# Accreditation Report
# for the New Undergraduate Study Programme in operation of:

**Early Years Learning & Care**

**Institution: University of Ioannina**

**Date: 17 December 2022**

Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the New Undergraduate Study Programme in operation of **Early Years Learning & Care** 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 External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

The Panel responsible for the Accreditation Review of the new undergraduate study programme in operation of **Early Years Learning & Care** of the **University of Ioannina** comprised the following five (5) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

1. **Prof. Emer. Athanasios Gagatsis (Chair),**
   University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus

2. **Prof. Emer. Eleni Katsarou,**
   University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA

3. **Prof. Anastasia Kitsantas,**
   George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia, United States of America

4. **Prof. Leonidas Kyriakides,**
   University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus

5. **Ms. Evanthia Rizopoulou, Student**
   School of Early Childhood Education, Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki, Greece

## II.       Review Procedure and Documentation

The External Evaluation Accreditation Panel (henceforth: EEAP) conducted the accreditation evaluation of the new undergraduate study program in operation of **Early Years Learning & Care** of the **University of Ioannina** (henceforth: UP) **during** the period 12-17th of December 2022. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences, EEAP could not visit the site physically but conducted the accreditation evaluation fully in a remote mode, using the Zoom teleconferencing tool. The panel was provided with HAHE's accreditation guidelines and was invited to attend an orientation session before the accreditation visit by HAHE's Director Dr. Christina Besta, during which the procedures and rationale for the accreditation were outlined and explained. Dr. Besta's ppt file was provided to the EEAP members.

The Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE) provided the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel (EEAP) members with a packet of materials ahead of the review process that included:

a.   Guidelines for accreditation, created by HAHE

b.   The mapping grid and the Assessment Guide created by HAHE

c.   A tabulation (prepared by HAHE) of the scores of the Department regarding the quality indexes. However, since the Department is also new there is no reference to past quality indicators.

d.   The accreditation information prepared by the Department

e.   A set of annexes to the accreditation proposal, including the study guide, course descriptions, etc.

f.   Statistical data regarding the Department and the specific program of studies

g.   The Quality Assurance policy of the specific program of studies

h.   A set of documents presenting quality indicators both for the Department and the Program

i.   The results of the internal evaluation of the Program

j.   During the virtual on-site visit, the Department Head Assoc. Prof. Eleni Kainourgiou provided additional materials (electronic versions of power-point presentations prepared and presented by the Department). Moreover, the president of OMEA presented a very detailed description of the undergraduate Program.

The EEAP met as a group before the accreditation teleconferences on December 13th, 2022, to plan ahead, coordinate division of work and process to be followed, and discuss issues that emerged from the preliminary study of the material at that point.

The virtual accreditation visit extended over two days, starting on December 14th, 2022. We first met with Prof. Anastasios Emvalotis, member of MODIP and with Assoc. Prof. Eleni Kainourgiou Head of the Department for an overview of the Undergraduate Program (UP): its history and academic profile, its current status, strengths and some possible areas of concern. We then met with OMEA and MODIP representatives to discuss the degree of compliance of the UP to the Quality Standards for accreditation. A detailed presentation of the information and supporting material under each one of the twelve principles of the "*Standards for Quality Accreditation of New Undergraduate Programmes in Operation*" was provided. This day was

concluded with debriefing meetings between teaching staff members and students with EEAP members. The first meeting concerned with the teaching staff professional development opportunities, their mobility and their competence and adequacy to ensure learning outcomes, with their involvement in applied research, in projects and research activities directly related to the UP and with possible areas of weakness. In the second meeting we met current students at different points in their degrees, that is students from the four years of their studies and moreover from the 5th transitory year. The discussion concerned with the students' satisfaction from their study experience and the Department/Institution facilities and the priority issues concerning student life and welfare.

On the second day of our visit (December 14th, 2022), we first were provided with an on-line tour of the classrooms, lecture halls, libraries laboratories, in order to evaluate facilities and learning resources to ascertain that the learning materials, equipment and facilities are adequate for a successful provision of the Program. Next, we met with employers and social partners to discuss the relations of the Department with external stakeholders from the private and the public sector. A debriefing meeting with EEAP members was later followed to discuss the outcomes of the on-line review and begin drafting the oral report. At the end of the meeting, we met with OMEA and MODIP representatives to discuss on several points/findings which may have needed further clarification. To conclude, an informal presentation of the EEAP key findings was also carried out to Head of the Department, OMEA & MODIP members, and MODIP staff members.

From the very beginning, the Department welcomed us with warmth, collegiality and openness and they were all eager to answer our questions and address our concerns. Their presentations were informative, emphasizing the UIO's commitment to quality improvement in teaching, research, and community outreach. A good number of faculty attended our meetings, a sign of involvement in departmental affairs. From our interactions and conversations with representatives of the Department, leadership, faculty members and administrative staff, current students, as well as community partners, we recognized that the Department takes its commitment to quality assurance seriously and are constantly working towards more compliance to the HAHE quality standards.

In closing, the EEAP would like to note the challenges of conducting an accreditation virtually. Despite the flawless and truly exemplary organization of the virtual visit on the part of our hosts, the EEAP members would like to point out that even though all the presentations were carried out effectively by the Department, the time allocated (i.e., only two days) for the virtual accreditation visit was not sufficient and a suggestion can be made to HAHE to follow the previous model where three days were allocated for the accreditation visit.

## III.     New Undergraduate Study Programme in operation Profile

The Department of **Early Years Learning & Care** (DECEC heretofore) belongs to the School of Social Sciences, of the University of Ioannina (UIO) and operates as a University Department since 2018 is an evolution of the Department of Preschool Education of the former Technological Institute (TEI) of Epirus. The educational field to which the Department falls, based on the directive of UNESCO (ISCED 2013) is "Training for pre-school teachers, Early childhood educational development levels and early childhood teaching (0112)".

 We could argue that a three-dimensional model characterizes the activities of the Department: Teaching, Research and Connecting with the Community and its stakeholders. Its main objectives are the education of teachers for the preschool age (theories, methods, and pedagogical and teaching practice for children of this age group), the development and acquisition of knowledge in education sciences and the provision of necessary knowledge to the students ensuring their proper training for their academic and professional career and development, as well as the study and research in the wider field of educational sciences.

It is also important to mention that, given that Greece is one of the few countries, at European Union level, in which preschool educators must have a University basic degree, the graduates of the Department (Τ.Α.Φ.Π.Π.Η.) become competitive, not only at national, but also at International level. In this direction, the curriculum of the Department is in line with the Program of study, of the Early Childhood Education & Care of the University of West Attica (https://ecec.uniwa.gr/courses/undergradute/) and the one of the International Hellenic University.

https://www.ihu.gr/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/progr-sp-agogis-paid-Thess.pdf.    Other examples include the Undergraduate Studies of Boston University (https://www.bu.edu/academics/wheelock/programs/early-childhood-education/bs/), the Columbia University Program in Britain (http://earlychildhood.educ.ubc.ca/programs/ece-certificate-programs/bc-early-childhood-education-basic-certificate/), as well as Middlesex University in London (http://www.mdx.ac.uk/courses/undergraduate/early-childhood-studies-degree).

The sustainability of the Department depends on various factors, such as the available resources, staff adequacy and infrastructure. The Department is housed in the University campus. Its facilities included classrooms for lecture and laboratory style courses, a common Amphitheatre, as well as two institutionalized laboratories (Government Gazette 281 / B / 11-02-2016), which are under renovation. The classrooms are considered sufficient for the needs of the Department. However, the available faculty member offices are limited, and additional offices have been requested by the administration. Similarly, as the research activity of the faculty members develops the spaces that house the research laboratories of the Department will be insufficient. On the other hand, the resources available for research and educational purposes in the Department are considered unsatisfactory as the Department's regular budget is not sufficient.

The permanent staff of the Department consists of 6 faculty members, 1 EDIP member, 1 ETEP member and 2 administrative members. The course of study extends to eight semesters (or four years) and to obtain the degree, 240 ECTS are required, which correspond to 45 courses (43 if the student chooses the graduate thesis). The graduate thesis is optional, and it is offered in the eighth (8th) semester of study. It provides an option for exemption from two (2) elective compulsory courses

The main language of instruction is Greek. Course attendance is optional, except for laboratories.

The EEAP has found that the aims and work already done in the Department, allowed the structure of the Program to be adhering to national and international similar programs. The Program is well articulated that the faculty members are vigilant in ensuring high quality instruction and innovative approaches to teaching and learning. The curriculum is monitored and evaluated very methodically both within the Department and program faculty, as well as within the MODIP and OMEA committees. The EEAP has also noted the dedication and commitment of the teaching staff, the Department's efforts to develop rigorous procedures for monitoring the assurance quality, and, in general, the effectiveness of the UP. As also indicated in the report, there is always room for further improvements of teaching and training of the students and the UP. Some of the weaknesses noted are due to factors beyond the control of the Department or indeed the University. Key such factors include the large number of incoming first year students, a process regulated by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs (thereafter called ME for brevity), the small number of the academic staff and the building infrastructure of the Department.

## 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 programmes. 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 programmes, 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 programmes, 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 programmes.*

*More specifically, the feasibility study of the new undergraduate study programmes 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 programmes, particular attention must be place 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 programme 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 programme*
*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 programmes 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-centered 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 programmes 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 programme*
- *Four-year business plan*

**Study Programme Compliance**

### a) The academic profile and the mission of the academic unit

#### I. Findings

The EEAP was provided with an articulation of the academic profile and mission of the Undergraduate Program of Studies, as evidenced in the documents (B.1 -1) and the slide presentations that were shared remotely.

#### II. Analysis of Judgement

In accordance with international and UNESCO (ISCED 2013) specifications of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), there has been an examination of similar programs within Greece and beyond, and as such, it appears that the faculty members afford their students with a program of studies that has three integrative and interconnected strands, namely, teaching, research, and engagement with the larger community/society. As this is a relatively new program within the Social Sciences Department of the University of Ioannina, but a re-configured program from a TEI of Epirus that trained care providers in infant and early care sites, the new program of studies, intends to equip students with the necessary theoretical and practical understandings and professional standards to become highly specialized and trained professionals in infant and early childhood care. As indeed, this is a highly specialized teaching domain, the program faculty have focused and on the necessary scientific and practical trends that are evident in the four (4) cycles of content areas or scientific strands that include *educational foundations, psychology, administrative and economic considerations of education, and aesthetic pedagogy and culture*. These strands represent the critical demands for future ECEC teachers and care providers. Therefore, these four strands aim to support future educators with all the requirements and skills necessary in multicultural educational and social environments.

#### III. Conclusions

The New Program has not fully implemented a provision for students to engage in intensive *Teaching Practice* opportunities as of the current academic year, and thus, the EEAP finds the program substantially compliant in this sub-principle and will address more fully recommendations about the *Teaching Practice* (TP heretofore) component in subsequent subprinciple below.

### b) The strategy of the Institution for its academic development

#### I. Findings

The Undergraduate Program of Studies was designed in 2018 based on a well-respected program of the Epirus TEI and is therefore rooted in a deep sixty-year tradition of its predecessor. The New Program is housed within the Social Sciences Department of the university.

#### II. Analysis of Judgement

In all the documentation and discussions held remotely, as well as in presentations and interviews conducted by the EEAP, it is evident that the strategy of this institution for academic

development has been analysed and strives to develop further. Program faculty and program committees delved into the analysis of local and international undergraduate programs in early childhood education. As a result, pertinent committees and faculty members have submitted a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis. *Strengths* identified include the high-quality studies program that has been designed and correlates with other well regarded national and international programs, its fine reputation in the scientific community, its doctoral and post-doctoral research, its engagement with the local community sites, as well as its sharp focus on student learning by applying student-centred approaches. *Opportunities* perceived include the potential for coalescing and re-invigorating community/local sites relations, technological advances, connecting students and graduates with potential work sites. *Weaknesses* outlined include an increased collaboration with other universities and Erasmus scholarships, and the threat of budgetary constraints both from within and without the Department, that latter to mean, an increased degree of dependence on the state and on critical programmatic matters such as faculty hiring and retention, overall funding concerns. This external dependence has inevitable effects on the instructional and research outcomes of the entire program.

### III.     Conclusions

The strategic plan that has been developed is detailed across three main goals namely, the continuous upgrade of the educational processes, the development of the program faculty and new hires, and the reinforcement of notions and subsequent actions of outreach, openness, and globalization. The aims that are attached to each goal appear manageable, and if anything, might have a year-by-year aim with higher percentages of improvement than those cited. The Program is substantially compliant in this part of their report.

### Recommendations

 While the EEAP considers this plan worthwhile and essential for the academic development of this new program, there was no specificity in the development of collaborations with local infant and early care centres that appear to be many (sixty, by one count and as an interviewee suggested). This pertains to the community engagement goal, but especially in strengthening and re-establishing the TP component. The aims that are attached to each goal appear manageable, and if anything, might have a year-by-year aim with higher percentages of improvement than those cited. The Program is fully compliant in this part of their report.

### c)  The documentation of the feasibility of the operation of the Department and the study programme

### I.     Findings

 The Program has developed a feasibility study (B4_1) that identified the local needs for its existence, and its structure parallels with existing national and international programs. The study is articulated accounting for major domains that include the economic needs at the local and national level, the evolution of scientific/research-based, and attending to the extant

academic map in with similarly designed programs. Specifically, and by citing a recent report of *ET 2020 Working group Early Childhood Education and Care*, in this feasibility study the conclusions drawn include that in order for students/graduates to be fully competent be equipped with all the professional and content standards necessary within the national and international settings, their Program must include among others, the development of a fully realized set of moral values, the assurance that every student will engage in meaningful ways and with significant time commitments within infancy and early childhood centres as part of their initial education and training and understanding, and can provide its graduates with inquiry methods and approaches that will encourage a deep analysis of what constitutes a meaningful set of practices that is realised through the TP component.

The Program reports that this is a student-centred program, with ample opportunities for students to design and self-select their study among a fair number of courses, integrating theoretical courses with attached workshops, thus embellishing, and enhancing the reflective approach to teaching and learning and the theory-to-practice model. Regarding the long-term feasibility plan, the program has identified three areas to be considered: the research that takes place within the research workshops and by individual faculty members; the post-graduate, doctoral and post-doctoral programs within the program; and the research plan of each DEP, EDIP, and YD member of the faculty. Currently the program does not offer its own a post-graduate program that is specific and focuses on ECEC guidelines and standards.

## II.    Analysis of Judgement

As articulated in B4_1, the Program hosts a relatively large number of undergraduate students, 136 active students during the 2021-22 academic year, when compared to the number of full-time (DEP) faculty, that is. A large percentage of students admitted into the program (62%) rank this program among their top five choices of available or programs of interest. Additionally, the average admission grade is 10.6, with the Undergraduate Program of Kindergarten Education at 11.6, while the Undergraduate Program of Elementary Education averages at 13.8. Nonetheless, the program of studies being offered to students with the intent in ECEC education, reflects not only all the international standards of early/pre-school pedagogy, but based on the number of graduates that enter the profession, contributes significantly to families, working parents, and the community writ large. Indeed, the numbers and the contributions to society are quite evident, thus ensuring a good degree of feasibility of the program.

## III.    Conclusions

The EEAP finds the feasibility plan of the program substantially compliant and thus, has the following recommendations.

**Recommendations**

- While it is impressive that the program admits a large number of students, in the long term, it may be more feasible to develop sustainable relationships with both the University Undergraduate Programs mentioned above, as well as establish methodical and bi-departmental approaches to the TP component, that seems to be elusive and wanting in the newly designed program.

**d) The documentation of the sustainability of the new Department**

### I. Findings

The Program presents a sustainability plan (B4_2) that identifies the state and other external funding, the available support structures/facilities, and all the personnel to provide the academic program for its continued operation. Funding of this program as with most education programs, is provided almost exclusively by the state and as such, the program has identified four major aims for its future planning and development that include the increase of teaching responsibilities to further support the educational and professional skills of the students, the possibility of other sources of support that include ESPA and other research programs, the establishment and organization of international conferences and other significant events to strengthen cooperation with other universities, and the methodical engagement and support within the local community educational settings of infants and early childhood care. The available facilities include three classrooms with 40 people capacity, two classrooms with 100 people capacity, and an auditorium with 250 people capacity. All these meeting/class settings are fully equipped with electronic/audio-visual needs. The two well-established and fully equipped laboratories in the areas of research and application of infant care are central to the program and appear to run very well. The secretarial/administrative facilities and faculty offices, are reportedly adequate, though it is unclear how the new prospective hires will affect this. Currently, the faculty/staff breakdown by rank or responsibility is as follows: 6 DEP members 5 of whom are associate professors; 1 EDIP member that serves as Laboratory Teaching Staff; 1 ETEP member who serves as a Special Technology Teaching Staff. Additionally, there are currently 10 staff/faculty that serve the needs of the program and include 3 as annual/as needed hires in special content areas, 4 faculty from other department of the university, and 2 are hired as academic fellows in an as needed basis. Support and advising facilities and opportunities are varied and critical for the well-being of the students and include, sports and arts programs, an e-learning platform and electronic records, updates, announcements of the program, a streamlined web page in both Greek and rather limited in English, and a secretarial system that has excellent knowledge of the program and provides support to the students.

### II. Analysis of Judgement

The EEAP has found that the sustainability plan, and especially as this pertains to the imminent faculty and staff hires and four additional DEP members is warranted, and views this aspect of the sustainability plan well thought out and merits a substantially compliant rating.

### III. Conclusions

Every effort needs to be made to maintain high quality teaching and learning environments, especially in the component of TP observations and on-site teaching. It may be advisable to create a new strand or faculty specialization that is entirely "clinical" in nature. Undergraduate and graduate programs in other countries (and especially in USA), have made these highly specialized hires, a top priority.

### e) The structure of studies
#### I. <u>Findings</u>

The Program in its design has the following key characteristics: Students graduate with 240 ECTS units across 8 semesters. There are 58 courses, 37 of which are mandatory courses; 21 are mandatory-elective course; none are electives. Of the 58 courses, 16 are of the general education domain, 23 are of particular content/knowledge areas; and 19 are specialization courses. In the 8th semester in lieu of 2 mandatory-elective courses, students can select to conduct a diploma paper/*ptyhiaki ergasia*. The program has four major strands from which the courses are drawn namely, *educational foundations, psychology, administrative and economic considerations in education, and aesthetic pedagogy and culture*. The TP component, critical in all education training programs, including this new program's predecessor of 60 years, is not mandatory, and if students decide to take this opportunity, they need to have done very well in 30 courses of mandatory and mandatory-elective courses, as well to have mastered a requisite set of skills in previous courses and laboratories.

During the 6th and 7th semesters, students are required to complete successfully laboratory/workshop exercises and assignments, totalling 4 hours per week for each laboratory, for 13 weeks.

Much care and attention are provided in ensuring that students engage in student-centred and in-situ environments, allowing them to develop the necessary skills and knowledge for this specialized field in ECEC. A comprehensive list of teaching and learning methods is also provided, and includes such key practices as reflective journals, round-table discussions, video coaching and portfolio creation. As mentioned earlier in this report, this is a highly specialized teaching domain, and as such, the program faculty have set a clear focus and command of the necessary scientific and practical trends that are evident in the four (4) cycles of content areas and scientific strands that represent the critical demands for future early childhood teachers and care providers. These four content areas or strands of study aim to support future educators with all the requirements necessary in multicultural educational and social environments. As articulated in the documentation provided, coursework attendance is not mandatory, except for the workshops.

#### II. <u>Analysis of Judgement</u>

In all the courses examined, the central aim of the faculty as reflected in presentations and documentation, is to provide students with an intentional mix of methods and models of teaching, focusing sharply on student-centred and innovative approaches as well as theory-to-practice actions and events. Faculty members in our interviews discussed the ways in which they engage students in courses and in the laboratories/workshop settings so that they have the critical thinking required, the reflection that is necessary, as well the development of "on the spot" analysis around key areas of study and theoretical underpinnings, as they work in various ECEC placements. In doing so, professional skills, growth potential and pedagogical understandings can be ensured.

### III. Conclusions

It is very clear that the Department's faculty and administration both as a team and within special committees, have thoughtfully designed a program of studies for the ECEC education of their students, that is both commensurate with many excellent programs in Greece and beyond, as well as drawing from its own excellent TEI predecessor and partnering institutions for the crucial TPP component. And while the rating for the structure of the program studies is partially compliant, this is primarily due to the absence of the mandatory TP component and the evaluation/supervision of students.

### Recommendations

The main recommendation is what has been mentioned in earlier in this report namely, the rethinking of how to make the TP component more beneficial for the students. Making the TP mandatory and broader in terms of time commitment is essential in this committee's assessment. Additionally, the supervision of the students in the field/ECEC sites needs to be tightened and far more intentional in terms of an agreed upon observation/supervision "protocols" that will better serve all concerned: the students, the university supervisor, and the attending mentor teacher. Finally, it has become clear to this EEAP committee that even though the numerous ECEC partners/site coordinators remain in total commitment to the Program and its faculty and students, they nonetheless voiced a real need that the Program send its students for extensive and intensive TP and perhaps in two-semester approach to accommodate all students. This committee remains convinced that these steps ought to be taken as soon as these can be arranged so that graduates will have the confidence needed to become an excellent *beginning* ECEC educators.

### f) The number of admitted students

### I. Findings

This program upon drawing from its TEI iterations (1955-2013), was established within the University of Ioannina in 2018, and approved fully in June 2019. Academic Year (AY) 2019-2020 was the first year that the Program, under its redesigned course of studies from the pre-existing TEI program, and admitted 91 students; in AY 2020-2021, 142 students were admitted; in AY 2021-2022, 132 students were admitted; in AY 2022-2023 166 students were admitted, a notable increase in the admission of students, and one that the program faculty find much too high for the number of full-time faculty. In fact, the documentation the EEAP received suggests that the number of admitted students in the years 2023 - 2026, ought to not exceed 100. A large percentage of students admitted into the program (62%) rank this program among their top five choices of available or programs of interest. Additionally, the average admission grade is 10.6, with the Undergraduate Program of Kindergarten Education at 11.6, while the Undergraduate Program of Elementary Education averages at 13.8. As none of the students have graduated from the program in its current format, no data is available as to the diploma grades and overall achievement. Similarly, even though Erasmus information is vailed to year two students within the university of Ioannina and five European universities have been the selected sites, no data is available as to any of the students currently enrolled.

## II.       Analysis of Judgement

From the pre-existing "old" program, a few students were transferred into the new Program and are currently in their fifth year to be awarded a university degree. Documents examined and interviews conducted show that on average, each year approximately 130 students are admitted.

## III.      Conclusions

The EEAP committee rates this sub-article as fully compliant. Nonetheless and as articulated in sub-part (c) of this report vis a vis the feasibility of the program and while it is admirable that a new program attracts this great number of students, in agreement with the documentation provided, this number of admitted students per year needs to be decreased. This would allow for a much better student to faculty ratio as well as ensure the re-establishment of the TP component and the supervision of students in ECEC sites.

## g)  Postgraduate studies

### I.       Findings

An autonomous post-graduate program is not currently available. Nonetheless, DEP faculty are overseeing 2 doctoral theses and 2 post-doctoral theses.

### II.       Analysis of Judgement

Based on a review of faculty strengths and content areas within ECEC, a post-graduate program seems poised to remain focused on the scientific pedagogy and psychological well-being of children in the early years. In our interviews with faculty and students, there is a high level of interest in establishing such a program and in this committee's assessment, with the completion of the new DEP hires, this will be plausible and desirable.

### III.      Conclusions

The EEAP finds the addition of an autonomous or perhaps even a post-graduate inter-departmental program most important for the Program as well as for the faculty's future endeavours. Given the current faculty configuration and future hires within ECEC specialized fields this is an excellent plan. Therefore, these merit a fully compliant rating, and as such makes no further recommendations.

**Panel Judgement**

| Principle 1: Strategic planning, feasibility and sustainability of the academic unit | |
|---|---|
| **a. The academic profile and the mission of the academic unit** | |
| Fully compliant | |
| Substantially compliant | **V** |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |
| **b. The strategy of the Institution for its academic development** | |
| Fully compliant | **V** |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |
| **c. The documentation of the feasibility of the operation of the Department and the study programme** | |
| Fully compliant | |
| Substantially compliant | **V** |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |
| **d. The documentation of the sustainability of the new department** | |
| Fully compliant | |
| Substantially compliant | **V** |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |
| **e. The structure of studies** | |
| Fully compliant | |
| Substantially compliant | **V** |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |
| **f. The number of admitted students** | |
| Fully compliant | **V** |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

| g.  Postgraduate studies | |
|---|---|
| Fully compliant | **V** |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

| Principle 1: Strategic planning, feasibility and sustainability of the academic unit (overall) | |
|---|---|
| Fully compliant | |
| Substantially compliant | **V** |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

**Panel Recommendations**

- Develop sustainable relationships with both University Undergraduate Programs that conduct teacher training, as well as establish methodical and bi-departmental approaches to the TP component.
- A time-intensive TP in the final year of study, perhaps with two 2-month internships across both semesters of the fourth year, may be a distinguishing characteristic and, one that students have expressed in this committee's interviews, as more desirable than the current TP timetable. In all recommendations above and were these to be considered, faculty hires would have to also be re-envisioned and fulfilled appropriately.
- The supervision of the students in the field/ECEC sites needs to be strengthened upon observation/supervision "protocols" that will better serve all concerned: the students, the university supervisor, and the attending mentor teacher.

## 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 programmes, and is accompanied by annual quality assurance goals for the continuous development and improvement of the academic units and the study programmes.**

> *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 programme offered by the academic unit. In order 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 programme (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 Programme Compliance**

### I.       Findings

The Program's quality assurance procedures are monitored by the University of Ioannina Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP). In general, the Quality Assurance Policy aims to support the academic content and scientific orientation of the undergraduate program, in accordance with international academic standards and the current national legislation. To that extent, there is a policy in place for improving the educational experience of undergraduate students, the quality and quantity of the overall research output of the new Program, as well as the introduction of innovative teaching and practical training approaches and strategies. Furthermore, such policy extends to the continual monitoring and improvement of human resources, curricula, outreach, mobility, and program visibility.

The Program has set five (5) key goals as to the quality assurance that can be summarized as follows: i) Fostering self-reflection and self-evaluation of the program faculty with an ongoing approach of student evaluations of both students and graduates of the program; ii) the program of studies is on a continuous review to ensure high quality of content knowledge and critical teaching/learning skills; promotion of research; iii) works diligently and continuously with OMEA and MODIP ensuring that all internal, external and student evaluations are critically examined and analysed; iv) adheres closely to the national and international standards of ECEC pedagogy; v) supports the teaching and research endeavours of DEP faculty and seeks to develop the academic environment and improve the local community outreach and work.

As presented in the Program's documents B7, the main dimensions of the Department's quality assurance policy revolve around:

- The design, development, and implementation of ECEC standards in the program of studies, that engenders and promotes quality, meets scientific and ECEC professional skills and demands, and establishing the Program's place and rank among top tier ECEC institutions.

- The close adherence to the national and international standards of ECEC pedagogy to best equip students/graduates with the professional skills and moral convictions for fruitful career in the ECEC field.

- The recruitment and retention of highly qualified faculty and evaluate their work yearly; support and encourage the production of research work by members of the Department that meets high academic standards.

- Ongoing evaluation and improvement by revisiting the Quality Assurance system in place building on the fruitful collaboration between OMEA and MODIP.


### II.    Analysis of Judgement

Overall, the EEAP finds the quality assurance action plan of the Department fully compliant. It is evident that the quality assurance processes are coordinated and supervised by OMEA in collaboration with the MODIP of the institution, and feedback is being obtained on a continual basis from the program's relevant committees, the Department meetings, and the analysis of student evaluation reports. For the process to be commendable, it may be advisable to engage important stakeholders to ensure that the quality of the action plan is more relevant, robust, and far-reaching. Current students may need to have representation both in the MODIP and the OMEA meetings, as well provide feedback on their course of study and readiness for the TPP opportunities and overall abilities and skills. Program alumni and ECEC teachers and administrators, especially those in the partnering/mentoring sites, have certainly voiced a great appreciation/ collaboration and support for their work, but this is an opportunity to legitimate the stakeholders' voices in more significant ways, such as providing them with opportunities to off programmatic improvements.

### III.    Conclusions

In addition to the OMEA and MODIP, be intentional and transparent (both in terms of policies and their implementation) in engaging alumni, practicing ECEC teachers/mentors and involving them in meaningful ways in curricular design.

**Panel Judgement**

| Principle 2: Quality assurance policy of the Institution and the academic unit | |
|---|---|
| Fully compliant | **V** |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

**Panel Recommendations**

As mentioned above, the EEAP recommends that the Program, in addition to the OMEA and MODIP, be intentional and transparent (both in terms of policies and their implementation) in engaging previous institution (TEI) alumni, practicing ECEC teachers/mentors and involving them in meaningful ways in curricular design.

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

**Institutions should design the new 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.**

*The Institutions develop their new undergraduate study programmes, following a well-defined procedure. The academic profile, the identity 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 European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education are described at this stage. An important new element in the structure of the programmes 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 programme design, which, among other things, should include: elements of the Institution's strategy, labour market data and employment prospects of graduates, smooth progression of students throughout the stages of the programme, 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 programmes of similar disciplines, the relevant regulatory framework, and the official procedure for the approval of the programme by the Institution.*

*The procedure of approval or revision of the programmes 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 programme and its compliance with the Standards*

**Study Programme Compliance**

### I.     Findings

The Department of **Early Years Learning & Care** consists of 6 DEP members, 1 EEP member, and 1 EDIP member. It is a small unit housed in the School of Social Sciences of the University of Ioannina (UOI). It used to be the Department of Preschool Education at the School of Health and Welfare Professions of the former Technological Educational Institution (TEI) of Epirus.

The EEAP examined the Department's website (https://eylc.uoi.gr/en/) that contained some important information about the teaching staff profiles. Additionally, the Department Head and faculty members provided information about the recruitment and selection process of the faculty, as well as faculty responsibilities, research productivity, and evaluation based on international metrics of evaluation of scientists, such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and Social Science Index.

The Department has developed two research laboratories: (a) the Laboratory of Research and Application in Infant's Touch; and (b) the Laboratory of Infant's Care and Education; and two practical laboratories: (a) Laboratory of Aesthetic Arts Education, and (b) the Laboratory of Pedagogy – Music pedagogy – Physical Education.

### II.     Analysis of Judgement

In regards to the procedures and criteria for teaching staff recruitment, the Department follows the current standard regulations on the recruitment and promotion procedures of faculty members. For example, announcements, selection, promotion, and recruitment materials are posted on the information system, APELLA. The details of these processes are accessible to candidates and members of the evaluation committee to enable transparency and a bias-free assessment process.

Despite limited financial resources and heavy teaching loads most of the faculty members are engaged in research and publish their scholarship in international scientific refereed journals. Faculty generate research of consequence by securing grant funding and creating work that receives academic attention as measured by citations (e.g., collectively, 3500 Google Scholar citations). Specifically, faculty have been successful in publishing in peer-reviewed journals, and book publishing (including edited volumes). Moreover, faculty members are encouraged to participate in international conferences with an adequate financial support for their participation. As a result, faculty frequently participate in national and international conferences bringing more visibility to the Department and their research work and a few hold leadership roles in an education-focused professional associations. In addition, faculty have been recognized internationally. Overall, faculty and students in the program appear to be engaged in several external and international relationships to share their expertise with various stakeholders and engage in research of consequence. Some of the faculty and students engage in researcher-practitioner partnerships that explore and address problems of practice

using rigorous research in the region, and generally in Greece. Finally, it is important to note that in order to meet the Department**'s** curricula and administrative needs at the undergraduate level, faculty constantly carry a teaching and administrative overload.

### III.    Conclusions

The Department supports faculty in teaching and research through mentoring, professional development, and opportunities to work with students. The Department should continue to encourage all faculty to participate in external funding proposals and awards, and address barriers to pursuing research and external funding by identifying creative ways to reduce the teaching and administrative load of faculty. The Department should also foster a community as well as collaborations and partnerships across the UOI with other strong programs, and stakeholder professional communities.

**Panel Judgement**

| Principle 3: Design, approval and monitoring of the quality of the new undergraduate programmes | |
|---|---|
| Fully compliant | V |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

**Panel Recommendations**

The Department should consider ways to further increase the faculty's international scientific collaborations and research activity.

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

**The academic unit should ensure that the new 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.**

> *In the implementation of student-centered 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 Programme Compliance**

### I.   Findings

The Department considers the study regulation, the strategic goals and the quality policy of the University of Ioannina, to establish a student-centred way of learning, teaching and assessment. The students are strongly encouraged to be active partners in their learning through choices of courses that reflect their interests (see elective special background courses in the study program).

Regarding the support of students with learning difficulties and special needs, the relevant provisions are applied, as provided by the current legislation, the internal regulations and the procedures for ensuring and improving the quality of the educational work and successful attendance, as defined in the internal regulations of the University. In addition, the Department has appointed a special committee represented by the Associate Professor Eleni Kainourgiou (Advisory Professor for Students with Special Needs). Students with special needs are encouraged to get in touch with her for any specific issues regarding their studies. Consequently, she is the link that connects students with special needs to the entire teaching staff of the Department, as well as to the Social Support and Accessibility Unit of the University

of Ioannina. In addition, she informs and tries to raise awareness among all students of the Department to voluntarily support students with special needs in their studies.

The Department emphasizes the application of appropriate teaching methods, which include lectures (mainly using PowerPoint Presentations) combined with guided discussion and/or practical exercises in order to critically process the course material by students, thus promoting their participation and collaboration. Faculty members apply transformative learning as well as other theoretical models using a variety of methods and techniques, such as theatre-play and performances, "steps for life", and a variety of psychomotor exercises.

Written examination is the method applied in the majority of courses. However, each tutor is entitled, if he deems it necessary, to conduct an oral examination. In addition, lecturers can carry out written assignments during the semester.

The student evaluations are considered a major part of the quality monitoring procedure. Students can assess the effectiveness of teaching via course evaluation surveys conducted during the 8th to 10th week of each semester for each course separately. On average, the Department teaching faculty and staff are rated as satisfactory (i.e., 3.8), but student participation in these evaluations is extremely low (i.e., 15-20%).

There is also a formal procedure in place from the academic year 2021-22 to address situations where students want to contest a grade or file a complaint, either by submitting a written complaint directly to the Chair of the Department or the Academic Advisor, or by contacting a member of the Department directly.

## II.    **Analysis of Judgement**

The Department's faculty try to deliver a student-centred program of study and most of the course objectives and activities are consistent with a student-centred approach. Students are given opportunities and support to develop personal as well as academic skills. However, even though the Department promotes student group work with the aim of activating socialization and cooperative learning, lecture rooms and labs are not sufficiently equipped to meet the needs of group work (see also Principle 7).

The educational process is evaluated through questionnaires completed each academic semester. By comparing progress over time, these questionnaires provide significant data that contribute to the improvement of the offered courses. However, as mentioned above the percentage of students participating in these evaluations is extremely small. In order to increase the percentage of student participation in the evaluation, the lecturers allocate part of the teaching time for students to complete the questionnaire in order to resolve any questions, but also to ensure their greater participation.

Finally, the faculty of the Department, along with the consulting committee and the Advisory Professor, assist students with special learning difficulties, or other health issues and/or disabilities, during their studies. However, it is noticed by the EEAP members that the teaching areas of the Department are not all accessible to people with disabilities (see also Principle 7).

### III. Conclusion

The EEAP found that the undergraduate program is substantially student-centred and cultivates and promotes mutual respect between the students and the faculty and staff. Some adjustments should be made especially in terms of the teaching areas to facilitate group work and in terms of the areas of the Department to be accessible for all students.

**Panel Judgement**

| Principle 4: Student-centred approach in learning, teaching and assessment of students | |
|---|---|
| Fully compliant | **V** |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

**Panel Recommendations**

- Upgrading of the teaching areas to meet the needs of group work.
- All areas of the Department must meet the needs of students with special needs; therefore, the building should be renovated to assist students with disabilities (i.e., elevators, large halls, etc.).

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

**Academic units should develop and apply published regulations addressing all aspects and phases of studies of the programme (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 programme*
- ▪ *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 Programme Compliance**

### I.      Findings

The Program has developed, published, and effectively applied regulations that pertain to all aspects of students' admission, progression, recognition, and degree/certification award. The Department welcomes around 120 new students each academic year and provides an orientation day for all new students each year. The students are provided with information

relating to their studies, academic life, the university, the department, the facilities, and the surrounding community. There is also a counsellor/facilitator available for these new students. The study program includes detailed information about the goals and structure of the program (courses for each semester), as well as descriptions of all courses in Greek and English.

Students' progress is monitored through the Institution's electronic system. Active students are informed during the semester of their progress by participating in assignments, which are assigned for completion during each semester. The examination method is chosen by the course instructor. In most courses the method of final evaluation is the written examination. However, each instructor is entitled, if he deems it necessary, to conduct an oral examination.

The program follows the ECTS credit system which is applied across the curriculum and supports students' later recognition and certification, as well as facilitates their possible mobility.

A total of 51 courses are offered, of which 37 (73%) are compulsory. The percentage of General Background courses is 29% (15 courses). 14 out of the 51 courses (27%) are elective courses (students much choose 8). The percentage of Special Background courses is 43% (22 courses out of 51). Specialization courses are also available (19 courses out of 51, 37%). In order to obtain a bachelor's degree, a student must complete 240 ECTS, by choosing either 45 courses, without the preparation of a Graduate Thesis, or 43 courses, with the preparation of a bachelor's Thesis. The Department has defined a set of quality requirements for the implementation of the thesis. The process of assigning, supervising, and evaluating the theses and the internships, as well as their quality standards, are mentioned in the study programme.

The internship is optional and has a duration of two months (continuous duration), full-time and is carried out in private and public sector institutions throughout the territory. The internship is offered in the final semester of the program as an elective course and has zero (0) ECTS. It is not taken into account for obtaining the degree, nor in the calculation of the degree grade.

Student mobility is encouraged via the ERASMUS program. The Department has signed bilateral agreements with 14 university institutions abroad, including the VIA University of Denmark, the Universities of Coruna and Jaen in Spain, the Mykolo Romerio University in Lithuania and the ECOLE SANTE SOCIAL SUDEST University in France. An agreement was recently signed with Del Atlántico Medio University in the Canary Islands of Spain. The prerequisites for the mobility of the students for the Erasmus+ program, are described in the relevant regulation (Mobility Regulation) and the website of the Department.


### II.    Analysis of Judgement

The Program has a well-established process for students to register and matriculate through the study program. However, the EEAP has noticed some significant weaknesses in the program content and structure.

First, there seems to be an uneven distribution of ECTS across the various courses. For example, there are courses with 5, 6 and 7.5 ECTS such as Greek Language, History and Culture, Music Education, and Museum Education and courses with 4 ECTS such as Educational

Material and the Implementation of Teaching in Early Childhood, Developmental Psychopathology. Also, there are many courses that should have been offered during the first two years of study and not during the last semester.

Second, it is quite disturbing that the Internship of the program is an optional course and has zero ECTS. The Internship should have been a valuable part of the programme, since it enables the developing of job-specific and broader skills for the students. This course should have been mandatory for all students entering the program. Nevertheless, the fact that it has zero ECTS with such a workload, it may discourage students from choosing it. The EEAP understands the problems raised during the interviews regarding the insufficient number of schools to cover all students of the Department, but this problem can be easily addressed by offering the Internship twice and splitting the students into two even groups (i.e., during the 7th and 8th semester).

Third, it is noticed that even though the study program mentions that students are trained in the research process through the corresponding courses, there is only one compulsory course on Educational Research (i.e., Research Methods in Education) offered during the 3rd semester. At least an optional course on conducting research and analysing quantitative and/or qualitative data should have been offered. It is also considered problematic the fact that there is only one elective course on Educational Evaluation (i.e., Assessment in Early Childhood Education and Care) offered during the last semester which implies that the program does not contribute towards the development of students' assessment skills. Lastly, even though that the study program claims that students are also trained during the individual assignments they prepare in the framework of courses as well as mainly by preparing their thesis, the EEAP was informed during the interviews with the students that the thesis is currently done in groups of four and the topics mentioned during the interview reveal that only a literature review of specific subjects/areas have been conducted.

### III. Conclusions

The EEAP finds that the Study Program needs to be enhanced and restructured to address the aspects mentioned above. The EEAP acknowledges the fact that the chair, teaching staff, and administrative staff have worked hard during a difficult transition period, but they need to work more to bring their program of study closer to the study programs of other universities. The EEAP, therefore finds the Department only substantially compliant with this Principle.

**Panel Judgement**

| Principle 5: Student admission, progression, recognition of academic qualifications, and award of degrees and certificates of competence of the new study programmes | |
|---|---|
| Fully compliant | |
| Substantially compliant | **V** |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

**Panel Recommendations**

- Restructuring of the Study Program to include the Internship as a compulsory course either in the last semester or in two even parts during the 7th and 8th semester.
- Distributing sufficient ECTS to courses that cover major aspects of the profession (e.g., to courses related with educational evaluation and assessment, and teaching methodology, as well as to the Internship).
- Promoting the acquisition of research skills by including courses on educational research and evaluation.

- Encourage students to take advantage of the ERASMUS or other relevant programs. Establish more Erasmus agreements with universities and childcare providers.

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

**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 specialisations, 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 recognise 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 Programme Compliance**

### I.      Findings

Relevant documentation:

1. Program of Study: courses, expected learning outcomes, internship, and mobility opportunities.
2. Student Guide
3. Course outlines
4. Teaching staff

The Department of **Early Years Learning & Care** is a four-year program (8 semesters) leading to a Bachelor's Degree. The program of study consists of a common core and elective courses, and the possibility for a thesis or internship. Foundational curriculum content is provided by core courses in domains such as research methodology and learning and developmental theories. These courses provide in-depth knowledge and skills that enable students to obtain employment. A total of 51 courses are offered in the program. In order to obtain their degrees

students must complete 37 required courses and eight electives. In their last semester, students have the opportunity to write a thesis or choose two elective courses. Students also have the option to seek and propose an internship opportunity in private or public sectors. Little was mentioned about course modalities in the program as it might be important to consider developing different pathways that allow for hybrid and online offerings to meet the various needs of the contemporary students. Graduates are employed mostly in early childhood centers. The program strives to improve communication with students, foster interactions with faculty outside the classroom, and provide career counselling. There is also a procedure in place for revisions of the curriculum which typically includes program faculty.

The Department uses a variety of instructional methods including simulations, video coaching and feedback, and action research and observations to help students develop in-depth knowledge and skills. It has conducted a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis of yearly internal unit goals to identify needed supports for the program. These efforts reflect the Department's vision to be an innovative and cutting-edge unit that successfully prepares professionals to promote learning and development in 0-4 early childhood years.

## II.     Analysis of Judgement

Based on our review of documents and discussions with various key stakeholders, it appears that that the Department does not have the necessary recourses to elevate its profile regionally and internationally. Interviews via Zoom revealed that it is challenging to meet the needs of current students since presently faculty members are overworked. However, they expressed a desire to develop and implement a required practicum for all students during their eighth semester in the program to improve the training and strengthen employment outcomes. It was also reported that their goal is to improve their collaboration with local centers to ensure that their students could have access to more internship opportunities. It was also noted that the newly hired faculty have a more diverse, multidisciplinary portfolio of research and scholarly activities which will contribute positively to the development of the program.

Interviews with students revealed that they found the program robust and viewed faculty as a strong component of the Program. They were also highly satisfied with their academic journey. However, employment opportunities for graduates remains a challenge. The need for required practicum/internships were highlighted to gain appropriate experience and network with future employers.

## III.     Conclusions

The Department strives to maintain a curriculum that prepares students for consequential work and employment in the community. The EEAP believes that the Department could consider changing the elective practicum experience course to a required course. Overall, the

EEAP was impressed with the administration of the program given the challenges they face due to shortage of staff and limited resources. Current students, graduates of the program, as well as community partners and stakeholders agree as to the quality and high regard they hold of the program.

**Panel Judgement**

| Principle 6: Ensuring the competence and high quality of the teaching staff of the new undergraduate study programmes | |
| --- | --- |
| Fully compliant | **V** |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

**Panel Recommendations**

The Department should consider reducing teaching load of some faculty to allow room for research growth. Although the performance of the teaching staff in scientific/research is satisfactory, research productivity is somewhat limited among the senior faculty.

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

**Institutions should have adequate funding to meet the needs for the operation of the academic unit and the new study programme as well as the means to cover all their 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 resources, on a planned and long-term basis, to support learning and academic activity in general, in order 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-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. 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 programme (job descriptions, qualifications and responsibilities)*
- *Informative / promotional material given to students with reference to the available services*

**Study Programme Compliance**

### I.    Findings

Although the EEAP members were not able to inspect in person the facilities of the Department, a video tour was given of the lecture rooms, laboratories, library, and administrative offices.

The Department is housed in the Campus City B of the University of Ioannina. The Department has 5 lecture rooms and 4 laboratories for teaching special courses. The needs of the new study program are covered by the specific rooms, but there are important problems in terms of the equipment in these rooms. For example, desks should be replaced with individual seats and folding lecterns, to enable group work. The lightning of these rooms should be also improved.

The offices of faculty members are also considered inadequate as well as the areas where the services of the Department's Secretary are offered. The air-conditioning and insulation infrastructures as well as the sanitary areas of the building need further improvement even

though related technical works are being carried out. Moreover, the inadequacies regarding the availability of areas (not only at the level of the building infrastructure of the Department but also of the Faculty) for students with disabilities are considered significant.

The Department also faces significant shortages in terms of its academic staff. The number of faculty members is extremely small compared to the number of students who enter the department annually (e.g., there are only 6 DEP, 1 EDIP, 1 ETEP and 1 Emeritus Professor). In relation to the educational laboratories, the number and appropriateness are considered sufficient only to a certain extent, as: a) they are unable to cover the large number of students and b) there is not enough laboratory collaborators to enable the proper functioning of the laboratory groups.

The Department is served both by the Central Library of the University of Ioannina (https://lib.uoi.gr), and by the library that operates in the department's facilities. The organization of the library is supported by the electronic registration of all available books and electronic book search. It is also linked to electronic bases for finding scientific articles. There is also a reading area in the library area.

Finally, students are informed about the services provided through the website of the Department, through the Study Guide, as well as through oral and electronic communication. Systematic update is provided to first-year students at the welcome meeting which takes place at the beginning of each academic year.


## II.    Analysis of Judgement

At the beginning of each academic year, first year students are provided with the sufficient support and counselling sessions that seem to be most useful in terms of planning and supporting new students for the entirety of their academic careers. However, there seems to be inadequate student support in terms of assistance during their studies, due to the small number of academic staff members. Even though the number of lecture rooms and laboratories is sufficient, there are important problems in terms of the equipment in these rooms as mentioned above. There are also important inadequacies in terms of infrastructure to support students with disabilities.

Students describe the faculty as hard working, inspirational, and motivated to teach and very responsive to students' needs. The Department constantly strives for the rational and effective utilization of the resources that provides for its students. However, during our interviews with students, the EEAP noticed that they were not sufficiently informed about all available learning resources in the Department. For example, they were not aware that they have access to research software such as SPSS.


## III.    Conclusions

The Department has the main infrastructure for the implementation of the study program. However, this needs to be enhanced with chairs/furniture that lend to small group activities/cooperative learning. All necessary 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, are present. However, the building and teaching areas need to be enhanced to meet the needs of students with special needs. Students should be also informed about all the available services to them by the administration staff as well as by their professors.

It would be very helpful for the Department to gain soon more offices for the academic staff members to meet its increasing needs (especially in terms of the number of students). Additionally, the Department should try to enhance the subscriptions to electronic databases (by finding the necessary financial resources) to meet the research needs both of faculty members and the students. For example, the library of UWA should consider the use of Educational Research Abstracts Online (ERA) (Taylor & Francis) which is a comprehensive database, comprising of fully indexed abstracts that cover the current international research in education.

**Panel Judgement**

| Principle 7: Learning resources and student support of the new undergraduate programmes | |
|---|---|
| Fully compliant | |
| Substantially compliant | **V** |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

**Panel Recommendations**

- Increasing the number of offices for the academic faculty/staff members for meeting the increasing needs of the Department.
- The teaching areas need to be enhanced with chairs/furniture that contribute to small group activities/cooperative learning (for example, desks should be replaced with individual seats and folding lecterns). The lightning of these rooms should be also improved.
- The building and teaching areas need to be enhanced to meet the needs of students with special needs.
- The Department should try to enhance the subscriptions to electronic databases, to meet the research needs both of faculty members and the students. Specifically, the library should consider the use of Educational Research Abstracts Online (ERA).

# Principle 8: Collection, Analysis and Use of Information for the Organisation and Operation of New Undergraduate Programmes

**The Institutions and their academic units 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.**

*Effective procedures for collecting and analysing information on the operation of Institutions, academic units and study programmes 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 programme, 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 with the exception of 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 programme (Students' Record)*
- *Other tools and procedures designed to collect data on the academic and administrative functions of the academic unit and the study programme*

**Study Programme Compliance**

### I. <u>Findings</u>

The UOI uses procedures and forms for collecting information proposed by MODIP. The procedures are carried out according to the Internal Quality Assurance System, in order to be used in the decision-making process with the aim of improving the Department and its Study Programs. This is done through MODIP's unified electronic system which is used by both faculty and students and aims at collecting and analysing data and information coming from both the Department and the Institution.

More specifically, the UOI provides a comprehensive range of online services to the academic community, supporting the educational process, research activity, as well as the administrative and support services of the university. All applications are accessible to the entire academic community using unique Institutional codes (username & password).

Concerning the Department, the basic factor in this process is the role of OMEA, the internal evaluation committee made up of faculty members from diverse disciplinary fields within the Department. OMEA collects survey data, both qualitative and quantitative, (student performance, questionnaires, and quality indicators) analyses and evaluates data and indicators and composes a report of findings.

The quality data are structured in sections (student population, staff, logistical infrastructure, research activity and financial data). Furthermore, the data concerning students' performance (per course) are extracted from the student online applications. The results of the electronic questionnaires and the annual internal reports on the research activity of the department are extracted from MODIP's application.

The Department provides a comprehensive range of online services to the academic community, supporting the educational process and the administrative and support services of the university.

All applications are accessible to the entire academic community using unique Institutional codes (username & password): https://sso.uoi.gr/login?service=https%3A%2F%2Fclassweb.uoi.gr%2Flogin%2Fcas.

Students participate in the collection of information and data about the operation of the Department by completing closed-type questionnaires within the six-month period evaluation, which concern both their tutors and the educational process. The participation percentage at 7, 29% is considered to be low.

A variety of online resources of an academic or institutional interest including Evdoxos system for the distribution of textbooks, the academic identities, online courses.

Finally, the Department collects data on student employability and the career paths of graduates through the page: https://eylc.uoi.gr/tmima/forma-apofoiton/ The data helps the Department enforce its ability to position its graduates in the workforce, but also has the potential to pursue future connections and collaborations.

## II.      Analysis of Judgement

The Department has a standard procedure for receiving data about the evaluation of the students, academic staff members, and educational work. However, the Department has no procedure in order to take into consideration the evaluations and opinions of other stakeholders, such as social partners.

The Department follows the procedures and tools provided and indicated by the UOI. The "Student log" system is an evolving information system, which interconnects data from both students and faculty members. The collected information is used to produce reports and indicators concerning staff and students, as well as the educational, research and operational processes of the institution, allowing their monitoring and evaluation over time.

Based on the above data, an analysis is carried out by the Department on variables related to both course evaluation and other key indicators, such as participation in mobility and research programmes, publications of faculty members and the flow of student graduations.

## III.      Conclusions

The EEAP members found that the Department has established quality assurance procedures and collects, among other things, adequate data on students, teaching staff, organization and curriculum structure. Furthermore, the Department has established procedures and collects data that allow examination of demographics, course evaluations, and student progression through the programme by asking alumni, in a specific form, about their progress after graduating. It would be helpful for the Department to establish a procedure of collecting systematic data from social partners.

The EEAP has also determined that the Department has established an information management process that informs both internal and external evaluation efforts as well the accreditation processes. The adopted processes, the levels of satisfaction expressed on

surveys are quite sufficient. The limiting factor is students' low participation. The participation rate on course evaluation for 2021-2022 was only 7, 29%. As stated in the Department's evaluation report the participation in the specific process was lower than the previous academic year. The low rates make obvious that more effort is required in placing the perception of internal evaluation as a significant feedback process.

**Panel Judgement**

| Principle 8: Collection, analysis and use of information for the organisation and operation of new undergraduate programmes | |
|---|---|
| Fully compliant | |
| Substantially compliant | **V** |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

**Panel Recommendations**

- The EEAP encourages the Department to make an effort to increase the percentage of Students participation in Courses evaluation and in other surveys related to the Department.
- It would be useful for the Department to further develop the Alumni contact Network to keep graduates informed about the Department's events, workshops and activities.
- The EEAP encourages the Department to establish a procedure of collecting systematic data from social partners.

## Principle 9: Public Information Concerning the New Undergraduate Programmes

**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 programmes 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 programme*
- *Bilingual version of the website of the academic unit with complete, clear and objective information*
- *Provision for website maintenance and updating*

**Study Programme Compliance**

### I.     Findings

The Department of **Early Years Learning & Care** of the University of Ioannina has put in place a comprehensive public information system. The determination above is based on reviews of printed and electronic sources, as well as interviews with the Head of the Department, members of the MODIP, OMEA, faculty, secretarial staff and students. The EEAP examined materials that exhibited evidence of critical information sharing with students, faculty members, external partners, and the community at large. The Department's website in Greek language contains information about its facilities, faculty members and staff, undergraduate, postgraduate, doctoral studies and guides, announcements, events, policy of quality assurance, and internal assessment reports. It also contains information about the Department's research projects and collaborations. News about awards, activities of members of the academic community (conferences, workshops, announcements, distinctions, trainings) are also posted on the Department's website. The information given is complete without being excessive or redundant.

Nevertheless, the important applications for students, such as the Moodle, the Eudoxus system and the Students system are not visible on the first page. They are all being placed at the bottom of the web page, so it's not so clearly laid out from the beginning of the search. It would be more useful if the website contained separate Students' menu fully developed with all the e-services.

Information of interest to the general public such as invited lectures, workshops, conferences and other events that connect the Department with society is posted on the website of the Department. All information is clearly laid out and detailed in an attractive and user-friendly

format. There is a Search button on the Menu as well as a complaint form and an alumni form (but only in the Greek version). Pictures and graphics are true to what they describe.

The English language version of the website is underdeveloped as it stands. It contains some information translated in English such as the Department profile, the courses outline, the Faculty members CVs etc. but it should be addressed so it will have the potential to improve the international visibility of the Department. Erasmus+ Programme page contains contact information, the courses offered to Erasmus students, students' testimonials, and partner universities. That is, all the information given in the Greek version. Other pages in the English version do not contain enough public information. More specifically it will be useful if the English version is updated with the news about the Department and other important information. Additionally, the Praktiki's (internship) page contains few information and a link given (about more information) does not lead to an actual page.

Overall, the EEAP believes that the variety of ways of public information used by the Department of Early Childhood Education is substantially satisfactory.

## II.      Analysis of judgement

The committee discussed with staff, students, graduates, and stakeholders and thoroughly studied the functionality of the Department's website. The analysis revealed that the Department has made a significant effort to present itself to its students and to the public, but some extra steps must be done in order this effort to be more targeted and complete.

## III.      Conclusions

Overall, the EEAP believes that the variety of ways of public information used by the Department of **Early Years Learning & Care** is satisfactory.

**Panel Judgement**

| Principle 9: Public information concerning the new undergraduate programmes | |
|---|---|
| Fully compliant | **V** |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

**Panel Recommendations**

- The EEAP encourages the Department to include a separate Students' menu fully developed with all the e-services in the main page of their website.
- The EEAP encourages the Department to enrich the English version of their website by publishing important announcements, news, and other important information.
- The EEAP encourages the Department to consider creating an e-Newsletter in order to maintain contact with students, alumni, schools, social partners and stake holders.

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

**Institutions and academic units should have in place an internal quality assurance system, for the audit and annual internal review of their new 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 the new study programmes 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 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.*

*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 programme by the QAU and the relevant minutes*

**Study Programme Compliance**

### I.     Findings

The internal evaluation of the Program is coordinated by the Department's Evaluation Working Group (OMEA), supervised by MODIP and carried out in accordance with the procedures defined by the HAHE. The Department is working closely with MODIP and has focused on re-visiting, adapting, and updating of course curricula. Discussions have also centered on faculty workload, staff shortage, and limited recourses and recommendations on how to cover gaps created by retirements and larger student enrolment. In order to deal effectively with these challenging issues their action plan includes: (a) intensification of committee meetings/general assembly to review data and provide recommendations for continuous improvement; and (b) establishment of committees or working groups to create new data collection instruments to measure new targeted indicators. During the interviews with external stakeholders (social partners & employers) it was apparent that the Department both in its previous form as a Department of the Technological Educational Institute of Epirus (TEI) and in its current form as a Department of the University of Ioannina has developed long-term and sustainable collaborations with these community partners that lead to positive educational and employment outcomes for students.

## II. Analysis of judgement

During the Zoom meetings with the faculty of the Program, it was reported that there is genuine interest in regular reviews of the program of study by surveying students using exit and alumni surveys to assess their levels of satisfaction in several program areas. The Department is also interested in the internationalization of the program with a focus on organizing and hosting of international conferences, study abroad, and strengthening the international Erasmus agreements with the aim of increasing the percentage of students and faculty who participate in these initiatives. During the Zoom meetings with the Stakeholders it was evident that all the participants believe that the internship is a crucial dimension of the Undergraduate Program (UGP) of the Department and that it must be obligatory for all the students.

## III. Conclusions

The Program is regularly reviewed and revised with the participation of students and faculty members. The information collected is analysed and the program is modified according to the internal evaluation data. The student evaluations seem to be a major part of the quality monitoring procedure, although the number of students participated in the evaluation was limited.

**Panel Judgement**

| Principle 10: Periodic internal review of the new study programmes | |
|---|---|
| Fully compliant | **V** |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

**Panel Recommendations**

- Need to adapt a rigorous data-driven decision-making approach to continuous improvement. The Department should use data to undergo a review of curricula and practicum experiences in response to student data so that they continue to offer a program that prepares students for successful careers in early childhood.
- It would be very helpful to share with the academic community the views of students on the improvement of the quality of teaching, the better organization of the courses, the cooperation with the teachers and their expectations from the studies.

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

**The new undergraduate study programmes 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 programmes. The term of validity of the accreditation is determined by HAHE.**

*HAHE is responsible for administrating the programme accreditation process which is realised as an external evaluation procedure and implemented by a panel of independent experts. HAHE grants accreditation of programmes, 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 programmes acts as a means of verification of the compliance of the programme 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 programme.*

*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 Programme Compliance**

I.      **Findings**

In order to investigate the program's compliance with the QA principles and the principles established by HAHE, the EEAP reviewed all available documents and the website of the Department(https://eylc.uoi.gr/) and conducted extensive online interviews the with Prof. Anastasios Emvalotis and Associate Professor Victoria Zakopoulou, members of MODIP, with Assoc. Prof. Eleni Kainourgiou, Head of the Department and the members of OMEA the program's faculty, administrative staff, students and external stakeholders for an overview of the Undergraduate Program (UGP). The Head of the Department and the members of the MODIP presented and explained their vision and were willing to share with the EEAP all the documents and information that could make their work visible. We have also discussed about the external evaluation report of the Department of Early Childhood Care and Education and Care of the Technological Educational Institute (TEI) of Epirus and on some related actions of the Department (ADIP, 2014).

II.      **Analysis of Judgement**

According to the above-mentioned presentations and discussions and according to the document B1-11, the Department **Early Years Learning & Care** will make use of the

recommendations that will result from the external evaluation process of the Undergraduate Program (UGP).

The Program will make significant efforts to satisfy the recommendations of the report concerning the Undergraduate Program of Study. The adopted procedures for the collection and analysis of quality data regarding the UGP and all the activities of the Department will be realized in the context of the operation of the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQS), in order to be used in the decision-making process in order to improve the activities of the Department and the aspects of its Curricula. The first step is related to the collection of quality data by the OMEA, the second step is related to the analysis of the quality data and the third step concerns the preparation of a report of findings and the highlighting points that need improvement and finally the applications of improvement decisions in 2026.

The faculty already invest serious efforts in research, and they have tried to connect teaching and research and to improve research and publications. The creation of research - oriented laboratories is also a very positive action towards the improvement of the faculty's research. Moreover, the digitization of the Department's communication with students with regular and in time announcements through the website, is a very positive action of the Department.

### III.    Conclusions

The value of the external review process to the functioning of both the Department and the undergraduate program is evident in the careful, epistemologically sound, and the systemic program review that has been adopted by the Department.

**Panel Judgement**

| Principle 11: Regular external evaluation and accreditation of the new undergraduate programmes | |
|---|---|
| Fully compliant | **V** |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

**Panel Recommendations**

None.

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

**Institutions and academic units apply procedures for the transition from previously existing undergraduate study programmes to new ones, in order 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, in order 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 particular 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 programme*
- *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 programme. 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 Programme Compliance**

I.     <u>Findings</u>

The Department of **Early Years Learning & Care** of the University of Ioannina was founded in 2018. It belongs to the School of Social Sciences of UIO and resulted from the transition of the Technological Educational Institute (TEI) of Epirus. The EEAP members studied the packet of materials available from three different sources:

- the first was the material from HAHE
- the second was the material from the Department's website (https://eylc.uoi.gr/)
- and the third was related to the very comprehensive presentations of the members of MODIP of the UIO and of the Head of the Department

The transition from the pre-existing UGP of Preschool Education of TEI to the new Early Childhood Education Undergraduate Program followed specific and foreseen procedures:

- The laws 4559/2018, 4610/2019
- The Senate Decision No. 1068/27-06-2019 concerning the approval of the new Undergraduate Program and the correspondences/transitions of the courses between the pre-existing and the new Undergraduate Program
- The Senate Decision No. 1069/18-07-2019 concerning the receipt of a degree by the students of the former TEI of Epirus from the University of Ioannina (Annex B26.2) as well as the updated Senate decisions no. 1094/21-09-2020, 1101/18-02-2021 and 1117/09-09-2021
- The Act of the Head of the Department for the matching of the courses between the two Undergraduate Programs, the determination of the transitional courses and those related to the transition process from the pre-existing Undergraduate Program to the new one (Annex B26.2).

These materials concern, among others, a Quality Assurance Policy document for the Undergraduate Program, the Undergraduate Student Guide, documentation on the legal framework, as well as a plethora of supportive materials and appendices concerning the relations of the past Department to the new one. Among the available material, there are the regulations of the study program, the template of the degree and the diploma supplement of the pre-existing Undergraduate Program (see documents B29, B30). Moreover, there is a list of the academic and teaching staff and their status, and the content area and the course they teach from the pre-existing Undergraduate program (document B31). Finally, the report of the MODIP reflects the process of the transition and the degree of completion of the Program. In the case of the former TEI program, the report should include a specific reference to how the traineeship is implemented (document B32).

According to the provisions of the law 4957/2018, undergraduate students of the Department of TEI were given the opportunity to choose:

- to graduate and receive the corresponding degree of the Department of TEI
- to apply to the secretariat of the Department of the UOI and attend additional courses from the new curriculum in order to receive the new university education degree

The pre-existing curriculum was completed in September 2022. Students of the old Undergraduate Program, who did not complete their studies until September 2022, will have the opportunity to be examined in the courses of the old Undergraduate Program of TEI. During the transitional period, the internship was reserved for students of the pre-existing undergraduate program (Academic year 2019-2020, 74 students, Academic year 2020--2021, 67 students, Academic year 2021-2022, 114 students).


## II.    Analysis of judgement

The Program has the appropriate specialized teaching faculty and staff, that clearly, are committed in providing their students with sound and thoughtful learning and teaching experiences. Moreover, the UIO and the Department of Early Years Learning & Care have prepared a plan for the transition period of the existing UGP until its completion by including

data on the transition and subsequent progression of students in the respective new UGP of Department as well as the specific graduation forecast for students enrolled under the previous status. The EEAP believes that the undertaken measures by the UIO and the Department guarantee the smooth delivery and termination of the former UGP (TEI).

### III.   Conclusions

It is quite evident, that the UIO and the Program have implemented all necessary procedures for the transition from the former UGPs (TEI) to the new one, to ensure their compliance with the requirements of the professional and academic standards.

**Panel Judgement**

| Principle 12: Monitoring the transition from previous undergraduate study programmes to the new ones | |
| --- | --- |
| Fully compliant | **V** |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

**Panel Recommendations**

None.

## PART C: CONCLUSIONS

### I. Features of Good Practice

- The Department has signed bilateral agreements with 14 university institutions abroad, including the VIA University of Denmark, the Universities of Coruna and Jaen in Spain, the Mykolo Romerio University in Lithuania and the ECOLE SANTE SOCIAL SUDEST University in France. An agreement was recently signed with Del Atlántico Medio University in the Canary Islands of Spain. The prerequisites for the mobility of the students for the Erasmus+ program, are described in the relevant regulation (Mobility Regulation) and the website of the Department.
- Students describe the faculty as hard working, inspirational, and motivated to teach and very responsive to students' needs. The Department constantly strives for the rational and effective utilization of the resources that provides for its students.
- It is quite evident, that the UIO and the Program have implemented all necessary procedures for the transition from the former UGPs (TEI) to the new one, to ensure their compliance with the requirements of the professional and academic standards.

### II. Areas of Weakness

- The study program must be restructured since it does not include the internship as a compulsory course.
- The distribution of ECTS to courses that cover major aspects of the profession should be substantially increased (e.g., to courses related with educational evaluation and assessment, and teaching methodology, as well as to the Internship).
- The study program does not give sufficient attention to courses that can help students develop their research skills.
- The ratio students/staff is high.

### III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

- Restructure the program of study to include the include the Teaching Practice (TP) component as a compulsory course. Specifically, a time-intensive TP in the final year of study, perhaps with two 2-month internships across both semesters of the fourth year, may be a distinguishing characteristic and, one that students have expressed in this committee's interviews, as more desirable than the current TP timetable.
- Distribute sufficient ECTS to courses that cover major aspects of the profession (e.g., to courses related with educational evaluation and assessment, and teaching methodology, as well as to the Internship).
- Include courses on educational research and program evaluation to develop students' research skills.

- Encourage students to take advantage of the ERASMUS or other relevant programs. To achieve this aim, more Erasmus agreements with universities and childcare providers should have been established.
- Provide graduates with a specialization in multicultural and special education in ECEC, given the recent and ongoing presence of children and their families from ethnolinguistic and social class groups in the public domain.
- Strengthen the supervision of the students in the field/ECEC sites based upon observation/supervision "protocols" that will better serve the students, the university supervisor, and the attending mentor teacher.
- Conduct a website upgrade to describe the program and its goals.
- Undergo a review of curricula and practicum experiences in response to student data so that they continue to offer a program that prepares students for successful careers in early childhood.
- Increase the percentage of student participation in course evaluations and in other surveys related to the Department performance.
- Develop the Alumni contact Network to keep graduates informed about the Department's events, workshops and activities.
  Encourage the Department to establish a procedure for collecting systematic data from social partners.
- Increase the number of offices for the academic faculty/staff members for meeting the increasing needs of the Department.
- Improve the teaching areas/facilities with chairs/furniture that contribute to small group activities/cooperative learning (for example, desks should be replaced with individual seats and folding lecterns). The lightning of these rooms should be also improved.
- Improve the building and teaching areas to meet the needs of students with special needs.
- Enhance the subscriptions to electronic databases, to meet the research needs both of faculty members and the students. Specifically, the library should consider the use of Educational Research Abstracts Online (ERA).

## IV.    Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: **2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11 and 12.**

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: **1, 5, 7, and 8.**

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

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

| Overall Judgement | |
|---|---|
| Fully compliant | |
| Substantially compliant | **V** |
| Partially compliant | |
| Non-compliant | |

# The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

**Name and Surname**                                                                 **Signature**

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