



**ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ**  
HELLENIC REPUBLIC



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Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης**  
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# Accreditation Report

## for the New Undergraduate Study Program in operation of:

**Agriculture**

**Institution: University of Western Macedonia**

**Date: 11 March 2023**



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 New Undergraduate Study Program in operation of **Agriculture** 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 new undergraduate study program in operation of **Agriculture** of the **University of Western Macedonia** comprised the following four (4) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

- 1. Professor Stella K. Kantartzi (Chair)**  
Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL, USA
- 2. Professor Constantin Vamvakas**  
University of Ghent, Belgium
- 3. Professor Emeritus Spyros Pavlostathis**  
Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, GA, USA
- 4. Ms. Maria Vargiami, Student**  
Department of Agriculture, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

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

The Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE) initiated the accreditation review process for the undergraduate program of the Department of Agriculture of the University of Western Macedonia by teleconference. Scheduled briefings and meetings were conducted efficiently without technical difficulties. Due to the time difference between Greece, Belgium, and the USA, all the meetings were held from the beginning of the afternoon until late at night.

Before the meetings, EEAP received the Proposal for Accreditation and other relevant material. Before starting the meetings with the Department, the members of the EEAP met online to discuss the strategy and the issues to consider during the discussions, as well as the distribution of different tasks for each EEAP member.

The accreditation review started on February 6 at 6.30 pm Greek time, according to the schedule prepared by HAEE. The EEAP met with the Vice-Rector of Academic Affairs, Prof. Nikolaos Sariannidis, and the Department Head, Prof. Aikaterini Melfou. The Vice Rector also serves as the President of the Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP). The EEAP was briefed with a power point presentation on the history and academic profile of University. The Department Head presented a power point about the Department profile, its policy on quality assurance, and other issues related to the study program. In the next meeting, EEAP met with the representatives of Quality Assurance Policy of the Department OMEA Prof. Theano Lazaridou, Prof. Fokion Papathanassiou, Assoc. Prof. Eleni Kasapidou, Assist. Prof. Konstantinos Zaralis, Mr. Panagiotis Giatsios student's representative and the MODIP representatives Prof. Nikolaos Sariannidis, Vice-Rector of Academic Affairs and president of MODIP, Assoc. Prof. Ioannis Kapageridis, MODIP member and Mr. Panagiotis Karagiannis and Ms. Xrysa Athanassiadou MODIP staff. EEAP discussed with these representatives the compliance of the undergraduate program (UP) to the standards for quality accreditation and other issues concerning the students' assignments, the theses, and the examination material.

The following day EEAP included six teleconference meetings with:

Ten teaching staff members: Assoc. Prof. Tsakiris Ioannis, Assist. Prof. Basioura Athina, Assist. Prof. Giantsis Ioannis, Assist. Prof. Karagiannis Evangelos, Assist. Prof. Papapanagiotou Aristidis, Lect. Koidou Paraskevi, Assist. Prof. Ampas Vasilios, Assist. Prof. Koutouzidou Georgia, Lab Staff Kesidis Anastasios and Lab Staff Papadopoulos Vasilios.

The main points of the discussion were: professional development opportunities, mobility, workload, student evaluations; competence and adequacy of the teaching staff to ensure learning outcomes; the link between teaching and research; teaching staff's involvement in applied research, projects, and research activities directly related to the program; and possible areas of weakness.

Ten students of different semesters: 2 students from 2<sup>nd</sup> semester; 2 students from 4<sup>th</sup> semester; 3 students from 6<sup>th</sup> semester and 4 students from 8<sup>th</sup> semester. The discussions were mainly about their satisfaction with the study experience and the Department/Institution facilities, their involvement in quality assurance, and any issues concerning student life and welfare.

Then, the EEAP attended several presentations of the classrooms, lecture halls, different laboratories, the farm and of the library by: Prof. Lazaridou Theano, Director of Genetics and Plant Breeding Lab., Prof. Papathanasiou Fokion, Lab. of Botany, Assoc. Prof. Kasapidou Eleni, Lab. of quality control of agricultural products, Assist. Prof. Giantsis Ioannis, Director of Animals molecular genetics Lab., Assist. Prof. Karagiannis Evangelos, Lab. of Pomology, Mr. Petrou Achileas, Farm Manager, Ms. Melidou Pelagia, Library Representative, Mr. Konstantinidou Anna, Department's Secretary and Mr. Despotakis Stylianos, Technical Staff. A video about the Department has been sent also together with the information material before the meetings.

The next meeting was with eight employers and social partners : Ms. Cheimonopoulou Maria, Biologist, Manager of State Hydrobiological Fish Breeding Station of Pella, Mr. Dimitriou Andreas, Owner of Dairy Firm, Mr. Iatridis Angelos, CEO, of "Alpha State", Prof. Kampas Athanasios, Dept. of Agricultural and Rural Development, Agricultural University of Athens , Mr. Remountakis Emmanouil, Vice President of "American Genetics", Mr. Sapalidis Savvas, Chairman, of Chamber of Florina, Mr. Siogkas Theodoros, Chairman of Geotechnical Chamber of Greece, Branch of Western Macedonia, and Mr. Vlachostergios Dimitrios, Director of "DEMETER" Institute of Industrial & Forage Crops.

The last two meetings took place with the OMEA and MODIP representatives, the Vice-Rector/President of MODIP and the President of the Department, during which the members of EEAP made a short debriefing to reflect on the impressions of the discussions and their key findings. From March 8 to 11, the EEAP worked on the accreditation Report. All parties involved conducted themselves professionally and the process was smooth, effective, and efficient.

**Important note:** The five years undergraduate program has only completed its first three years, with two completed during the COVID pandemic. Therefore, the EEAP conducted the evaluation and drew conclusions based on the experiences of the three-fifths of the program already completed, the documents provided regarding its strategic planning and studies programs and the discussions during the meetings.

### **III. New Undergraduate Study Program in operation Profile**

The Department was established by law in 2019 (Law 4610/07.05.2019). It was the re-embodiment of the Technical Educational Institution (TEI) of Western Macedonia. It is the only Department of the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, and it is situated in the town of Florina in Western Macedonia. It comprises sections on different scientific subjects and has an excellent building infrastructure, well-equipped laboratories, and several open-air areas.

The Department's mission is a) the academic excellence to face the modern scientific developments and the requirements of the market's labour and b) to contribute to the economic and social well-being in the Prefecture of Western Macedonia after the closing of the coal mines.

The strategic goals of the Department are a) High quality curriculum and teaching work, b) Producing high-level research, c) Quality of support services to students, d) Connection of the Department with the labour market and e) society extroversion and recognition.

The professional specializations offered to the students are Plant Production Agronomist, Animal Production Agronomist and Agronomist in Agricultural Economics.

The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs determines the number of incoming students yearly. The total number of registered undergraduate students is 525, (86 for the academic year 2022-2023). There are 14 PhD candidate students and one postdoc researcher.

The Department uses the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), and it is structured on the qualifications framework of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). It has a student-centred education system.

The program offers an intergraded MSc degree within ten semesters (5 years), requiring a total of 300 ECTS. In the first three years (6 semesters), common for all the students, there are 29 obligatory lessons, 4 language lessons and 8 optional lessons with a total 180 ECTS. Semesters 7,8, and 9 concern the three different directions (specializations) offered by the Department. The 10th semester includes exclusively the preparation of the thesis (total ECTS credits: 30).

There are two post-graduate programs: a) "Production, Certification and Trafficking of Plant Propagation Material" and b) "Integrated Livestock and Wildlife Management".

Today the Department has 11 tenured and 15 non-tenure track Faculty members (DEP), 3 special technical laboratory personnel (EDIP) and 3 administrative staff members. Two more DEP members are expected to join the Department in 2023. There is a ratio of 20 students/professor. Between the years 2017-2022, according to SCOPUS, 152 publications were presented by members of the staff.

The Department has two main buildings, 14 modern classrooms, 26 well equipped laboratories, a library and information centre, a 340 seats amphitheatre, a student's residence, a restaurant, a gym, and a 20-he farm.



## **PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES**

### **Principle 1: Strategic Planning, Feasibility and Sustainability of the Academic Unit**

**Institutions must have developed an appropriate strategy for the establishment and operation of new academic units and the provision of new undergraduate study programs. This strategy should be documented by specific feasibility and sustainability studies.**

*By decision of the institutional Senate, the Institutions should address in their strategy issues related to their academic structure in academic units and study programs, which support the profile, the vision, the mission, and the strategic goal setting of the Institution, within a specific time frame. The strategy of the Institution should articulate the potential benefits, weaknesses, opportunities, or risks from the operation of new academic units and study programs and plan all the necessary actions towards the achievement of their goals.*

*The strategy of their academic structure should be documented by specific feasibility and sustainability studies, especially for new academic units and new study programs.*

*More specifically, the feasibility study of the new undergraduate study programs should be accompanied by a four-year business plan to meet specific needs in infrastructure, services, human resources, procedures, financial resources, and management systems.*

*During the evaluation of the Institutions and their individual academic units in terms of meeting the criteria for the organisation of undergraduate study programs, particular attention must be placed upon:*

***a. The academic profile and the mission of the academic unit***

*The profile and mission of the department should be specified. The scientific field of the department should be included in the internationally established scientific fields of Higher Education, as they are designated by the international categorisation of scientific fields in education, by UNESCO (ISCED 2013).*

***b. The strategy of the Institution for its academic development***

*The academic development strategy for the operation of the department and the new study program should be set out. This strategy should result from the investigation of the factors that influence the studies and the research in the scientific field, the investigation of the institutional, economic, developmental, and social parameters that apply in the external environment of the Institution, as well as the possibilities and capabilities that exist within the internal environment (as reflected in a SWOT Analysis: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats). This specific analysis should demonstrate the reason for selecting the scientific field of the new department.*

***c. The documentation of the feasibility of the operation of the department and the study program***

*The feasibility of the operation of the new department should be justified based on:*

- *the needs of the national and regional economy (economic sectors, employment, supply-demand, expected academic and professional qualifications)*
- *comparison with other national and international study programs of the same scientific field*
- *the state-of-the-art developments*
- *the existing academic map: the differentiation of the proposed department from the already existing ones needs to be analysed, in addition to the implications of the current image of the academic map in the specific scientific field.*

***d. The documentation of the sustainability of the new department***

*Mention must be made to the infrastructure, human resources, funding perspective, services, and all other available resources in terms of:*

- *educational and research facilities (buildings, rooms, laboratories, equipment, etc.)*
- *staff (existing and new, by category, specialty, rank, and laboratory). A distinct five-year plan is required, documenting the commitment of the School and of the Institution for filling in the necessary faculty positions to cover at least the entire pre-defined core curriculum.*
- *funding (funding possibility from public or non-public sources)*
- *services (central, departmental / student support, digital, administrative, etc.)*

***e. The structure of studies***

*The structure of the studies should be briefly presented, namely:*

- ***The organisation of studies:*** *The courses and the categories to which they belong; the distribution of the courses into semesters; the alignment of the courses with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).*
- ***Learning process:*** *Documentation must be provided as to how the student-centred approach is ensured (modes of teaching and evaluation of students beyond the traditional methods).*
- ***Learning outcomes:*** *Knowledge, skills and competences acquired by graduates, as well as the professional rights awarded must be mentioned.*

***f. The number of admitted students.***

- *The proposed number of admitted students over a five-year period should be specified.*
- *Any similar departments in other HEIs with the possibility of student transfers from / to the proposed department should be mentioned.*

***g. Postgraduate studies and research***

- *It is necessary to indicate research priorities in the scientific field, the opportunities for interdisciplinary research, the challenges towards new knowledge, possible research collaborations, etc.*
- *In addition, the postgraduate and doctoral programs offered by the academic unit, the research projects performed, and the research performance of the faculty members should be mentioned.*

***Relevant documentation***

- *Introductory Report by the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) addressing the above points with the necessary documentation.*
- *Updated Strategic Plan of the Institution that will include its proposed academic reconstruction, in view of the planned operation of new department(s) (incl. updated SWOT analysis at institutional level)*
- *Feasibility and sustainability studies for the establishment and operation of the new academic unit and the new study program*
- *Four-year business plan*

**Study Program Compliance**

***a. The academic profile and the mission of the academic unit***

According to the Greek legislation (N. 4589/2019), the Department's undergraduate students follow an innovative Undergraduate Study Program (USP) of 5 years, which upon completion, leads to awarding of a degree in the specialty of Agriculture. USP provides integrated knowledge in plant science, animal science, and agricultural economics, a competitive advantage in the labour market that requires scientists with high academic backgrounds, valuable skills, and comprehensive thinking.

**Conclusion:** The Department of Agriculture of the University of Western Macedonia clearly presented its academic profile and orientation to EEAP.

***b. The strategy of the Institution for its academic development***

The Department of Agriculture of the University of Western Macedonia aims to preserve and enrich the social bonds, promote its scientific know-how to the industry, incorporate novel tools in research and teaching as well as to revive the local economy in the post-coal era.

The high-level teaching of the Department is focused on the training of young scientists and the cultivation of skills with intense lab courses. The specializations meet the needs of modern society as well as the expectations of students for high scientific value training and good prospects for professional development.

Scientific research is carried out actively with the support of funding from the State, European Union, and private sector. The results of projects are presented in various peer-reviewed publications and at regional, national, and international scientific conferences.

The administrative, technical, and other supporting staff contribute to upgrading the Department's services with consistency, responsibility, continuous improvement of efficiency, and close cooperation with the faculty. All the efforts are student oriented, contributing to an environment that encourages learning and practical training.

**Conclusion:** The Department's strategic plan for its academic development was clearly presented to the EAAP through extensive and informative presentations.

***c. The documentation of the feasibility of the operation of the department and the study program***

Agriculture plays a critical role in our country's economy and society, providing valuable sources of food, feed, medicine, materials, and many other goods. The Department of Agriculture of the University of Western University:

- Supports the socio-economic functions of agriculture.
- Promotes local bioeconomy, including products with protected designation of origin and ecotourism.
- Works on a strong research and innovation agenda to improve knowledge in agriculture.
- Develops skills and empowers citizens for a sustainable agricultural development.

The undergraduate study program of Agriculture of the University of Western Macedonia fully covers the expected modern academic and professional qualifications required to make full use of the diverse potential of our country's agricultural sector. The graduated students will practice their professional activities in the public and private agricultural sectors.

The Department offers three concentrations/specializations of studies (plant science, animal science, and agricultural economics) starting from the 7<sup>th</sup> semester. The pre-graduate program of studies offers various courses, aiming to provide contemporary knowledge in specialized fields. Besides, the Department offers postgraduate and doctoral study programs.

More specifically, the first six semesters include compulsory courses, common to all students. In each of the three concentrations/specializations, compulsory courses are included for the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> semester, while in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> semesters, the students carry out their thesis under the guidance of a Supervising Professor, a member of the Department's academic staff. In addition, a compulsory internship that takes place in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> semesters connects theory with practice and actively contributes to the improved utilization of the knowledge and skills in the labour market.

**Conclusion:** The Department of Agriculture of the University of Western Macedonia fully complies with the feasibility of operations based on its orientation and the study program.

#### ***d. The documentation of the sustainability of the new department***

The Department of Agriculture of the University of Western Macedonia is housed in two buildings with one amphitheatre, 14 classrooms, and 28 laboratories. a restaurant, a fitness facility, and a library. Farm space (20 he) and a greenhouse are also available for research and teaching purposes.

The Department's has 11 Faculty members and two additional that are currently under the hiring process that possess a high-level research profile, holding publications in scientific journals and conferences and supervising national and international competitive research projects.

**Conclusion:** The sustainability of Department is deemed satisfactory.

#### ***e. The structure of studies***

The undergraduate study program comprises a wide range of classes which in detail can be found at:

<https://agro.uowm.gr/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Οδηγός-Σπουδών-Τμήματος-Γεωπονίας-ακαδημαϊκού-έτους-2022-2023.pdf>

**Conclusion:** The Department offers a wide range of classes that meet today's industry needs.

#### ***f. The number of admitted students.***

According to the official data of the Hellenic Ministry of Education, the admitted students of the Department of Agriculture of the University of Western Macedonia were 189, 269, 67, and 86 in 2019–2020, 2020–2021, 2021–2022, and 2022–2023, respectively.

It should be noted that during the last two academic years, the Minimum Entry Base was set into force by the Ministry of Education. For the new academic year 2023–2024, it is estimated that approximately 150 students will be admitted.

**Conclusion:** The number of admitted students is deemed satisfactory.

### ***g. Postgraduate studies***

The Department of Agriculture of the University of Western Macedonia offers two MSc program studies:

- MSc in Production, Certification and Distribution of Plant Reproductive Material and
- MSc in Livestock and Wildlife Management

as described at <https://agro.uowm.gr/μεταπτυχιακά-προγράμματα-σπουδών/>

In addition, the Department runs a Doctoral Studies Program that aims to carry out original and innovative scientific research in various agricultural fields and subjects.

**Conclusion:** The number and quality of offered post-graduate studies are deemed satisfactory.

## Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 1: Strategic planning, feasibility, and sustainability of the academic unit</b>	
<b>a. The academic profile and the mission of the academic unit</b>	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
<b>b. The strategy of the Institution for its academic development</b>	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
<b>c. The documentation of the feasibility of the operation of the department and the study program</b>	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
<b>d. The documentation of the sustainability of the new department</b>	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
<b>e. The structure of studies</b>	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
<b>f. The number of admitted students</b>	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
<b>g. Postgraduate studies</b>	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

<b>Principle 1: Strategic planning, feasibility, and sustainability of the academic unit (overall)</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>X</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

### **Panel Recommendations**

- The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs should allow the Department to re-establish the study program on Food Science and Nutrition that will support the local food industry and further help the community to smoothly transition into the post-coal era.
- The Department should work on its extroversion and sign memorandum of understanding with top-level departments of agriculture worldwide.

## Principle 2: Quality Assurance Policy of the Institution and the Academic Unit

The Institution should have in place an accredited Internal Quality Assurance System, and should formulate and apply a Quality Assurance Policy, which is part of its strategy, specialises in the operation of the new academic units and the new study programs, and is accompanied by annual quality assurance goals for the continuous development and improvement of the academic units and the study programs.

*The quality assurance policy of the Institution must be formulated in the form of a published statement, which is implemented by all stakeholders. It focuses on the achievement of special annual quality goals related to the quality assurance of the new study program offered by the academic unit. To implement this policy, the Institution, among others, commits itself to put into practice quality procedures that will demonstrate: the adequacy and quality of the academic unit's resources; the suitability of the structure and organisation of the curriculum; the appropriateness of the qualifications of the teaching staff; the quality of support services of the academic unit and its staffing with appropriate administrative personnel. The Institution also commits itself to conduct an annual internal evaluation of the new undergraduate program (UGP), realised by the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) in collaboration with the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) of the Institution.*

*The quality assurance policy of the academic unit includes its commitment to implement quality procedures that will demonstrate: a) the adequacy of the structure and organisation of the curriculum, b) the pursuit of learning outcomes and qualifications in accordance with the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education, c) the promotion of the quality and effectiveness of the teaching work, d) the adequacy of the qualifications of the teaching staff, e) the promotion of the quality and quantity of the research work of the members of the academic unit, f) the ways of linking teaching with research, g) the level of demand for graduates' qualifications in the labour market, h) the quality of support services, such as administration, libraries and student care, i) the implementation of an annual review and audit of the quality assurance system of the UGP through the cooperation of the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) with the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) of the Institution.*

### **Relevant documentation**

- *Revised Quality Assurance Policy of the Institution*
- *Quality Assurance Policy of the academic unit*
- *Quality target setting of the Institution and the academic unit (utilising the S.M.A.R.T. methodology)*

### **Study Program Compliance**

The Institution has developed and implements its Quality Assurance Policy as part of its broader strategy. The past three years the University has applied this policy at the new undergraduate curriculum of the Department of Agriculture, accompanied by annual quality assurance targets for the continuous development and improvement of the academic unit and teaching program. The Department has established a quality assurance policy, which is fully compliant with Principle 2. The Development Strategy and the Quality Policy of the University, as well as the responsibilities of the Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP), the structure of the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS) and the Quality Manual of the Institution are publicly accessible from the main website of the Institution: <https://www.uowm.gr>



The Quality Assurance Policy of the academic unit includes adequate reference to the delivery of the new undergraduate program, including commitments to satisfy requirements and strive for continuous improvement. These are explicitly stated in the four-year Business Plan of the academic unit and are also included in the Program of Study. The Quality Assurance Policy is sufficiently communicated to all parties involved as it is publicly available via the main University website, as well as via the Departmental webpage. The academic unit has set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely goals regarding the new undergraduate program. Based on the data presented to the EEAP, the targets are also paired with suitable key performance indicators (KPIs). Goals are monitored, updated, and communicated, according to the Quality Assurance Policy implemented by the Institution and the academic unit.

Teaching effectiveness is assessed by regularly monitoring student progress and student satisfaction. The EEAP confirms that faculty are motivated and care deeply about the student experience at the Department. The level of teaching and administrative support available to the students is deemed highly satisfactory. The Department has very good laboratories and excellent facilities, including a farm. There are links between teaching and research, mostly at the Diploma Thesis stage. Similarly, there is a link between education and workplace through the Diploma Thesis and practical training. Opportunities also exist for students to be involved in industry-initiated Diploma Theses, thus further enhancing student exposure to industry needs. The Department has excellent collaborations with other Academic and Research Institutions, Agricultural Cooperatives, and Industry. There is significant outreach to the local society. The Department should be praised for having already established an External Advisory Board consisting of key stakeholders, who actively have contributed to the development of the new undergraduate curriculum.

The EEAP finds that the Department has established and follows a quality assurance policy that is fully compliant with Principle 2.

### Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 2: Quality assurance policy of the Institution and the academic unit</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>X</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

### Panel Recommendations

The EEAP has no specific recommendations on Principle 2.

### **Principle 3: Design, Approval and Monitoring of the Quality of the New Undergraduate Programs**

Institutions should design the new undergraduate programs following a defined written process, which will involve the participants, information sources and the approval committees for the program. The objectives, the expected learning outcomes, the intended professional qualifications, and the ways to achieve them are set out in the program design. The above details, as well as information on the program's structure, are published in the Student Guide.

*The Institutions develop their new undergraduate study programs, following a well-defined procedure. The academic profile, the identity and orientation of the program, the objectives, the subject areas, the structure and organization, the expected learning outcomes, and the intended professional qualifications according to the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education are described at this stage. An important new element in the structure of the programs is the introduction of courses for the acquisition of digital skills. The above components should be taken into consideration and constitute the subject of the program design, which, among other things, should include: elements of the Institution's strategy, labor market data and employment prospects of graduates, smooth progression of students throughout the stages of the program, the anticipated student workload according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), the option of providing work experience to the students, the linking of teaching and research, the international experience in study programs of similar disciplines, the relevant regulatory framework, and the official procedure for the approval of the program by the Institution.*

*The procedure of approval or revision of the programs provides for the verification of compliance with the basic requirements of the Standards by the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU).*

#### **Relevant documentation**

- *Senate decision for the establishment of the UGP*
- *Curriculum structure: courses, course categories (including courses for the acquisition of digital skills), ECTS awarded, expected learning outcomes according to the EQF, internship, mobility opportunities.*
- *Labour market data regarding the employment of graduates, international experience in a related scientific field.*
- *Student Guide*
- *Course outlines*
- *Teaching staff (list of areas of specialisation, its relation to the courses taught, employment relationship)*
- *QAU minutes for the internal evaluation of the new study program and its compliance with the Standards*

#### **Study Program Compliance**

The undergraduate program has been designed with the aim to be harmonized with corresponding European Agricultural Sciences programs. The Greek and European standards

concerning higher education have been considered. The feasibility study presents in detail the objectives of the program, the process and the intended training results that graduates are expected to have. The Department curriculum committee responsible for the program revision process considers data from OMEA, MODIP, student course evaluation and external experts, such as scientific and professional associations. The undergraduate program is reviewed and revised regularly. In addition, the Department curriculum committee, if deemed necessary, can propose additional revisions even after every semester. Approval and/or revision of the undergraduate program is in full compliance with the basic requirements of the Standards set by the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU).

The study guide is well structured and clearly articulates all information deemed necessary for the students, such as information on the Institution, the Department, the structure of the program, study regulations, registration process, course enrolment, explanation of ECTS, etc. The duration of studies is five years (ten semesters), of which the first three include general and special subject courses, while in the last two years specialization courses are taught depending on the direction of study chosen at the end of the sixth semester. There are three study directions offered: 1) Plant Production, 2) Animal Production and 3) Agricultural Economics. The core curriculum consists of 29 compulsory courses, 4 foreign language courses, and 7 compulsory optional courses (from a list of 18 compulsory/compulsory elective courses). Online tools (e-Class Platform, e-Student Portal and EVDOS facilitate and streamline the learning processes. Through ERASMUS+ and IAESTE programs, the Department has developed agreements with Foreign Institutions for student and staff mobility, reinforcing intercultural links in higher education.

The EEAP noted that additional input from critical constituencies and stakeholders, who will influence how the graduates meet the stated mission of the Department and/or educational objectives, could be solicited routinely and more systematically. The exposure of students to active, experimental research work is typically and by far limited to Diploma Thesis. The collaboration with industry can be significantly enhanced to involve more joint Diploma Theses, practical training, visits to and by industry in the Department's courses and more.

The EEAP finds that the program is substantially compliant with Principle 3.

### Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 3: Design, approval and monitoring of the quality of the new undergraduate programs</b>	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	<b>X</b>
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

### **Panel Recommendations**

To further improve adherence to Principle 3, the EEAP recommends the following:

Critical stakeholders (alumni, companies, professional organizations) should actively participate in the continuous assessment, and possible improvement, of the curriculum as well as new research directions meeting local and national workforce and society needs. This participation should be done in a formal and systematic way with clearly defined objectives, and with feedback solicited in a rigorous way. The EEAP noticed that all stakeholder representatives met, expressed strong support and enthusiasm for furthering their interactions with the Department.

## **Principle 4: Student-centered Approach in Learning, Teaching and Assessment of Students**

The academic unit should ensure that the new undergraduate programs are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process. The assessment methods should reflect this approach.

*In the implementation of student-centred learning and teaching, the academic unit:*

- ✓ *respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths.*
- ✓ *considers and uses different modes of delivery where appropriate.*
- ✓ *flexibly uses a variety of pedagogical methods.*
- ✓ *regularly evaluates and adjusts the modes of delivery and application of pedagogical methods aiming at improvement.*
- ✓ *regularly evaluates the quality and effectiveness of teaching, as documented especially through student surveys.*
- ✓ *reinforces the student's sense of autonomy, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teaching staff*
- ✓ *promotes mutual respect in the student-teacher relationship.*
- ✓ *applies appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints*

### **Relevant documentation**

- *Questionnaires for assessment by the students*
- *Regulation for dealing with students' complaints and appeals.*
- *Regulation for the function of the academic advisor*
- *Reference to the planned teaching modes and assessment methods*

### **Study Program Compliance**

The academic unit should ensure that the new undergraduate programs are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process. The evaluation methods should reflect this approach.

### **Findings**

- The conversation between the EEAP members, the teaching staff, and the students (11 in number) was very constructive, and it was clearly communicated that both parties have developed a very friendly environment. Therefore, everyone is enjoying mutual respect.
- In that spirit, the Department has taken into consideration sensitive social groups and their needs (AMEA, students with learning difficulties) in both learning process and regarding their easy access in the buildings.
- As a Department closer to nature and the businesses of the primary production sector, the teaching staff has taken this into consideration and helped students adopt the respective mentality of zero-waste and circular economy.
- The laboratory exercises are obligatory and only successful attendance and examination allows students to be examined in the theoretical part of the course.

- Even though the law forbids prerequisite courses, students have come to realize the importance of fundamental subjects, such as anatomy or physiology, for understanding more difficult and specialized subjects.
- Due to the small number of admitted students (70 & 87 in the last 2 years) and thus the small ratio between students and teaching staff (20:1), students can receive the maximum laboratory education and practice. Let it be emphasized that the Laboratory of Pomology is the only laboratory where students practice in all irrigation systems.
- On the other hand, teachers can organize their workload and teaching work in a more efficient way since students are well-trained enough to participate more actively in research programs.
- All courses are available online after they are posted in e-Class.
- As far as the books are concerned, the University enables students to choose whichever is available on the electronic complete management service EUDOXUS. The books offered are the latest international releases to which the teaching staff of the Department has often participated in translations. Additionally, handwritten notes and papers covering all the courses of the curriculum made by the teaching staff are at students' disposal.
- In the curriculum there are 2 courses that enhance and / or develop students' digital skills (Applications of Information in Agriculture Sciences, GIS Geographic Information Systems). However, they do not grant students a formal certificate of acquired digital skills.
- Students can choose and change, if they want, study orientation between the 3 available: Plant Science, Animal Science and Agricultural Economics on condition they select the respective courses.
- Concerning the academic advisor, students are aware of this statute and the website includes information about the advisor's responsibilities but have not come to require their service as they can contact any member of the teaching staff any time apart from the announced office-hours.
- Despite the excellent relationship both the teaching staff and students claim to have, the participation rate in course evaluation is extremely low (approximately 25%) especially for a Department that numbers few students. The students themselves are not aware of the significantly low rate, which indicates that the results of the surveys are not published and communicated to the students.
- However, the teaching staff does not miss a chance to explain the importance of the procedure, emphasize the anonymity and motivate them to take part in it.
- The questionnaires are clear, targeted, and well-structured as the students themselves have clarified.
- The students with whom the EEAP conversed seemed to have participated in the course evaluation procedure.

## Analysis

The teaching staff considers the lack of the right mentality concerning the evaluating procedure, the lack of knowledge of its benefits and the students' fear of being exposed through the procedure.

## Conclusions

The new undergraduate study program has made significant effort in establishing a student-centred approach in learning along with providing them with the necessary laboratory-practicing background that will help them successfully cope with research and job market in the primary production sector of Western Macedonia region and elsewhere.

## Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 4: Student-centred approach in learning, teaching and evaluation of students</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>X</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

## Panel Recommendations

- The teaching staff should continue their efforts to motivate students to participate in the evaluation process.
- The curriculum could be enriched with a few more courses related to Informatics such as learning of programming languages (Python, R), something useful, especially for the Agricultural Economics branch, which will facilitate their understanding of the rapid developments in Agriculture and how to better handle technology and logistics.
- The curriculum could also include more Informatics oriented courses and enable students to acquire a formal certificate of digital skills, an equivalent of ECDL. This could be accomplished by students taking such courses from other Departments of the University of Western Macedonia.

## **Principle 5: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition of Academic Qualifications and Award of Degrees and Certificates of Competence of the New Study Programs**

**Academic units should develop and apply published regulations addressing all aspects and phases of studies of the program (admission, progression, recognition, and degree award).**

*All the issues from the beginning to the end of studies should be governed by the internal regulations of the academic units. Indicatively:*

- ✓ *the registration procedure of the admitted students and the necessary documents - according to the law - and the support of the newly admitted students.*
- ✓ *student rights and obligations and monitoring of student progression.*
- ✓ *internship issues, granting of scholarships.*
- ✓ *the procedures and terms for writing the thesis (diploma or degree)*
- ✓ *the procedure of award and recognition of degrees, the duration of studies, the conditions for progression and assurance of the progress of students in their studies*

*as well as*

- ✓ *the terms and conditions for enhancing student mobility.*

*Appropriate recognition procedures rely on relevant academic practice for recognition of credits among various European academic departments and Institutions in line with the principles of the Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region. Graduation represents the culmination of the students' study period. Students need to receive documentation explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes, and the context, level, content, and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed (Diploma Supplement).*

*All the above must be made public within the context of the Student Guide.*

### **Relevant documentation**

- *Internal regulation for the operation of the new study program*
- *Regulation of studies, internship, mobility, and student assignments*
- *Printed Diploma Supplement*

*Certificate from the President of the academic unit that the diploma supplement is awarded to all graduates without exception together with the degree or the certificate of completion of studies.*

### **Study Program Compliance**

#### **Findings**

- The newly admitted students have a smooth transition from high school to University as they are early informed by the Department's secretariat and by the well-organised website ([https://agro.uowm.gr/odigoi\\_spoudon/](https://agro.uowm.gr/odigoi_spoudon/)) of the Department where, among others, criteria for the evaluation procedures are thoroughly analysed.



- They are also informed about the various services the Department has to offer (ERASMUS+, cultural, sport events, dining, etc.).
- During the 1<sup>st</sup> fortnight a welcoming event is held with the presence of the Department's chair, teaching and other staff for the newly admitted students' thorough briefing.
- The Department has established regulations for research and excellence awards.
- The curriculum has successfully been altered since new courses have been added, something the stakeholders mentioned.
- Students are also informed about their respective academic advisor who is posted for each student on the Department's website.
- Students are being evaluated through exams and projects and those with specific education needs or disabilities go through special exams.
- Terms and conditions for participating in mobility programs are explained on the website (<https://erasmus.uowm.gr/intrelations/erasmus/outgoing-students-studies/>). So far 4 students from Hebron-Palestine visited the Department for their internship.
- The internship lasts for 2 months during summer and each student is credited 10 ECTS on condition that they have completed the minimum amount of ECTS and attend courses beyond the 8<sup>th</sup> semester.
- The internship is a vital component of the students' training who encounter with the business world, familiarize with the idea of the employee, and are better informed about the job market.
- The thesis is conducted during the last (10<sup>th</sup>) semester and credits the student with 30 ECTS. Students have the necessary guidance from both the faculty and website. It could also be combined with their internship.
- Upon graduation, graduates receive the Diploma and the Study Certificate in English and in Greek.

### **Analysis**

The Diploma Supplement and Study Certificate are issued to all graduates in English and Greek without request. The Department plans to keep contact with the graduate students through the Career office.

### **Conclusions**

The academic unit have developed and applied all the necessary regulations for the normal function of the study program providing its students with the necessary support.

## Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 5: Student admission, progression, recognition of academic qualifications, and award of degrees and certificates of competence of the new study programs</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>X</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

## Panel Recommendations

- The student (through ERASMUS+) and teaching staff's mobility should be encouraged as well as be able to attract foreign students through these programs.
- Because of the suitable environment, the Department should enhance to the best of its abilities the interface between Animal Science and business world so that the sector can be promoted even more.
- Accordingly, an extra branch could be a useful link between Animal and Plant Science, that of Food Science and Nutrition.
- The internship, as the stakeholders have mentioned, is more efficient if it lasts for 6 rather than 2 months, since the student can better familiarize with the working environment and get better trained by the professionals. Consequently, they would have increased their chances of being employed by the same professionals in the future.

## **Principle 6: Ensuring the Competence and High Quality of the Teaching Staff of the New Undergraduate Study Programs**

**Institutions should assure themselves of the competence, the level of knowledge and skills of the teaching staff of the academic units, and apply fair and transparent processes for their recruitment, training, and further development.**

*The Institution should attend to the adequacy of the teaching staff of the academic unit, the appropriate staff-student ratio, the suitable categories of staff, the appropriate subject areas and specializations, the fair and objective recruitment process, the high research performance, the training – development, the staff development policy (including participation in mobility schemes, conferences, and educational leaves- as mandated by law).*

*More specifically, the academic unit should set up and follow clear, transparent and fair processes for the recruitment of properly qualified staff and offer them conditions of employment that recognize the importance of teaching and research; offer opportunities and promote the professional development of the teaching staff; encourage scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research; encourage innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies; promote the increase of the volume and quality of the research output within the academic unit; follow quality assurance processes for all staff members (with respect to attendance requirements, performance, self-assessment, training, etc.); develop policies to attract highly qualified academic staff.*

### **Relevant documentation**

- *Procedures and criteria for teaching staff recruitment*
- *Regulations or employment contracts, and obligations of the teaching staff*
- *Policy for staff recruitment, support, and development*
- *Performance of the teaching staff in scientific-research and teaching work, also based on internationally recognised systems of scientific evaluation (e.g., Google Scholar, Scopus, etc.)*

### **Study Program Compliance**

The present composition of faculty members was primarily established with the inception of the Department a few years ago. More than 80% of the faculty had corresponding appointments to the prior Technical Educational Institutes (TEI) and transferred to the current positions. Post Department inception appointments and hiring processes are too few to serve as the basis for an objective evaluation of associated procedures.

All faculty members carry qualified doctoral degrees. The hiring process is reportedly based on applicant merit and credentials and is administered by the Department following Greek laws. These are nominal provisions; the EEAP did not attempt to, nor was interested in corroboration as such an effort would be well outside its main objectives. The State controls the number of faculty. The Department does not have hiring autonomy. Hiring opportunities for permanent or tenure-track positions are infrequent. The efforts of the faculty are aided by temporary hires, known as '407 plan' appointments.

In 2017-2022, the Faculty published 152 scientific articles based on Scopus. The Faculty's skills, collaborative spirit, industry affiliations, and leadership sets a strong foundation for future

excellence. Overall, the Faculty demonstrated an ambitious vision and seem to be well prepared for any future challenges.

The faculty/student ratio is 1 to 20. The Faculty members are formally obliged to teach 3-10 hours per week and spent 10-15 hours per week for preparation. Considering the increase in teaching loads as more students will be admitted in the following years, participation in alternative professional development activities may become difficult for the faculty.

Stakeholders, including public authorities, industry representatives, and entrepreneurs praised the contributions made by the Department to the local economy. It was mentioned that most Faculty members are leaders in their specializations and that the Department will continue to provide invaluable services.

### Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 6: Ensuring the competence and high quality of the teaching staff of the new undergraduate study programs</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>X</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

### Panel Recommendations

- Encourage regular professional development activities of the faculty.
- Support high quality publications to promote the status of the Department and facilitate access to substantial research grants.

## Principle 7: Learning Resources and Student Support of the New Undergraduate Programs

*Institutions and their academic units must have sufficient resources, on a planned and long-term basis, to support learning and academic activity in general, to offer students, the best possible level of studies. The above means include facilities such as, the necessary general and specific libraries and possibilities for access to electronic databases, study rooms, educational and scientific equipment, information and communication services, support, and counselling services. When allocating the available resources, the needs of all students must be taken into consideration (e.g., whether they are full-time or part-time students, employed students, students with disabilities), in addition to the shift towards student-centered learning and the adoption of flexible modes of learning and teaching. Support activities and facilities may be organized in various ways, depending on the institutional context. Students should be informed about all available services. In delivering support services, the role of support and administration staff is crucial and therefore this segment of staff needs to be qualified and have opportunities to develop its competences.*

### **Relevant documentation**

- *Detailed description of the infrastructure and services made available by the Institution to the academic unit to support learning and academic activity (human resources, infrastructure, services, etc.) and the corresponding specific commitment of the Institution to financially cover these infrastructure-services from state or other resources.*
- *Administrative support staff of the new undergraduate program (job descriptions, qualifications, and responsibilities)*
- *Informative / promotional material given to students with reference to the available services.*

### **Study Program Compliance**

#### **Findings**

- The Department of Agriculture of the University of Western Macedonia belongs to the faculty of Agricultural Sciences and is a newly founded Institution (founded in 2019).
- There are 3 scientific orientations: Agricultural Economics, Plant Science and Animal Science which students choose after the 7<sup>th</sup> semester.
- The Department holds events to introduce high school students to possible studies.
- The infrastructure of the Department consists of: 1) the New building that hosts the Student residence, the Library (<https://library.uowm.gr/>), the Restaurant, the Gym, the Amphitheatre, some Classrooms, and some Laboratories; 2) the Central Neoclassical building that hosts classrooms, laboratories, and administrative services; and finally 3) the Farm.
- In the Farm's facilities there are laboratories for Plant and Animal Science for teaching and research purposes, the Greenhouse, stable, milking facilities, room for feed manufacturing and a slaughterhouse which is no longer in operation.

- There also is all the necessary agricultural equipment which is being maintained and an experimental field where practical exercises take place and students have an active role. Students can also take exams to acquire license for an agricultural tractor.
- During the conversation the EEAP had with the students, the latter mentioned a significant improvement of the infrastructure and increase in administrative and teaching staff.
- The Library's staff work hours conclude in early afternoon, which poses issues for students, administrative staff, and other users.
- The Library is well-equipped, available for 60 people to sit and read and the administrative and teaching staff organizes frequent seminars informing students about its operation, utilization of available technology, necessary steps in borrowing, etc.
- The teaching staff fully supports the teaching procedure and the thesis writing.
- The Institution covers all students' needs through its website and services.
- In case any laboratory faces a temporary or permanent shortage of equipment / laboratory consumables, other laboratories or even other Departments assist.
- The Department utilizes funds acquired through development and governmental programs for equipment maintenance, research, etc.
- The Department organises educational trips to businesses so the students may meet possible future employers. It also helps them decide where they would like to do their internship.

### **Analysis**

The infrastructure was thoroughly presented in the files and presentations.

### **Conclusions**

The laboratories and the Farm are well-equipped, there is exchange of material and expertise and the Department supports, through its graduates, the local economy, and the primary production sector of the region. Also, the Department has set realistic goals that inspires to achieve soon.

## Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 7: Learning resources and student support of the new undergraduate programs</b>	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	<b>X</b>
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

## Panel Recommendations

- The funding through governmental and developmental programs and other sources should be maintained to ensure the continuous maintenance of the research facilities and equipment.
- It is suggested that an emergency response protocol is implemented and exercises to ensure the safety of everyone that works in the laboratories and utilizes the equipment.
- As the goals that the Institution has set indicate, it must continue to enhance the mobility, attract foreign students, strengthen the research work, and research potential.
- An even better interface with the business world, especially of Animal Production sector, could improve students' direct employment after graduation.
- The Library could operate for longer hours if the Department considers hiring extra, part-time personnel (such as postgraduate students).

## **Principle 8: Collection, Analysis and Use of Information for the Organization and Operation of New Undergraduate Programs**

**The Institutions and their academic units bear full responsibility for collecting, analyzing, and using information, aimed at the efficient management of undergraduate programs of study and related activities, in an integrated, effective, and easily accessible way.**

*Effective procedures for collecting and analysing information on the operation of Institutions, academic units and study programs feed data into the internal quality assurance system. The following data is of interest: key performance indicators for the student body profile, student progression, success and drop-out rates, student satisfaction with the program, availability of learning resources and student support. The completion of the fields of National Information System for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NISQA) should be correct and complete except for the fields that concern graduates in which a null value is registered.*

### **Relevant documentation**

- *Report from the National Information System for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NISQA) at the level of the Institution, the department and the new UGP*
- *Operation of an information management system for the collection of administrative data for the implementation of the program (Students' Record)*
- *Other tools and procedures designed to collect data on the academic and administrative functions of the academic unit and the study program.*

### **Study Program Compliance**

At the institutional level, the University's Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP) is responsible for the collection, analysis, and evaluation of information for the effective management of all teaching programs. MODIP supports the assessment and accreditation processes of the curricula and the Internal Quality Assurance System of the Institution, within the framework of the principles, directives, and guidelines of the Hellenic Authority of Higher Education (HAHE). At the Departmental level, the Internal Evaluation Team (OMEA), a committee consisting of five Departmental faculty members and a student representative, is responsible for collecting data on the functioning of the undergraduate program in cooperation with the secretariat and academic staff. The Department's Internal Evaluation Report is submitted on an annual basis to the University's MODIP and includes aggregates of quantitative information concerning the functioning of the Department. For the compilation of the annual internal report, OMEA makes use of a range of information, such as results from questionnaires, student register data, international databases, Departmental archives, etc.

The Department has developed a satisfactory information management system for its current students, following the rules and suggestions of the National Information System for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NISQA). Suitable key performance indicators (KPIs) have been established. The Department has the necessary learning resources and students are supported both formally and informally. Student progression, success and drop-out/transfer rates are closely monitored. The course evaluation consists of five-point scale questions concerning teaching and learning processes, administrative services, and infrastructure, and allows space for expressing anonymously views or raise concerns. The University MODIP runs an electronic platform inviting students and teaching staff to complete questionnaires around the 10th-12th



week of each semester, while course instructors remind and encourage student participation. However, the percentage of students who evaluate their courses is very low (~25%).

The Departmental student register communicates with the University student database providing efficient data access on registration, course selection, grades, etc. Uploading data to the Integrated National Quality Information System (OPESP) is a responsibility of the Departmental OMEA together with the secretariat.

The Department provided the EEAP aggregate data, processed information, and quality indicators. The quantitative information is comprehensive, while additional analyses allow comparisons between years enabling the identification of temporal trends. It is evident from the material provided, that the internal evaluation reports and the information collected are taken seriously by the Departmental OMEA and discussed at the Departmental General Assembly where decisions on improvements and remedial action for identified issues are taken. Results are then published in the annual internal evaluation report of the Department.

The EEAP finds that the program is substantially compliant with Principle 8.

### Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 8: Collection, analysis, and use of information for the organisation and operation of new undergraduate programs</b>	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	<b>X</b>
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

### Panel Recommendations

To further improve adherence to Principle 8, the EEAP recommends the following:

- The student evaluations should be considered formally by the “Undergraduate Program or Study Committee” at the end of each semester. The conclusions and decisions made by the committee should be communicated to the students so that they are aware of the results of the process and can appreciate its significance for improving the program delivery.
- The students should be more actively encouraged by the faculty to participate in the evaluations of their courses.
- As students will be soon graduating, the career paths of graduates should be followed systematically. A dedicated alumni portal may be developed to promote post-graduation interactions. This community may contribute to the Department’s financial support and could facilitate important networking interactions among graduates.

## **Principle 9: Public Information Concerning the New Undergraduate Programs**

**Institutions and academic units should publish information about their teaching and academic activities in a direct and readily accessible way. The relevant information should be up-to-date, clear, and objective.**

*Information on the Institutions' activities is useful for prospective and current students, graduates, other stakeholders, and the public. Therefore, Institutions and their academic units must provide information about their activities, including the new undergraduate programs they offer, the intended learning outcomes, the degrees awarded, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to their students. Information is also provided, to the extent possible, on graduate employment perspectives.*

### **Relevant documentation**

- *Dedicated segment on the website of the department for the promotion of the new study program*
- *Bilingual version of the website of the academic unit with complete, clear, and objective information*
- *Provision for website maintenance and updating.*

### **Study Program Compliance**

The University website points to a website for the Department in both Greek and English <https://agro.uowm.gr/home/>. The Departmental website contains a wide range of information, logically organised under major pull-down menus: Department; Staff; Studies; Announcements; Student Affairs; Research; Newsletter. The website contains comprehensive material regarding the structure and organization of the Department, such as, procedures and regulations for undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral studies, educational activities, programs of study at undergraduate and postgraduate level, staff information (e.g., faculty CVs), as well as services offered to students and academic staff. A separate menu presents the research activities of the Department, the research projects, and publications of the faculty members.

The Departmental policy on quality assurance is published online and relies on the University MODIP website, while the main University website has a dedicated section on University Policies. Furthermore, the Departmental website provides links to the University of Western Macedonia/Student Welfare Department website with information regarding counselling and psychological support (MYΦEO), holistic care, medical/pharmaceutical care, dining, and housing).

In addition to the website, Department staff members and faculty can access a secure platform where can view class lists, student records and submit grades, while students can access their grades, submit choices for elective courses and apply for transcripts and other documents.

The Department maintains active YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter accounts, all of which are regularly updated with news and activities.

The EEAP finds that the program is fully compliant with Principle 9.

### Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 9: Public information concerning the new undergraduate programs</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>X</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

### Panel Recommendations

The EEAP has no specific recommendations on Principle 9.

## Principle 10: Periodic Internal Review of the New Study Programs

Institutions and academic units should have in place an internal quality assurance system, for the audit and annual internal review of their new programs, to achieve the objectives set for them, through monitoring and amendments, with a view to continuous improvement. Any actions taken in the above context, should be communicated to all parties concerned.

*Regular monitoring, review and revision of the new study programs aim at maintaining the level of educational provision and creating a supportive and effective learning environment for students. The above comprise the evaluation of: the content of the program in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the program is up to date; the changing needs of society; the students' workload, progression and completion; the effectiveness of the procedures for the assessment of students; the students' expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the program; the learning environment, support services, and their fitness for purpose for the program. Programs are reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders. The information collected is analysed and the program is adapted to ensure that it is up to date.*

### **Relevant documentation**

- Procedure for the re-evaluation, redefinition and updating of the curriculum.
- Procedure for mitigating weaknesses and upgrading the structure of the UGP and the learning process.
- Feedback processes on strategy implementation and quality targeting of the new UGP and relevant decision-making processes (students, external stakeholders)
- Results of the annual internal evaluation of the study program by the QAU and the relevant minutes

### **Study Program Compliance**

#### **Findings**

- Many data are taken into consideration for the internal evaluation report and the new MODIP model is applied since 2021.
- The data are acquired from OMEA while MODIP processes them.
- The time of the internal evaluation starts at the end of each academic year and finishes in the middle of the next.
- The Department's UGP is periodically evaluated by the Curriculum Committee.
- The course evaluation procedure takes place electronically twice per academic year, every winter and summer semester.
- The questionnaire consists of 18 closed-type, course related questions where students are supposed to answer using a 5-point scale (0: No answer, 1: Disagree, 2: Maybe Disagree, 3: Neither 4: Maybe Agree, 5: Agree).
- The rest of the questions up to number 25 follow a 5-point scale as well.
- The Committee gathers proposals regarding the altering of the courses and recommends them.

- The feedback plan suggests more courses with obligatory projects, teaching methods that encourage students take more active role, creation of small groups during laboratory exercises and remedial teaching.
- The rate of students' participation in the course evaluation procedure is extremely low (approximately 25%).

### Analysis

The participation percentage of students in the course evaluation process is extremely low (approximately 25%).

### Conclusions

The self-assessment procedure takes place annually.

### Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 10: Periodic internal review of the new study programs</b>	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	<b>X</b>
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

### Panel Recommendations

- The problem of the low rate of student participation in the course evaluation procedure should be addressed.
- The importance of evaluation should be continually emphasized and, if possible, attempt to encourage the completion of the questionnaires in class on paper. This would create a feeling of necessity, like taking an exam, and the fact that it would be on paper would eliminate the fear some students may have of being spotted through the Internet even if anonymity is applied.
- Apart from close-type questions, students should be able to express themselves and pose ideas through open-type questions as well.

## **Principle 11: Regular External Evaluation and Accreditation of the New Undergraduate Programs**

The new undergraduate study programs should regularly undergo evaluation by panels of external experts set by HAHE, aiming at accreditation. The results of the external evaluation and accreditation are used for the continuous improvement of the Institutions, academic units, and study programs. The term of validity of the accreditation is determined by HAHE.

*HAHE is responsible for administrating the program accreditation process which is realised as an external evaluation procedure and implemented by a panel of independent experts. HAHE grants accreditation of programs, based on the Reports submitted by the panels, with a specific term of validity, following to which revision is required. The accreditation of the quality of the programs acts as a means of verification of the compliance of the program with the Standards, and as a catalyst for improvement, while opening new perspectives towards the international standing of the awarded degrees. Both academic units and institutions must consistently consider the conclusions and the recommendations submitted by the panels of experts for the continuous improvement of the program.*

### **Relevant documentation**

- *Progress report on the results from the utilisation of the recommendations of the external evaluation of the Institution and of the IQAS Accreditation Report.*

### **Study Program Compliance**

Principle 11 cannot be properly and thoroughly evaluated because the Department is a newly established one based on the new transition law of the former TEI structure, and the Department has never had any other external evaluation before.

The HAHE, with an Information Notice (27.10.2022), asked the EEAP to consider, apart from the rest of the revised documentation submitted by the Department, the fact that the Department responded partially to HAHE's recommendations as far as Principle 1 is concerned.

The last external evaluation of the then TEI under the Department of Agricultural Products Marketing and Quality Control was made in June 2012 by a four external evaluators team under the coordination of ADIP (now HAHE). The observations focused on the institution's strategic planning, the strengthening of the administrative staff, the design of the websites and public information, and the percentages of student participation in the evaluation of courses/teachers.

In this context, the MODIP has produced a detailed and precise report including all the significant advantages and issues regarding the progress of the transition and its degree of completion of the pre-existing curriculum.

### **Findings**

The Study Program based on the former (TEI of WM) has been renewed and complemented but needs to be amended shortly after applying the recommendations and updates proposed by the current evaluation report.

## Analysis

The regular Internal Review of the program is vital for newly founded university programs. The success of that program depends on the inclusion of all the representative stakeholders (academic area, students, social partners, public sector, primary sector, retail, industry, etc.).

## Conclusions

The internal review reports currently acknowledge this need and must be continued in the same manner. We acknowledge that the Department has no responsibility for the lack of previous external evaluation.

## Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 11: Regular external evaluation and accreditation of the new undergraduate programs</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>X</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

## Panel Recommendations

The EEAP has no recommendations for Principle 11.

## **Principle 12: Monitoring the Transition from Previous Undergraduate Study Programs to the New Ones**

**Institutions and academic units apply procedures for the transition from previously existing undergraduate study programs to new ones, to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Standards.**

*Applies in cases where the department implements, in addition to the new UGPs, any pre-existing UGPs from departments of former Technological Educational Institutions (TEI) or from departments that were merged / renamed / abolished.*

*Institutions should implement procedures for the transition from former UGPs to new ones, to ensure their compliance with the requirements of the Standards. More specifically, the institution and the academic unit must have a) the necessary learning resources, b) appropriate teaching staff, c) structured curriculum (courses, ECTS, learning outcomes), d) study regulations, award of diploma and diploma supplement, and e) system of data collection and use, with reference to the data of the graduates of the pre-existing UGP. In this context, the Institutions and the academic units prepare a plan for the foreseen transition period of the existing UGP until its completion, the costs caused to the Institution by its operation as well as possible measures and proposals for its smooth delivery and termination. This planning includes data on the transition and subsequent progression of students in the respective new UGP of the academic unit, as well as the specific graduation forecast for students enrolled under the previous status.*

### **Relevant documentation**

- *The planning of the Institution for the foreseen transition period, the operating costs and the specific measures or proposals for the smooth implementation and completion of the program*
- *The study regulations, template for the degree and the diploma supplement*
- *Name list of teaching staff, status, subject and the course they teach / examine.*
- *Report of Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) on the progress of the transition and the degree of completion of the program. In the case of UGP of a former Technological Educational Institution (TEI), the report must include a specific reference to how the internship was implemented.*

### **Study Program Compliance**

The Department was founded by law 4610/07.05.2019 after the previous TEI was eliminated and faculty, staff, etc. transferred to new Department of Agriculture of the University of Western Macedonia. It is one of the 11 Agriculture Departments in the country, but unique for the Prefecture of Western Macedonia. The program has a newly developed curriculum and a five-year strategic plan with specific goals. The Department has developed a thorough plan for the educational support of the previous TEI students till their graduation.

The Department is housed in two buildings with 14 modern teaching classrooms, 26 well equipped teaching and research labs, a library and information centre, a 284 seats amphitheatre, a student's residence, a restaurant, a gym and several offices for Faculty and staff. Research and teaching activity also occurs in an approximately 20-hectare farm/orchard space, greenhouses, and animal breeding spaces.

The teaching and academic research staff (DEP) includes 11 tenured Faculty members 15 non-tenure track Faculty members, 3 special technical laboratory personnel (EDIP) and 3



administrative staff members. Two more DEP members are expected to join the Department in 2023. There is a ratio of 20 students/professor. The EEAP considers that all members have the required education and skills to meet the teaching and research requirements. The program is supported by the regular budget for Greek Universities, the National Development and Investment Program, National Strategic Reference Frameworks, and several research grants.

The Department supports newly incoming students, as well as those of the former TEI, to obtain a university-level degree or graduate as Agricultural Technologists. The granted degree aligns with the skills and qualifications described in PD 344/2000.

### Findings

The undergraduate program has a newly developed curriculum, unique to the Prefecture of Western Macedonia. It is well adequate to analyse and face the challenges in the geographical area where is situated. There are excellent relations between the students and the Department's staff and there is an excellent infrastructure for education and research purposes.

### Analysis

All teaching and research staff are adequately skilled to support the program and meet teaching and research requirements.

### Conclusions

The granted degree aligns with the skills and qualifications described in PD 344/2000.

### Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 12: Monitoring the transition from previous undergraduate study programs to the new ones</b>	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

### Panel Recommendations

- Continue even more the competitive structure in research and teaching.
- Collect and analyse information on student participation and course evaluation.

## **PART C: CONCLUSIONS**

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

- The Department of Agriculture of the University of Western Macedonia fully complies with the feasibility of operations based on its orientation and the study program and adheres to the standards of quality assurance and continuous improvement.
- The Department offers a wide range of classes that meet today's industry needs.
- The number and quality of offered post-graduate studies are deemed satisfactory.
- The Faculty creates a very friendly environment for the students.
- The Department supports high quality publications to promote the status of the Faculty and facilitate access to substantial research grants.

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

- The students should be more actively encouraged by the faculty to participate in the evaluations of their courses.
- The student evaluations should be considered formally by the "Undergraduate Program or Study Committee" at the end of each semester. The conclusions and decisions made by the committee should be communicated to the students so that they are aware of the results of the process and can appreciate its significance for improving the program delivery.

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

- Critical stakeholders (alumni, companies, professional organizations) should actively participate in the continuous assessment, and possible improvement, of the curriculum as well as new research directions meeting local and national workforce and society needs. This participation should be done in a formal and systematic way with clearly defined objectives, and with feedback solicited in a rigorous way.
- The student (through ERASMUS+) and teaching staff's mobility should be encouraged as well as be able to attract foreign students through these programs.
- The Department should enhance to the best of its abilities the interface between Animal Science and business world so that the sector can be promoted even more.
- The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs should allow the Department to re-establish the study program on Food Science and Nutrition that will support the local food industry and further help the community to smoothly transition into the post-coal era.

#### IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: **1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11, and 12.**

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: **3, 7, 8, and 10.**

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

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

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

## The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname	Signature
<b>1. Professor Stella K. Kantartzi (Chair)</b> Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL, USA	
<b>2. Professor Constantin Vamvakas</b> University of Ghent, Belgium	
<b>3. Professor Emeritus Spyros Pavlostathis</b> Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, GA, USA	
<b>4. Ms. Maria Vargiami, Student</b> Department of Agriculture, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece	