating more in the future.

In general, the working environment in the UoWM is considered favourable for the daily activities of faculty and staff. Although the EEAP did not visit the premises of the University in person due to the COVID-19 restrictions, it appears that all buildings are in good operational condition, clean and favourable for a productive academic environment.

The administrative staff is sufficient for the operations of the institution. There are departments that do not have sufficient permanent academic staff; thus, they rely heavily on contracting external adjunct teaching faculty. The institution supports faculty members to participate in international conferences and other events.

## 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	
Substantially compliant	<b>x</b>
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
<b>2.3 Working Environment</b>	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	<b>x</b>
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

- UoWM should intensify their effort to create more student accommodation space.
- The institution should intensify their research and innovation activities and create a related supporting mechanism.
- UoWM should intensify their effort to recruit permanent faculty staff.

### 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 IQAS includes specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely goals regarding the study programmes offered, teaching methods and administration and resources. However, this is less apparent for research & innovation, though ELKE seems to be managed well by the institution. There is not much information on past and current research programmes on the institution's web pages, apart from a pie chart with the areas of attracted funding.

These above goals are in line with the institutional strategy and it seems that they are well monitored, updated and communicated to the various teams.

On the other hand, it was not clear to the Panel, how the above goals are paired with suitable (Key Performance Indicators) KPIs set by the institution. The KPIs are insufficiently used for the creation and/or adaptation of the required goals for quality assurance.

Some stakeholders (e.g., municipal parties) participate in establishing the goals for quality assurance, however the participation of external stakeholders in particular industrial engagement is less evident (in our meeting only two parties were from the private sector). Though, the involvement of UG students is reasonable.

Overall, the IQAS provided by the UoWM, appears to be effective and achievable within timelines. However, it is not always clear how some of the goals are measured and the KPIs set by the institution are not substantially mapped to these goals. An example here is research and innovation, where there is not a clear mechanism to accomplish such a task.

## Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 3: Establishing Goals for Quality Assurance</b>	
<b>3.1 Study Programmes/ education activities</b>	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	<b>x</b>
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
<b>3.2 Research &amp; Innovation</b>	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	<b>x</b>
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	
Substantially compliant	<b>x</b>
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

## Panel Recommendations

- Research and innovation goals are set appropriately by the institution.
- ELKE and institutional websites are updated with past and new research and innovation programmes.
- KPIs are appropriately mapped to the goals of the Institution.
- Industrial stakeholders in particular are further involved in establishing goals for quality assurance.

## 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**

UoWM, in its current format, has been in operation for a relatively short period. During this period, it has managed to implement an adequate internal quality assurance. The documentation we were sent provided evidence of well thought out structures and processes aiming at monitoring all aspects of the University's operations and at implementing initiatives of continuous improvement.

The documentation included detailed description of the policy that all key stakeholders needed to pursue in order to achieve continuous improvement. Parts of the University's administration processes are certified by ISO 9001, which outlines key processes and the path to continuous improvement. Similarly, there is a quality manual that captures processes across all key areas of activity, e.g. teaching, research and outreach. This is extensive and explains in detail the inputs, outputs to the processes and their measures of success.

During the virtual visit we were shown examples of how these work in practice and how data is used to guide decision making as much as possible. However, there is scope for further embedding these processes across the operations of the University. For instance, it was not always clear how the mission and vision of the University was translated into specific actions and ultimately how progress was measured and assessed. Furthermore, the collection of data on adjunct (temporary) teaching staff is relatively limited. Nevertheless, the progress made in terms of educating the academic and support staff on the benefits of a wider quality management process is significant and admirable.

The Quality Assurance Unit consists of eight members of staff. Given the size of the Institution, this is a relatively small number. Nevertheless, they have been able to capture the processes of the University across all key areas and to cultivate a culture of continuous improvement. The support of the senior management team in achieving this has been evident throughout the documentation and the virtual visit. This has been a key enabler to reaching their current state.

During the virtual visit, we also met several academic staff who have taken on several quality assurance responsibilities. This has really helped in progressing the embedment of the processes across the institution. It has also ensured that these are 'owned' by key personnel. However, it has come at a significant cost in terms of academic time.

The Quality assurance Unit is very well integrated across all departmental functions that we were shown. It is also well aware of the challenges and threats that come from the integration of two institutions. Since its establishment, it has set up an organization structure, systems and policies that monitor most aspects of the operation of the institution. This is in line with the government guidelines and similar to the international standards. Although the accreditation took place virtually, the team was able to provide a detailed and accurate representation of the realities of the University's operations.

### Panel Judgement

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

### Panel Recommendations

- The quality assurance unit is strengthened by making more resources available as the University grows.
- All data collection processes are extended in ways that capture temporary teaching staff.
- Systems are established for measuring progress towards achieving strategic goals at all levels, including student assessment (see for instance the AACSB's assurance of learning scheme).

## 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

According to the OPESP data, the IQAS of the Institution has only been institutionalized in 2020 and conducted a self-assessment in October 2020, which is not mentioned in the OPESP data. Before that, always according to the OPESP data, the last self-assessment was conducted in 2015. The administration and the QAU explain that is due to i) the very recent consolidation of various academic institutions into what is now the UoWM and ii) that the administration of the recently fused UoWM has only been established in 2019 after administration elections.

The IQAS of the Institution comprises all necessary processes to conduct self-assessment of all academic and administrative units as described by the QM and executed by the Internal Evaluation Groups (OMEA) under the coordination of the QAU. It should be mentioned that the IEGs and the QAU expressed that collaboration was effective despite the presence of 5 campuses.

Several IQAS processes have been certified with ISO standards (neither required nor expected), which demonstrates the Institution's commitment to the efficacy of its IQAS. A very well implemented and managed information system is used to conduct self-assessment and store and process its numerical findings. This includes the important process of conducting course and teaching evaluations.

The outcomes of the October 2020 self-assessment have been documented in a report prepared by the QAU, communicated to all relevant stakeholders within the Institution (QAU staff, Deans, Department Chairs, etc.), made publicly available through posting it on the MODIP website, and discussed at the Senate General Assemblies. The report includes recommendations to the HAHE. However, the QM and its processes manuals are currently classified as confidential. (Note that, according to the OPESP data, the self-assessment and action plan are not made publicly available, but as mentioned above, the 2020 OPESP data do not take into account the October self-assessment; evidently, these OPESP data entries concern the previous self-assessment of 2015).

The QAU is also conducting a SWOT analysis based on self-assessment. This process results in both target (re-)setting and drafting action plans that are communicated, discussed, and, possibly, reviewed. As far as can be told in such a short period of time of the Institution's existence as a fused University, action plans seem to be implemented as evidenced, for example, by organizing and offering seminars on effective teaching methods, honing existing and developing new teaching skills, etc.

Examples of implemented action plans include the Institution's action to ensure quality in on-line delivery of courses during the pandemic and the creation of student-supporting offices (e.g., office for emotional support and office of students' ombudsperson)

Through the discussions that the Panel had with students at all levels (undergraduate, graduate, and alumni), it is evident that self-assessment processes are well-perceived. For example, regarding course and teaching evaluation, the students were convinced that good teaching is rewarded while ineffective instructors are not allowed to teach the same course again. However, there is a meagre to modest average response rate to course evaluations.

Finally, all findings of self-assessment are made publicly available on the QAU's website.

## Panel Judgement

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

## Panel Recommendations

- The QAU sticks to its plan to conduct annual self-assessments.
- The QM of the IQAS and the Manual of the IQAS processes (both ISO 9001 certified) are not classified as confidential.
- The Institution finds creative ways to enhance response rate to course and teaching evaluations.

## 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

The UoWM has established an information system for collecting and managing the data required for the implementation of the Internal Quality Assurance System. This is in line with the standards set by the National Information System for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NISQA). Although we did not access the system directly, we were shown outputs of its operation and given access to the automated reports. This took place through several presentations where we were shown screenshots of the system from the perspectives of various stakeholders. These reports provide clear evidence of how the information system captures most aspects of the University's activities including funding, human resources and infrastructure management. On the education side, the information system captures data from students and teaching staff. It provides monitoring of the progress of the relevant activities, particularly student satisfaction. Data is collected at regular intervals and is owned largely by the departmental teams (OMEA). Yet, the response rate is relatively low (ranging between 25 and 30%).

One notable illustration of the system's flexibility has been the monitoring of student's satisfaction following the onset of the pandemic, where all activities had to be readjusted and moved online. The quality assurance scheme was implemented flexibly and provided the organisation with a full set of results. This is a reality that many international institutions shied away from. Therefore, the University needs to be commended for its actions in this space that led to some excellent insights.

We were also shown how the quality assurance scheme is used to monitor some of the high level KPIs of research and innovation, e.g., research income and publications across the institution.

Finally, we were shown how the information system is used to capture high level information about HR systems and processes, e.g., on current staffing departmental levels and needs across the institution. This did not seem to be extended across other, more detailed levels though, such as onboarding and individuals' workload. Nevertheless, the quality manual provides evidence that areas are also captured. During the virtual visit, staff explained to us the reliance on the government for the provision for funding of new academic staff. As such, the degree of flexibility of implementing actions in these may be relatively limited.

Finally, the reports shared with us provided a detailed overview of the current position of the University and the reach of the information system.

Despite the above, there was relatively little evidence of how these data was used to conduct analysis of the progress of the institution. For instance, there was little use of this data to conduct comparative, trend and statistical analysis. As a result, there was little use of these data for monitoring the progress of the institution towards meeting its strategic goals.

### Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 6: Collection of Data: Measuring, Analysis &amp; Improvement</b>	
<b>6.1 Study Programmes / education activities</b>	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	<b>x</b>
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
<b>6.2 Research &amp; Innovation</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>x</b>
Substantially compliant	
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	
Substantially compliant	<b>x</b>
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

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

#### **Panel Recommendations**

- Take additional effort to increase the response rate.
- Ensure that the system and its outcome is embedded across all areas of the institution including HRM.
- Capture progress towards achieving strategic goals.



## 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

The University of Western Macedonia (UoWM) puts a lot of effort in maintaining a high level of public information. Its website seems modern and with well-focused information. As an independent outside visitor, one can easily find all the information regarding the university, its schools and their departments, the study and research programs, and its administration, as well as information about life inside and outside its five sites. Moreover, the website is both in Greek and in English although the information is somehow differently structured in the two versions (for example the information about MODIP appears immediately up front in the Greek version whereas it is rather difficult to find in the English version).

In asking a statistically significant group of recent graduates and industrial representatives the Panel heard that the University maintains regular contact with them through various channels. For example, the high-level activity of the internships, the interaction with industry, the seminars by external speakers, the high quality of its recent graduates as well as the continuing interaction of the university with its graduates, add to the reputation and the public information about the University.

Although such actions are highly commendable the University has only recently established an alumni association, which is not active yet. The University maintains regular contact with local stakeholders and industrial organizations. Yet, these contacts have not been institutionalized in the form of an advisory board to facilitate, among other things, the strategic planning of the University.

### Panel Judgement

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

### **Panel Recommendations**

- The University urgently completes the installation of the Alumni Association.
- The University establishes an External Advisory Board.
- The University seeks the advice and assistance of the External Advisory Board during the period of the EU Just Transition Program.

## 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

This principle actually calls for the evaluation of how the “old UoWM” responded to the recommendations of the 2016 Evaluation (i.e., before the fusion with the TEI). Clearly these recommendations remain relevant for the “new UoWM” (i.e., after the fusion with the TEI in 2019). It is possible that some of them are not relevant anymore, which has not been clarified by the report provided.

However, to a greater or lesser degree, the issues raised by the 2016 evaluation panel have changed in nature and complexity – sometimes in significant ways. For example, the recommendation of more focused graduate programs (recommendation 17 in the progress report) requires significantly more detailed and careful planning as the number of schools has increased in the new UoWM and so have the number of departments and courses.

Similarly, the recommendation to improve the presentation of the academic units in the university website (recommendation 22 in the progress report) requires new ways to organize larger volumes of information in more complex structures. Indeed, although the University website is very well organized, the new UoWM needs a better and more integrated information system – and this requires more resources and time to be implemented. By the way, this will have a significant impact on improving public information as well (see previous principle 7).

Under the circumstances, the governance of the new UoWM has adapted to the present conditions remarkably well and have responded to the recommendations of the 2016 evaluation in a very professional manner, describing clearly the significant progress made so far and the actions to be taken in the immediate future (in one- or two-year's time).

## Panel Judgement

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

## Panel Recommendations

- The efforts of improvement according to the recommendations of the 2016 External Evaluation Committee continue and intensify.
- A new external evaluation of the current institution is conducted as soon as feasible.

## **PART C: CONCLUSIONS**

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

- The UoWM has made excellent progress since the institution was established in its current form. Despite the circumstances during the last year and the relatively limited resources it has been able to capture most organizational processes, establish systems of measurement and work towards cultivating a culture of continuous improvement. The support of the senior management of the institution in achieving this has been significant.
- All representatives of the University, faculty staff, student groups of all levels, alumni and stakeholders that participated in the accreditation procedure were fully transparent, enthusiastic, and willing to share all relevant information. It is positive that elected student representatives participated in the accreditation procedure.
- The UoWM has certified (ISO) its administrative procedures including its anti-corruption processes.
- There is evidence of negotiating the pandemic period adequately without affecting the teaching and research quality negatively.
- The Institution is aware of the significant change of the region's socioeconomic environment because of the closure of the coal-fired power plants.

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

- There is lack of a suitable plan for overcoming the geographic dispersion of the UoWM and the adopted structures of the old institutions, which should optimise its performance and create the new profile of the recently formed university.
- Although the MODIP administrative group started with enthusiasm and succeeded to deliver an adequate system, its resources are small for the size and structure of the university causing bureaucratic work for the faculty staff.
- Investment related to research, innovation and development is very low related to the size of the UoWM and there is no such a mechanism to support it.
- The number of academic staff (DEP) is insufficient in many departments, consequently the number of temporary teaching staff is disproportionately high.
- Despite the difficulties raised of merging two institutions with different external evaluations some of their recommendations are not fulfilled or need revision.

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

- The Panel recommends that the UoWMs policy takes explicitly into account the challenges posed by the geographic dispersion of the 5 campuses developing a clear plan.
- The Panel recommends that the Institution increases the MODIP's personnel to alleviate the faculty's administrative burden.

- The Panel recommends that the institution should intensify their research and innovation activities and create a related supporting mechanism.
- The Panel recommends that UoWM should intensify their effort to recruit permanent academic staff and reduce the temporary teaching personnel.
- The Panel recommends that the UoWM continues its efforts of improvement according to the recommendations of the 2016 External Evaluation Committee until the next external evaluation (strongly recommended by the Panel) is conducted.

#### IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: **1**

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: **2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8**

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

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

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

## The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

**Name and Surname**

**Signature**

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