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ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΑΝΩΤΑΤΗ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗ

HELLENIC REPUBLIC  
HQA  
HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE  
AND ACCREDITATION AGENCY

**Accreditation Report**  
**for the Undergraduate Study Programme of:**  
**Medicine**  
**Institution: University of Ioannina**  
**Date: 16-11-2019**

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Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση  
Ευρωπαϊκό Κοινωνικό Ταμείο

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



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION  
FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE  
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Report of the Panel appointed by the HQA to undertake the review of the Undergraduate Study Programme of **Medicine** of the **University of Ioannina** for the purposes of granting accreditation

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## **PART A: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE REVIEW**

### **I. The Accreditation Panel**

The Panel responsible for the Accreditation Review of the Undergraduate Study Programme of the Higher Education Institution named: **University of Ioannina Department of Medicine** comprised the following five (3) members, drawn from the HQA Register, in accordance with the Law 4009/2011:

- 1.** Prof. Nikolaos Venizelos (Chair)  
School of Medical Sciences, Örebro University, Örebro, Sweden
  
- 2.** Prof. Konstantinos Pantopoulos  
Department of Medicine, McGill University, Montreal, Canada
  
- 3.** Dr. Dimitra Pappa  
Member of the Panhellenic Medical Association, Larissa, Greece

## II. Review Procedure and Documentation

The members of the Accreditation Panel for undergraduate program of the Department of Medicine at the University of Ioannina were selected by the Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency (HQA/ΑΔΙΠ) in August 2019. Official invitation letters were sent on October 16, 2019. The accreditation procedure was scheduled for the period between November 11-16, with a site visit between November 12-13. Following formal acceptance of membership, the Accreditation Panel was formed and received relevant documentation from HQA. The material included the previous external evaluation report and guidelines about the purpose and standards for quality accreditation of undergraduate programs. The HQA also forwarded to the Accreditation Panel a comprehensive documentation provided by the Department of Medicine related to the structure and organization of the University of Ioannina and the Department of Medicine. It included the Study guide, a detailed description of the courses offered in each semester, departmental rules and regulations, strategic planning of the Department, internal quality assurance policies, examples of questionnaires assessing quality of teaching and internal evaluation reports.

The Accreditation Panel met in the morning of November 11, 2019 at a conference room of the Divani Palace Acropolis Hotel. The members were briefed by Prof. Kyprianos, President of HQA, and by Dr. Besta, General Director of HQA, about the purpose and procedures of the accreditation process. In particular, they were updated on the 10 overarching principles of the study program review that the Accreditation Panel should use as a guide in order to assess Department's compliance.

Two of the Accreditation Panel members (Prof. Venizelos and Prof. Pantopoulos) were transported to the airport in the late afternoon and travelled to Ioannina. They arrived in Ioannina in the evening and transported to a Hotel. The site-visit started in the morning of November 12, 2019. The Accreditation Panel members were received and briefed by the Rector of the University of Ioannina Prof. Albanis, the Vice-Rector and President of the internal Quality Assurance Unit (QAU/ΜΟΔΙΠ) Prof. Nikolopoulos, the Dean of School of Health Sciences Prof. Georgiou and the Chair of the Department of Medicine Prof. Batistatou. The meeting took place in the General Assembly Conference room of the Faculty of Medicine. The third member of the Accreditation Panel (Dr. Pappa) participated in this and all other discussions via teleconference. Following the first orientational meeting with the leadership of the University and the Department, the Accreditation Panel met with members of QAU, the departmental Internal Evaluation Group (IEG/OMEA) Alexandros Makis coordinator, Anna Batistatou, Sotirios Giannopoulos, Aikaterini Naka, Evangelia Ntzani, Periklis Pappas, Anastasia Politou, Avraam Ploumis, Petros Skapinakis, Evangelos Evangelou, the President of the Panel of Undergraduate Studies (Patrona Vezyraki) and administrative supporting staff. Subsequently, the Accreditation Panel met with representative members of teaching staff, students and graduates of the Department of Medicine, as well as with employers, social partners and stakeholders in the Epirus region. On the next day, the Accreditation Panel visited the University Hospital and was received by the Director Prof. Tsikaris. The Accreditation

Panel members had ad-hoc visits at the hospital's main lecture hall, where students were attending a lecture by an invited speaker, and at small teaching rooms in the hospital's clinics. During these visits they had a chance to meet senior medical students rotating in the cardiology and pediatric clinics and discuss with them and their supervisors about their training. Subsequently, the Accreditation Panel members had a tour around the buildings and classrooms within the Department of Medicine, where they had a chance to discuss with junior students during preclinical teaching in basic sciences. Following visits at the central University Library and the recently established and impressive History of Medicine Museum at the premises of the Department of Medicine, the Accreditation Panel members finalized their site visit in a debriefing meeting with the Vice-Rector and head of QAU, the Chair and teaching staff of the Department of Medicine to conclude and clarify outstanding issues. The Accreditation Panel members returned to Athens in the evening of November 13, 2019.

Overall, the Accreditation Panel members were impressed by the warm reception and hospitality they were offered, as well as by the professionalism, honesty, receptiveness and open-mindedness of the faculty and students. All members of the academic community actively participated in the accreditation process. The faculty and supporting administrative staff were extremely well prepared for it and facilitated and supported the work of the Accreditation Panel.

The Accreditation Panel expresses its gratitude to Profs. Nikolopoulos and Batistatou, to all other members of QAU and IEG, and to the Head of the Secretariat of the Faculty Mrs Kapitopoulou for putting all documents together, for data presentations and for organizing a highly efficient site-visit.

Overall, the Accreditation Panel found all reports and associated documents highly informative and extremely helpful in assessing, together with the site visit, the quality of the undergraduate study program of the Department of Medicine and its compliance with quality assurance policies.

### III. Study Programme Profile

The University of Ioannina ([www.uoi.gr](http://www.uoi.gr)) was founded in 1964 and became independent and self-administered in 1970. Its campus is located 6 km from the centre of Ioannina and is one of the largest university campuses in Greece. The student population is approximately 25,000. The University of Ioannina comprises the Schools of Philosophy, Sciences, Health Sciences, Engineering, Education, Economics and Social Sciences, and Fine Arts.

The Medical School of the University of Ioannina was founded in 1977 with bill (641/77) published in the Government Gazette (200 / A / 1977), followed by the decision to also establish the University Hospital. Today, the Department of Medicine (<http://med.uoi.gr/>) belongs to the School of Health Sciences. It is housed in modern buildings within the campus, which contain administrative offices, classrooms, amphitheatres, laboratory structures, a library and other facilities. The Department of Medicine is situated in close proximity to the University Hospital, which is the largest in northwestern Greece and one of the largest in the country in terms of bed capacity. Moreover, the University Hospital has emerged in recent years as the hospital with the highest number of serving patients in Greece (approximately 400,000 per year).

The number of faculty members of the Department of Medicine was steadily growing until 2010. Growth was interrupted during the economic crisis and the number of faculty members declined to approximately 30%. At the time of the site visit the Department of Medicine had 140 faculty members (ΔΕΠ), 1 special faculty member (ΕΕΠ), 12 teaching and laboratory staff (ΕΔΙΠ), 19 technical laboratory staff (ΕΤΕΠ) and 9 administrative staff members. They served a total of 1686 undergraduate and 637 PhD students.

The Department of Medicine is divided into 7 Sectors: Clinical and Basic Functional Sciences, Morphological and Clinical Laboratory Sciences, Social Medicine and Mental Health, Surgery, Child Health, Internal Medicine, and Nervous System and Sensory Organs. The General Assembly of the Department pursuant to Law 4485/17, Article 21 is composed of the faculty with representatives from each Sector, and student representatives corresponding to 15% of participating faculty members. There are also representatives of teaching and laboratory staff, as well as from technical laboratory staff.

The Study Rules and Regulations were approved by the General Assembly of the Department of Medicine at meeting 887a on March 12, 2019. The educational work of each academic year is structured in two semesters. The first semester begins on October 1 and the second semester ends by mid-June. Each semester comprises at least 13 full weeks and corresponds to 30 credits of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). The ECTS number per year is 60. The curriculum was extensively revised in 2014 by taking into account the comments and recommendations of the

External Evaluation Committee in 2013. Slight modifications were introduced afterwards with the latest in 2019.

The Department of Medicine awards a medical degree that enables medical licensure in Greece. Graduates of the program can practice medicine or continue their training in a medical specialty or in post-graduate studies towards a PhD degree.



## PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

### Principle 1: Academic Unit Policy for Quality Assurance

**INSTITUTIONS SHOULD APPLY A QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY AS PART OF THEIR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT. THIS POLICY SHOULD EXPAND AND BE AIMED (WITH THE COLLABORATION OF EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS) AT ALL INSTITUTION'S AREAS OF ACTIVITY, AND PARTICULARLY AT THE FULFILMENT OF QUALITY REQUIREMENTS OF UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES. THIS POLICY SHOULD BE PUBLISHED AND IMPLEMENTED BY ALL STAKEHOLDERS.**

*The quality assurance policy of the academic unit is in line with the Institutional policy on quality, and is included in a published statement that is implemented by all stakeholders. It focuses on the achievement of special objectives related to the quality assurance of study programmes offered by the academic unit.*

*The quality policy statement of the academic unit includes its commitment to implement a quality policy that will promote the academic profile and orientation of the programme, its purpose and field of study; it will realise the programme's strategic goals and it will determine the means and ways for attaining them; it will implement the appropriate quality procedures, aiming at the programme's continuous improvement. In particular, in order to carry out this policy, the academic unit commits itself to put into practice quality procedures that will demonstrate:*

- a) the suitability of the structure and organization of the curriculum;*
- b) the pursuit of learning outcomes and qualifications in accordance with the European and the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education;*
- c) the promotion of the quality and effectiveness of teaching;*
- d) the appropriateness of the qualifications of the teaching staff;*
- e) the enhancement of the quality and quantity of the research output among faculty members of the academic unit;*
- f) ways for linking teaching and research;*
- g) the level of demand for qualifications acquired by graduates, in the labour market;*
- h) the quality of support services such as the administrative services, the Library, and the student welfare office;*
- i) the conduct of an annual review and an internal audit of the quality assurance system of the undergraduate programme(s) offered, as well as the collaboration of the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) with the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU);*

#### Study Programme compliance

The Department of Medicine offers high quality, modern and dynamic academic programs, in line with the specifications of the European Qualifications Framework for Higher Education. The Department of Medicine has developed Quality Assurance policies and harmonized them with the assistance of QAU to those of the University of Ioannina. The general Quality Assurance policies are specified in the guide of the Internal Quality Assurance System of the University of Ioannina. The Department of Medicine has set some strategic goals. These include:

- High quality training of students to develop critical thinking, scientific reasoning and clinical skills.
- Generation of new knowledge via cutting edge and innovative research programs.
- Compliance with quality assurance guidelines of the European Qualifications Framework for Higher Education.
- Improvement of academic and research quality metrics.
- Development of an academic quality and research ethics culture among teaching staff and students.
- Recognition of academic excellence of students with awards and prizes.
- Interconnection between educational and research activities of the department.
- Improvement of connectivity with employers, medical associations and alumni.
- Transparency and communication in departmental activities.
- Improvement of administrative and technical support.

The Quality Assurance policies of the Department of Medicine are reviewed on an annual basis and updated if necessary. They are approved by the General Assembly and publicized on the website of the Department. They are also communicated to stakeholders in workshops and other activities.

The Accreditation Panel feels that the current curriculum, which was last revised in 2019, is appropriately structured, well organized and meets the educational needs of the students. It has been approved by the internal quality assurance bodies (IEG and QAU) and meets high quality standards. The learning objectives and the approaches to achieve them are in line with the European and the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education.

The Department of Medicine excels in quality and effectiveness of teaching. This is documented by the feedback of students to comprehensive evaluation questionnaires of preclinical and clinical courses, which were submitted to the Accreditation Panel. Further support comes from personal interviews with students during the site visit. Almost all students were overwhelmingly satisfied with their learning experience. A minor complaint was raised by a single junior student who felt that the success rate was low in a past exam on a preclinical course. This happened before student evaluation of courses was introduced. The issue was brought up by the Accreditation Panel in one of the discussions with teaching staff. The teaching staff informed the Accreditation Panel that there is a specific University policy that deals with failures of >85% in student exams. Moreover, the staff has always shown flexibility in rare cases where examination results did not reflect the generally high level of the students, and responded by adjusting the teaching and exam methodology.

The teaching staff is enthusiastic and highly motivated with teaching duties. Several among the faculty members have demonstrated excellence in research and mentoring. A problem that was brought up by the Department and was verified by the Accreditation Panel is the lack of faculty renewal in recent years as a result of the economic crisis. This is gradually resulting in an aging faculty that is stretched with an extraordinary teaching load. Support is provided by teaching assistants who are carefully selected among excellent senior students and trained by staff. Physicians at the neighboring University teaching Hospital who are employees of the National Health Care system assist students in acquiring clinical skills and competence.

Quality of teaching is monitored by the students who are requested to fill out anonymous evaluation questionnaires. The extremely positive assessments of the questionnaires were verified by the Accreditation Panel via random ad hoc short interviews with junior and senior students. The Accreditation Panel supports the efforts of the Department to encourage and increase student participation in the evaluation questionnaires.

Efforts are made by the staff to link teaching with research. This is particularly evident in epidemiological and clinical studies where several students actively engage. Nevertheless, more emphasis could be given on linking teaching with basic research.

The level of demand for qualifications acquired by graduates within the national labor market is relatively low due to the high number of medical graduates in Greek Universities and also due to the economic crisis. On the other hand, the demand for graduates in developed countries outside Greece is high. This clearly reflects the quality of training, but also the quality of the students, and contributes to brain drain.

The administrative services in the Department in support of the undergraduate program are excellent. The administrative staff is dedicated and highly motivated. Nevertheless, the personnel are not sufficient to appropriately support the faculty in research and other academic activities. The University library is impressive and well organized. It offers a broad gamut of scientific books and journals, including medical literature. The Accreditation Panel appreciated that the students use extensively the facilities and services of the Library.

The Department of Medicine complies with the requirement to conduct an annual review and internal audit of the quality assurance system of the undergraduate program and the IEG collaborates appropriately with the QAU.

## Panel judgement

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

## Panel Recommendations

Overall, the Accreditation Panel is impressed with the adherence of the Department of Medicine to the quality assurance guidelines and the implementation of quality assurance policies. It recommends the Department to intensify its efforts for better linking teaching with research activities. One possibility would be via offering short-term research projects leading to a Thesis as an elective option, with credits appropriate to the workload.

With regard to renewal of academic staff, the Panel recommends the Department to prioritize the recruitment of young clinicians and scientists with strong research accomplishments and track record, and with a high leadership potential. This will be essential to maintain high academic standards and further enhance the reputation of the Department nationally and internationally. Administrative support should be provided to faculty for research and for applications to extramural funding.

## Principle 2: Design and Approval of Programmes

**INSTITUTIONS SHOULD DEVELOP THEIR UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES FOLLOWING A DEFINED WRITTEN PROCESS WHICH WILL INVOLVE THE PARTICIPANTS, INFORMATION SOURCES AND THE APPROVAL COMMITTEES FOR THE PROGRAMME. THE OBJECTIVES, THE EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES, THE INTENDED PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND THE WAYS TO ACHIEVE THEM ARE SET OUT IN THE PROGRAMME DESIGN. THE ABOVE DETAILS AS WELL AS INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAMME'S STRUCTURE ARE PUBLISHED IN THE STUDENT GUIDE.**

*Academic units develop their programmes following a well-defined procedure. The academic profile and orientation of the programme, the objectives, the subject areas, the structure and organisation, the expected learning outcomes and the intended professional qualifications according to the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education are described at this stage. The approval or revision process for programmes includes a check of compliance with the basic requirements described in the Standards, on behalf of the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU).*

*Furthermore, the programme design should take into consideration the following:*

- *the Institutional strategy*
- *the active participation of students*
- *the experience of external stakeholders from the labour market*
- *the smooth progression of students throughout the stages of the programme*
- *the anticipated student workload according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System*
- *the option to provide work experience to the students*
- *the linking of teaching and research*
- *the relevant regulatory framework and the official procedure for the approval of the programme by the Institution.*

### Study Programme compliance

The main goal of the undergraduate curriculum in the Department of Medicine is to provide optimal scientific knowledge and clinical skills, as well as appropriate ethical training to medical doctors who will mainly practice clinical medicine. Another important goal is to cultivate scientific reasoning and critical thinking, and to offer research opportunities to students who will later undertake additional research and teaching activities.

The Study Program has evolved since 1977, year when the Department of Medicine was founded, in a way that reflects scientific developments and advances in clinical practice. A major problem identified during evaluation of the Department for the years 2005-2010 was the low effectiveness of clinical training due to one-sided focus on theoretical courses. The Department responded to this criticism by a major restructuring of the Study Program in 2014 that resulted in earlier engagement of students in clinical training. In addition, emphasis was given in highlighting the clinical relevance of topics covered in basic science courses. Preclinical and clinical courses are now better linked. The Accreditation Panel raised the question whether the restructuring of the program has affected the delicate balance between preclinical and clinical courses at the expense of the former but was reassured that this is not the case.

Teaching effectiveness has been improved by dividing students in small groups during rotation in clinics; tutorials are offered to groups of 30 students, while groups of 2 students are trained by one supervisor in patient examinations and basic medical procedures. New courses and clinical trainings in General and Emergency Medicine were introduced, in line with developing needs in these areas.

Linkage between teaching and research is mainly offered to students by choice of relevant elective courses.

The program design takes into account several factors, which are discussed below. The institutional strategy in education is documented by compliance of the study program to European standards and by its continuous improvement in response to feedback from internal and external evaluations. The institutional strategy is also reflected in the use of interactive teaching approaches and tools, in the use of alternative sources of teaching material apart from the classical textbook (such as review articles from major medical journals), and the gradual introduction of up-to-date e-books. Finally, the institutional strategy is reflected in promotion and reward of excellence in students.

Active participation of students is evident by their participation in evaluation of courses. The experience of external stakeholders is offered via the input from the Medical Association of Ioannina and the recently established Alumni Association. Importantly, the Red Cross is offering a First Aid elective course, which is unique in Greece and particularly popular among junior students. Further external support is provided by scientific collaborations with the Department of Biological Applications and the new Departments of Nursing and Speech Therapy, by bidirectional competitive student exchange programs, sabbatical leaves of teaching staff and by collaborations with Universities abroad. The latter is illustrated in a recent agreement with the University of Illinois at Chicago.

The smooth progression of students throughout the stages of the program is facilitated by the continuous evaluation of their performance and by assistance offered by the Department in cases this is needed. This is provided via the personal interaction with teaching staff, but also by Academic Advisors, who were recently introduced and help students address academic issues. Importantly, the Psychiatric clinic is offering psychosocial counseling to students and assists them in dealing with personal problems. Special attention is also given to students with disabilities with the assignment of a specific counseling role to a faculty member. The success of this approach is demonstrated by the high graduation (>90%) and the low drop-out rates (<5%) of students.

The Study Program fulfills all requirements of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), with 30 credit units per semester. Student workload is compliant with European guidelines for medical undergraduate programs.

The students are offered opportunities for working experience in primary health care units as an elective course. An office for Employment and Career Development (ΔΑΣΤΑ) operating at the University is coordinating contact of students with employers. Further opportunities are provided within the elective course "General Medicine".

Teaching with research are mainly linked in epidemiological and clinical studies. This is reflected in student presentations in Panhellenic conferences of medical students, where the Medical School of Ioannina is highly and over-proportionally represented. However, the link between teaching and basic biomedical research is less evident. The Department of Medicine has had historically a strong record in this area and this tradition should be maintained. Moreover, opportunities and incentives for more active involvement should be provided to students.

The procedure for program approval by the institution is consistent with the regulatory framework and follows relevant guidelines by involving the IEG and QAU.

## Panel judgement

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

## Panel Recommendations

The Accreditation Panel found the Study Program to be of high academic standards and fully compliant to guidelines. The Panel recommends the Department to maintain a strong basic science curriculum in further revisions aiming to improve clinical training. This should be better integrated with research programs, and the students should be given more opportunities and encouraged to choose an active involvement in biomedical research projects. One possibility could be via the office for Employment and Career Development (ΔΑΣΤΑ). Engagement into a short-term research project leading to a Thesis could also be offered as an elective option independent of ΔΑΣΤΑ, with credits appropriate to the workload. On a final note, the Accreditation Panel welcomes extroverted activities that aim to further increase the attractiveness of the curriculum, such as active participation in the Erasmus student exchange programs, and formal collaborations with Medical Schools outside Greece.

## Principle 3: Student-centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment

**INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES ARE DELIVERED IN A WAY THAT ENCOURAGES STUDENTS TO TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN CREATING THE LEARNING PROCESS. THE ASSESSMENT METHODS SHOULD REFLECT THIS APPROACH.**

*Student-centred learning and teaching plays an important role in stimulating students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in the learning process. The above entail continuous consideration of the programme's delivery and the assessment of the related outcomes.*

*The student-centred learning and teaching process*

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

*In addition :*

- *the academic staff are familiar with the existing examination system and methods and are supported in developing their own skills in this field;*
- *the assessment criteria and methods are published in advance;*
- *the assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary is linked to advice on the learning process;*
- *student assessment is conducted by more than one examiner, where possible;*
- *the regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances*
- *assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures;*
- *a formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*

### Study Programme compliance

The current Study Program focuses on a student-centered learning approach. Teaching at the preclinical level combines lectures in classrooms and laboratory exercises in laboratories within the premises of the Department of Medicine. Teaching of clinical courses is performed in the main amphitheater and classrooms of the neighboring University Hospital; this is combined with clinical training and patient examinations in small student groups.

The adopted student-centered learning approach is flexible in the use of teaching methodologies and tools according to the needs of the students. The methods include lectures, seminars, tutorials, video broadcasts, preclinical and clinical training with emphasis on small groups. This approach is greatly appreciated by the students and contributes to a more integrated knowledge. The Accreditation Panel conducted ad-hoc interviews with students having clinical training in groups of 2 and was impressed by the excellent organization and the enthusiasm and commitment of both



teaching staff and students. Lectures are delivered with the use of audiovisual equipment. The teaching material is up-to-date and communicated in advance to the students. Thus, the powerpoint presentation, review or primary articles and references to textbooks are uploaded on the electronic platform e-course. Teaching staff can be easily contacted by the students in person, via email or over the phone. Clinical training is always performed in small groups and the learning objectives and tasks are clearly defined and communicated in advance. A variety of pedagogical tools is utilized, including medical training dummies.

All students are encouraged to develop individual skills and core clinical competences. The fact that the students are exposed to clinical cases at early stages of their training, stimulates the development of autonomy, confidence and responsibility. The teaching staff promotes critical thinking and provides sufficient guidance for students to acquire in-depth knowledge and develop leadership and communication skills. Achieving the learning objectives is facilitated by the strong personal interactions between teaching staff and students. This is a major strength of the Department of Medicine at the University of Ioannina, which appears to attract excellent medical students from areas outside the region of Epirus, and to offer a competitive advantage compared to Departments of Medicine in other Universities.

There is plenty of evidence that students are seen as active partners in the teaching/learning process. First of all, there is mutual respect between students and teaching staff; this was evident from personal interviews with representatives from both sides. Second, the students are encouraged to participate in the course evaluation process and their suggestions are taken into account. Finally, the student feedback has repeatedly resulted in improvement of the teaching method and course material.

The assessment criteria are published in advance and are easily accessible on the departmental web site, which is user-friendly and up-to-date. The examinations are transparent and fair. Multiple examination approaches are used, including essay-style questions, multiple choice questions, presentations, oral exams. In addition, students are often evaluated by more than one instructor, which increases transparency. The teaching staff values the quality and high level of the students, while students are extremely satisfied with the assessment of their acquired knowledge.

Student satisfaction surveys are regularly conducted to measure the effectiveness of student teaching. Some initial problems have been resolved and it appears that the course evaluation process has been embraced by both teaching staff and students. The questionnaires are centrally developed at the level of University and are adapted to specific needs at the level of the Department. It is extremely positive that the results are analyzed by experts and publicized.

There are possibilities for appeals. Students can express their concerns for any issues in writing and electronically. The academic advisor can mediate and if the problem remains unresolved it can be discussed with the Chair of the Department.

The above examples demonstrate that the undergraduate program is delivered in a student-centered learning environment that promotes mutual respect and encourages students to actively participate in the learning process.

## Panel judgement

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

## Panel Recommendations

The Accreditation Panel felt that student-centered learning, teaching and assessment are at very high standards and are fully compliant with the guidelines. The major problem is the unfavorable student/academic staff ratio, which has already been identified by the Department. This is due to the lack of sufficient renewal of academic personnel as a result of the economic crisis, but also due to the unjustified increase in the number of students that are entering the program. Unfortunately, this is determined by the ministry of Education and not by the University and the Department of Medicine, which is inconsistent with the autonomy of universities and contrary to common practices in Europe and North America. The Department of Medicine tries to mitigate the impact of the extremely high student/academic staff ratio in the quality of student training by dividing students in small groups. However, while this provides a temporary solution, it overwhelms the academic staff with extra teaching responsibilities and distracts from research activities. In the long run, this will negatively affect the quality of the undergraduate program. The Accreditation Panel recommends the Department to devise a careful plan for academic renewal focusing on academic excellence, and to coordinate its efforts with other Medical Departments and Universities for an autonomous function in determining student admission. This will be essential to maintain effectiveness and quality of teaching.

The Accreditation Panel also encourages the Department to continue its efforts to increase the participation of students in evaluation of courses. Finally, the Accreditation Panel recommends the Department to adopt the objective structured clinical examination (OSCE) method, which is widely used in Europe and North America.

## Principle 4: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification

### INSTITUTIONS SHOULD DEVELOP AND APPLY PUBLISHED REGULATIONS COVERING ALL ASPECTS AND PHASES OF STUDIES (ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION).

*Institutions and academic units need to put in place both processes and tools to collect, manage and act on information regarding student progression.*

*Procedures concerning the award and recognition of higher education degrees, the duration of studies, rules ensuring students progression, terms and conditions for student mobility should be based on the institutional study regulations. Appropriate recognition procedures rely on institutional practice for recognition of credits among various European academic departments and Institutions, in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.*

*Graduation represents the culmination of the students' study period. Students need to receive documentation explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed (Diploma Supplement).*

#### Study Programme compliance

The Department of Medicine and the University of Ioannina have no role in student admission. This is a serious shortcoming of the Greek Higher Education system. Nevertheless, the admission process is transparent and results in recruitment of highly talented students in medical schools. The Accreditation Panel had the chance to verify that the level of the students in the Department of Medicine is exceedingly high and that the Department of Medicine was the first choice for most of the students, including those from outside the Epirus region. The Accreditation Panel felt from personal interviews with teaching staff and students that the Department of Medicine is proud of its students and vice versa.

The incoming students are supported in having a smooth transition from high school to the higher education by a welcome reception and orientation session with the participation of the Chair of the Department, the Dean of Health Sciences and the Rector of the University. The students are offered an introduction to the educational program and the facilities. The department administration provides specific assistance related to admission, while the University supports students in relocating to Ioannina.

Students can constantly monitor progression via the Cronos electronic platform. The academic advisor has a central role in helping students track their progress. The academic advisor also helps students to resolve potential problems. Student's mobility is facilitated by exchange programs for basic and clinical research such as Erasmus and HELMISC. These are well established and widely used. Another possibility is offered by agreements with foreign Universities.

The ECTS is widely applied across the curriculum. Student exchanges are strongly encouraged by the Department. Diploma Supplement will be provided from the current academic year. The clinical training of the students is very well organized. The daily training plan is posted on the e-course

platform and a printout is placed in the classroom. The students are prepared and oriented. This was verified during ad-hoc inspection by the Accreditation Panel and interviews with students and instructors. In the clinics, the students were divided in groups of 2 and had a well-organized logbook. Having a completed logbook is a prerequisite for participation in the final exams. The Accreditation Panel did not have a chance to see students working on a research project.

The Department offers rewards to excellent students each academic year. The students actively participate in educational seminars, conferences and workshops, which helps them to acquire specific knowledge, enrich their general background, socialize and develop organizational skills. The students also participate in volunteering activities, such as those organized by the Red Cross. The Accreditation Panel greatly appreciated the efforts of the Department of Medicine and the Red Cross to support and encourage student involvement in volunteering activities.

### Panel judgement

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

### Panel Recommendations

The Accreditation Panel found that the students are very satisfied with their curriculum, the monitoring of their progress and the early integration of clinical training within the study program. Moreover, they appreciate the excellent organization of clinical training and the associated documentation, but also the commitment and enthusiasm of teaching staff.

The Accreditation Panel recommends the department to increase the mobility opportunities to students via further formal agreements with Universities and research centers. It also recommends offering more opportunities for students to participate in research projects.

## Principle 5: Teaching Staff

**INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ASSURE THEMSELVES OF THE QUALIFICATIONS AND COMPETENCE OF THE TEACHING STAFF. THEY SHOULD APPLY FAIR AND TRANSPARENT PROCESSES FOR THE RECRUITMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEACHING STAFF.**

*The Institutions and their academic units have a major responsibility as to the standard of their teaching staff providing them with a supportive environment that promotes the advancement of their scientific work. In particular, the academic unit should:*

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

### Study Programme compliance

Since its inception in 1977, the Department of Medicine has established a reputation of excellence in teaching and research. This was tightly linked to a successful faculty recruitment strategy. Thus, the University has hosted leading clinicians and scientists, among them internationally acclaimed opinion leaders. The faculty growth has been impressive until 2010 but this was halted during the last years due to the economic crisis. As a result, the teaching staff is aging, and many faculty members are close to retirement. This has not affected the quality of teaching thus far but has substantially increased the teaching load, which may distract from research activities and compromise quality of teaching in the future. There is an obvious strong need for academic renewal. The problem of personnel shortage was further aggravated by the relocation of leading professors to other universities. Therefore, the challenge is not only to recruit, but also retain highly qualified personnel.

The recruitment of personnel follows standard procedures and is transparent. The Department states that its goal is to ensure meritocratic recruitments. The Accreditation Panel had a chance to verify the presence of pockets of excellence within the Department, which is documented by the academic accomplishments of teaching staff. This validates the recruitment strategy of the Department. Nevertheless, more work needs to be done to carefully select a next generation of leaders under the current financial constraints. Priority should be given to the recruitment of candidates with an established track record who will be able to enrich the Department with new expertise and ideas.

There are several professional development opportunities for the teaching staff in forms of seminars and workshops. However, there is no specific program for assisting newly recruiting staff to develop teaching skills. Teaching staff mobility is possible in form of sabbatical leaves. As indicated above, the teaching load is overly high, and this can have a negative impact on the research output. In spite

of this, the faculty in the Department of Medicine is very active in attracting extramural funds and contributes to 40% of the total funds administered by the University.

There is evidence for linking teaching with research, but more research opportunities should be offered to students. The Department can take advantage of the Research Institutes that were recently established and are expected to operate shortly. Moreover, the Department can strengthen the already existing collaboration with the neighbouring Biomedical Research institute of the Foundation of Technology and Research-Hellas.

The teaching staff is regularly evaluated by the students during course evaluation. The Accreditation Panel got the impression that there is a mutual respect and appreciation between teaching staff and students. There are defined research strategies in the areas of epidemiology, basic biomedical research and biomaterials.

### Panel judgement

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

### Panel Recommendations

The Accreditation Panel feels that the Department should give a specific emphasis in academic renewal and develop strategies for faculty recruitment and retention. Priority should be given to hire young and promising academics with a strong track record and the potential to bring fresh ideas. Incentives should be provided to make the Department of Medicine and the University of Ioannina attractive to leading researchers who may have further career options. The academic world is highly competitive, and it is impossible to attract highly qualified personnel without offering a start-up package to establish and equip a research laboratory. The Accreditation Panel understands the limitations and inflexibility of the hiring system, as well as the financial constraints. These can be mitigated by “out of the box” activities, such as fundraising. The Department of Medicine and the University Hospital have an excellent reputation in the community of Ioannina and Epirus, a region with long tradition in benefactors. The community is proud of hosting these institutions and should be reached out via targeted actions for financial support.

The Accreditation Panel also recommends the introduction of Faculty Development workshops or a mentoring program where senior faculty members will help new recruits to develop teaching skills. Non-monetary awards to faculty members recognizing exceptional contributions to teaching can be considered. The evaluations of students should be taken into account in promotion of faculty. Promotions should be based on merit and academic record rather than hierarchy.

Finally, the Accreditation Panel recommends further strengthening of teaching with research by offering more research opportunities to students. Better integration between teaching with research programs can be done via collaboration with other departments and research institutes and by the offering of elective short-term research projects that can result in a Thesis.

## Principle 6: Learning Resources and Student Support

**INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE ADEQUATE FUNDING TO COVER TEACHING AND LEARNING NEEDS. THEY SHOULD –ON THE ONE HAND- PROVIDE SATISFACTORY INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES FOR LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORT AND–ON THE OTHER HAND- FACILITATE DIRECT ACCESS TO THEM BY ESTABLISHING INTERNAL RULES TO THIS END (E.G. LECTURE ROOMS, LABORATORIES, LIBRARIES, NETWORKS, BOARDING, CAREER AND SOCIAL POLICY SERVICES ETC.).**

*Institutions and their academic units must have sufficient funding and means to support learning and academic activity in general, so that they can offer to students the best possible level of studies. The above means could include facilities such as libraries, study rooms, educational and scientific equipment, information and communications services, support or counselling services.*

*When allocating the available resources, the needs of all students must be taken into consideration (e.g. whether they are full-time or part-time students, employed or international students, students with disabilities) and the shift towards student-centred learning and the adoption of flexible modes of learning and teaching. Support activities and facilities may be organised in various ways, depending on the institutional context. However, the internal quality assurance ensures that all resources are appropriate, adequate, and accessible, and that students are informed about the services available to them.*

*In delivering support services the role of support and administrative staff is crucial and therefore they need to be qualified and have opportunities to develop their competences.*

### Study Programme compliance

There is a sufficient number of lecture halls and seminar rooms. Some of them need renovation and renewal of infrastructure (chairs and desks). A problem identified in discussions with teaching staff and students was the insufficient heating in the winter and air conditioning in the summer, especially in early morning hours. The Department took action and this problem is now resolved. Another issue is the lack of permanent audiovisual equipment. As a result, the teaching staff needs to carry computers and projectors for each lecture. The reason for this is the lack of security in this particular building. On the other hand, the lecture halls and seminar rooms at the neighboring University Hospital are in excellent condition and fully equipped with permanent audiovisual systems.

The research laboratories and clinics have a good infrastructure, including state of the art instruments. Existing facilities are rationally distributed and there is excellent access to the University Hospital from the University campus and the buildings of the Department of Medicine. Moreover, there is an exemplary cooperation between the Department of Medicine and the University Hospital, which allows the students to use Hospital facilities and equipment for training.

There is a wide range of support services available to students within the campus, including accommodation in dormitories, meals in a student canteen, access to scientific literature in an outstanding University library, career counseling, psychosocial counseling, as well as possibilities for sport and cultural activities. The dormitories and the canteen are subsidized by the University and offered to students at extremely low prices (dormitories) or at no cost (canteen). This appears to be socially acceptable; however, the University does not seem to have full control over the dormitories and the Accreditation Panel was told that some students refuse to leave after graduation. This violates any concept of justice as it deprives junior students of the right to find affordable

accommodation in a dormitory. This issue should be resolved by the central University administration.

The administrative staff of the Department of Medicine is extremely competent and supportive to the students.

### Panel judgement

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

### Panel Recommendations

The Accreditation Panel recommends the Department to take actions for improving the infrastructure in the lecture halls. Security of permanent audiovisual equipment could be maintained by restricting access to third parties and by locking the rooms. Monitoring of the area by security cameras is also recommended, even though this may raise concerns on privacy protection; such concerns are unjustified because protecting public property from criminal actions is a common good practice. The problem with illegal occupation of student dormitories should be resolved together with the University administration and authorities.



## Principle 7: Information Management

**INSTITUTIONS BEAR FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR COLLECTING, ANALYSING AND USING INFORMATION, AIMED AT THE EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT OF UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES OF STUDY AND RELATED ACTIVITIES, IN AN INTEGRATED, EFFECTIVE AND EASILY ACCESSIBLE WAY.**

*Institutions are expected to establish and operate an information system for the management and monitoring of data concerning students, teaching staff, course structure and organisation, teaching and provision of services to students as well as to the academic community.*

*Reliable data is essential for accurate information and for decision making, as well as for identifying areas of smooth operation and areas for improvement. Effective procedures for collecting and analysing information on study programmes and other activities feed data into the internal system of quality assurance.*

*The information gathered depends, to some extent, on the type and mission of the Institution. The following are of interest:*

- *key performance indicators*
- *student population profile*
- *student progression, success and drop-out rates*
- *student satisfaction with their programme(s)*
- *availability of learning resources and student support*
- *career paths of graduates*

*A number of methods may be used for collecting information. It is important that students and staff are involved in providing and analyzing information and planning follow-up activities.*

### Study Programme compliance

The Department of Medicine has established procedures for data collection. The data management follows the European Union guidelines for General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Student registration involves the Cronos platform, which is also used for further administrative purposes. Teaching staff and students access student records via a password and have different access privileges: the teaching staff for grading and for viewing past grades, and the students for registering courses and viewing grades.

The students have access to the e-course platform, which is also used for communication with the teaching staff. The students use e-course to electronically evaluate the courses with anonymous questionnaires. They also have access to the results of their evaluation. The data are available to the IEG and QAU, which is important for quality control. They are analyzed and discussed in the General Assembly of the Department.

Student and staff satisfaction surveys are regularly conducted and evaluated. The data are analyzed by the Department of Medicine with the assistance of experts from the Epidemiology division. They are appropriately communicated, publicized and used for quality control purposes.

The Department provides modern IT infrastructure and resources to the students. These include a well-equipped computer room which was visited by the Accreditation Panel, IT services, and electronic access to teaching material and medical journals.

### Panel judgement

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

### Panel Recommendations

The Accreditation Panel finds the Department fully compliant to the guidelines for Information Management and has no further recommendation.

## Principle 8: Public Information

**INSTITUTIONS SHOULD PUBLISH INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR TEACHING AND ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES WHICH IS CLEAR, ACCURATE, OBJECTIVE, UP-TO-DATE AND READILY ACCESSIBLE.**

*Information on Institution's activities is useful for prospective and current students, graduates, other stakeholders and the public.*

*Therefore, institutions and their academic units provide information about their activities, including the programmes they offer, the intended learning outcomes, the qualifications awarded, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to their students, as well as graduate employment information.*

### Study Programme compliance

Key information regarding the Department is available online via the departmental website which is user-friendly and very well organized. Moreover, it is updated regularly and offers bilingual information in Greek and English. Faculty members submit documentation on research and teaching activities. The website also contains information on CVs and research interests of faculty members. Course outlines of the program are complete and available online. The quality assurance policy of the Department is likewise available online. All data presented on the web site are up-to-date and clear.

The Department of Medicine also has presence in social media such as Facebook. These are used for communicating news and press releases. Press releases are also presented in the website and sent to traditional media such as newspapers.

### Panel judgement

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

### Panel Recommendations

The Accreditation Panel appreciated the excellent website and the maintenance of high Public Information and IT standards. It recommends an update of the website with a link to Pubmed showing publications of each faculty member.

## Principle 9: On-going Monitoring and Periodic Internal Review of Programmes

**INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE IN PLACE AN INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM FOR THE AUDIT AND ANNUAL INTERNAL REVIEW OF THEIR PROGRAMMES, SO AS TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES SET FOR THEM, THROUGH MONITORING AND AMENDMENTS, WITH A VIEW TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT. ANY ACTIONS TAKEN IN THE ABOVE CONTEXT SHOULD BE COMMUNICATED TO ALL PARTIES CONCERNED.**

*Regular monitoring, review and revision of study programmes aim to maintain the level of educational provision and to create a supportive and effective learning environment for students.*

*The above comprise the evaluation of:*

- *the content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up to date;*
- *the changing needs of society*
- *the students' workload, progression and completion;*
- *the effectiveness of the procedures for the assessment of students*
- *the students' expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme;*
- *the learning environment, support services and their fitness for purpose for the programme*

*Programmes are reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders. The information collected is analysed and the programme is adapted to ensure that it is up-to-date. Revised programme specifications are published.*

### Study Programme compliance

The Department of Medicine has adopted quality assurance policies and has established an IEG which works closely with the University QAU. The QAU initiates the self-assessment procedure of the study program, which takes place annually. The IEG collects and analyzes data to generate an internal evaluation report, which is properly recorded and submitted to the QAU. The report is presented and discussed in the General Assembly of the Department. It is also posted on the website and thereby communicated to the academic community.

An action plan is taken together with the QAU to improve quality assessment and overall quality of education. Some characteristic actions of the Department of Medicine in these directions are: Encouragement of students to participate in course evaluation by filling out questionnaires, encouragement of teaching staff to generate and update course outlines and to use the e-course platform, the introduction of academic advisors to students, the mediation for training opportunities for students.

An additional strength is the adaptation of the Department to social needs. This is best seen in outward looking activities such as the organization of "Week for Acquaintance with Medicine" to reach out society and the strengthening of the departmental links with stakeholders and non-scientific cultural, social or financial organizations.

The Department has done a serious work in formulating and implementing quality assurance policies. Concerns of the students are extensively discussed and result in visible and measurable improvements. The level of student satisfaction is high. The close collaboration between the Department, students, alumni and stakeholders in the context of quality assurance policies and actions have resulted in significant modernization of the curriculum and harmonization to international standards.

### Panel judgement

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

### Panel Recommendations

The Accreditation Panel feels that the Department fully complies with the need for continuous monitoring and improving quality assurance policies and recommends to continue working effectively in this direction.

## Principle 10: Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programmes

**PROGRAMMES SHOULD REGULARLY UNDERGO EVALUATION BY COMMITTEES OF EXTERNAL EXPERTS SET BY HQA, AIMING AT ACCREDITATION. THE TERM OF VALIDITY OF THE ACCREDITATION IS DETERMINED BY HQA.**

*HQA is responsible for administrating the programme accreditation process which is realised as an external evaluation procedure, and implemented by a committee of independent experts. HQA grants accreditation of programmes, with a specific term of validity, following to which revision is required. The accreditation of the quality of the programmes acts as a means of verification of the compliance of the programme with the template's requirements, and as a catalyst for improvement, while opening new perspectives towards the international standing of the awarded degrees.*

*Both academic units and institutions participate in the regular external quality assurance process, while respecting the requirements of the legislative framework in which they operate.*

*The quality assurance, in this case the accreditation, is an on-going process that does not end with the external feedback, or report or its follow-up process within the Institution. Therefore, Institutions and their academic units ensure that the progress made since the last external quality assurance activity is taken into consideration when preparing for the next one.*

### Study Programme compliance

The Department of Medicine has been evaluated by external referees in June 2013. The evaluation report contained several recommendations. The Department of Medicine has implemented actions in response to the report and estimates that approximately 70% of the issues raised by the previous external Evaluation Committee have been addressed, especially these directly related to the undergraduate program. A point-by-point response was provided.

There are, however, outstanding issues where no significant progress has been made. For instance, this applies to the proposed development of a strategic planning for research and to the improvement of administrative services to faculty for research and applications for extramural funding. Important problems identified by the previous Evaluation Committee that are more related to central government policies, rather than to the Department of Medicine and the University of Ioannina, have not been resolved. These and include the underfunding of Universities, the reduction of academic salaries and the lack of a long-term research funding policy.

Overall, the Accreditation Panel got the impression that the Department of Medicine is fully aware of the importance of external evaluations. All members of the teaching staff, students and stakeholders were extremely cooperative and interactive during the site visit. The Department of Medicine endorses regular external evaluations and is committed for improvement according to the recommendations of the evaluators.

## Panel judgement

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

## Panel Recommendations

The Accreditation Panel agrees that the Department of Medicine has made all necessary actions to facilitate regular external evaluations of the undergraduate programs. It recommends the Department to closely monitor the impact of curriculum revisions. It also recommends the Department to address remaining issues from previous evaluations and all new points raised during the current accreditation of the undergraduate program.

## **PART C: CONCLUSIONS**

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

The Accreditation Panel is impressed by the accomplishments of the Department of Medicine at the University of Ioannina in undergraduate medical education, and by its commitment for quality control and continuous improvement. The Department offers a first-class academic environment and has an excellent reputation in the region, but also throughout the country. This is reflected in the fact that the Department of Medicine in Ioannina is the first choice for many students outside Epirus and particularly for students from areas with other medical schools. The local community has a long tradition in appreciating and supporting educational institutions and is proud of hosting the University and the Department of Medicine. The links are further reinforced by targeted actions of the Department that open it to society.

The Department of Medicine has cultivated a vibrant academic atmosphere that nurtures an excellent cooperation and mutual respect among faculty and students. The curriculum is modern and offers a good balance between preclinical and clinical disciplines. Moreover, it is dynamic and undergoes regular internal and external evaluations, which result in revisions according to scientific developments and societal needs.

The infrastructure and facilities are appropriate and supportive to the Department's mission in teaching and research. The physical proximity to the University Hospital is another major strength because it allows students easy access to the clinics and facilitates their training and involvement in clinical research. The strong collaboration between the Department of Medicine and the University Hospital is extremely positive, especially considering that the University Hospital is an established tertiary health care institution that provides numerous opportunities to students for comprehensive clinical training. The students have also easy access to research laboratories within the Department but also at the neighbouring Biomedical Research institute of the Foundation of Technology and Research-Hellas. A framework for closer collaboration between the Department of Medicine and the Biomedical Research institute exists and a link is provided by faculty members with joint appointment.

The faculty is highly motivated and committed to undergraduate teaching. This is greatly appreciated by the students and graduates. The close personal contact between faculty and students is a major asset. The Department of Medicine is very supportive to international student exchanges and values the importance of student exposure to a different teaching and research environment. It has established collaborations with Universities abroad and has also succeeded in making student exchanges bidirectional. Thus, there are foreign students who choose the Department of Medicine as a place for short-term training. This testifies to the excellent international reputation of the Department.

The faculty also has a strong track record in research; in fact, there is a notable research tradition in the Department that should be further cultivated and strengthened. This applies to clinical, epidemiological and basic biomedical research.

Undergraduate teaching is supported by well-trained teaching assistants and by clinicians of the public Health Care system. Administrative support by the Department is very good and the staff is



dedicated and committed. Moreover, collaboration between faculty, supporting teaching staff, students and administration is smooth.

The Accreditation Panel feels that the above features of good practice should be maintained and further bolstered.

## **II. Areas of Weaknesses**

The Accreditation Panel identified some areas of weaknesses that should be considered. An action plan is recommended. Given the strong dependence of University policies on the central government, some of the issues can only be addressed by politicians and relevant government authorities such as the Ministry of Education.

A major problem that has already been identified by the Department is the unfavorable student/faculty ratio. This is directly related to the lack of sufficient faculty renewal in recent years due to the economic crisis. Another contributing factor is the unjustified increase in the number of students that are entering the program, which is exclusively determined by the ministry of Education. This is inconsistent with the autonomy of universities and contrary to common practices in Europe and North America. The Department of Medicine has responded to the educational challenge by offering courses and training in small student groups. This provides a temporary remedy to the problem but overwhelms the academic staff with extra teaching responsibilities and distracts from research activities. In the long run, it will negatively affect the quality of the undergraduate program.

The lack of academic renewal is resulting in a gradually aging faculty. Retired faculty was not replaced, while some prominent faculty members could not be retained and moved to other Universities. This situation can negatively affect motivation and enthusiasm for teaching and research.

The Accreditation Panel felt that while the undergraduate program excels in many aspects including clinical training, it does not offer sufficient opportunities and incentives for students to participate in research programs. Thus, the exposure of students to research is suboptimal and can be improved.

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

The Accreditation Panel recommends follow-up actions. These are specified in each section and summarized below.

Priority should be given in developing a careful plan for academic renewal that focuses on academic excellence. The Department of Medicine should attract young clinicians and scientists with strong research accomplishments and track record, and with a high leadership potential. Efforts should be coordinated with other Medical Departments and Universities for an autonomous function in determining student admission and thereby optimizing the student/faculty ratio. This will be essential to maintain effectiveness and quality of teaching.

New faculty should be facilitated for a smooth transition and integration within the Department. This can be done with a start-up package, according to international standards. Administrative

support should be provided to young and old faculty for research and for applications to extramural funding. Faculty Development workshops and/or a mentoring program can be offered where senior faculty members will help new recruits to develop teaching skills. Non-monetary awards to faculty members recognizing exceptional contributions to teaching can be considered. The evaluations of students should be taken into account in promotion of faculty. Promotions should be based on merit and academic record rather than hierarchy.

The Accreditation Panel understands the limitations and inflexibility of the hiring system, as well as the financial constraints. These can be mitigated by “out of the box” activities, such as fundraising. The Department of Medicine and the University Hospital have an excellent reputation in the community of Ioannina and Epirus, a region with long tradition in benefactors. The community is proud of hosting these institutions and should be reached out via targeted actions for financial support.

The curriculum should provide more opportunities for students to participate in research projects. Better integration between teaching with research programs can be done via collaboration with other departments and research institutes. The possibility for introducing an elective short-term diploma project that leads to a Thesis should be considered, with credits commensurate with the workload.

The Department of Medicine is encouraged to adopt the objective structured clinical examination (OSCE) method, which is widely used in Europe and North America. It is also encouraged to increase the mobility opportunities for students via further formal agreements with Universities and research centers.

Minor issues related to learning resources and student support such as the quality of classrooms and the use of permanent audiovisual equipment should be resolved.

An update of the website with a Pubmed link for faculty members is also recommended.

Finally, the Accreditation Panel recommends the Department to monitor the impact of changes in the undergraduate study program and address outstanding issues from the last external evaluation report.

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

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: 1 - 10

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are:

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are:

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are:

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

**The members of the Accreditation Panel for the Undergraduate Programme Medicine  
University of Ioannina**

Name and Surname

Signature

- **Prof. Nikolaos Venizelos (Chair)**, Örebro University, Örebro, Sweden
  
- **Prof. Konstantinos Pantopoulos**, McGill University, Montreal,  
Canada
  
- **Dr Dimitra Pappa**, Member of the Panhellenic Medical Association,  
Greece