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HELLENIC REPUBLIC
H.Q.A.
HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE
AND ACCREDITATION AGENCY

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

SCHOOL:
APPLIED ARTS

UNIVERSITY:
HELLENIC OPEN UNIVERSITY



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External Evaluation Committee

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the **School of Applied Arts of The Hellenic Open University** consisted of the following three (3) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by the HQA in accordance with Law 3374/2005 :

1. Professor Panayiotis Zaphiris (Coordinator)
Cyprus University of Technology, Cyprus

2. Professor Emeritus, Rick M. Newton
Kent State University, Kent, Ohio, USA

3. Professor Jason Karaindros
Rouen/Le Havre Higher School of Art, France

N.B. The structure of the “Template” proposed for the External Evaluation Report mirrors the requirements of Law 3374/2005 and corresponds overall to the structure of the Internal Evaluation Report submitted by the Department.

The length of text in each box is free. Questions included in each box are not exclusive nor should they always be answered separately; they are meant to provide a general outline of matters that should be addressed by the Committee when formulating its comments.

Introduction

I. The External Evaluation Procedure

The External Evaluation Committee (henceforth: Committee) visited the School of Applied Arts (henceforth: School) of the Hellenic Open University (HOU) from 10 to 12 February 2014. To prepare for the visit, the Committee members had individually read and studied the Internal Evaluation Report which the School had earlier submitted to ADIP/HQA, as well as other materials which had been electronically submitted. The Committee also had access to links from the University and School website. During the on-site visit, furthermore, the full-time faculty provided other materials (printouts and electronic copies of power-point presentations prepared by faculty, copies of all full-time and part-time faculty CVs, and samples of printed and wiki-based teaching materials which included all textbooks published by the HOU for this specific School). In addition, the Committee reviewed samples of student written work (postgraduate theses, a PhD dissertation, and coursework) which were available in the meeting room.

On the morning of 10 February, the Committee attended a general orientation and briefing session for evaluators at the ADIP headquarters in Athens. They then walked to the HOU offices in Athens where they met the President of the HOU Governing Body (Prof. Haralambos Kokosis) and two faculty from the School of Applied Arts: Full-time (“DEP”) Assistant Professor Stelios Zerefos, and Part-time (“SEP”) Professor Frangiskos Topalis. A power-point presentation ensued, outlining the history, structure, and operations of the HOU. A question-and-answer discussion followed, in which the Committee gathered specific information pertaining to the School and the the delivery of Distance Learning.

Assistant Prof. Zerefos then drove the Committee from Athens to the HOU campus in Patras where they met the other two members of the faculty (Professor Dimitrios Zevgolis, Lecturer Eirini Mavrommati). Associate Professor Achilleas Kameas (Director of the Educational Content, Methodology, and Technology Laboratory – “EEYEM”) gave a presentation on the horizontal structure of administrative and educational services of the HOU. He specifically presented the goals and services provided by EEYEM and the Counseling Office of the University. At the end of the day, the members of the Committee were conveyed to their hotel.

On 11 February, the Committee visited the EYEM offices in person, where Associate Professor Kameas provided a tour of the facilities (textbook warehouse, book editing and reviewing offices, research offices) and explained the process of developing, printing, and mailing textbooks to HOU students. This was followed by a tour of all other facilities of the Patras Campus of the HOU by the University General Secretary (Mr. Labis Rodopoulos). Associate Professor Michalis Xenos and two colleagues from the University's Division of Quality Insurance and Development then gave an extensive presentation of the rigorous quality assurance mechanisms the HOU has implemented at the University level.

In the afternoon of the same day, the three full-time faculty members of the School presented detailed descriptions of the three postgraduate programs, describing each module and distributing copies of the textbooks used for each module, samples of student projects, and copies of Masters theses. During the presentations, the Committee was free to ask questions and engage in discussion. In addition, via Skype, various members from the part-time faculty who serve as tutors/instructors and coordinators of the three programs assisted in helping the Committee understand how the programs operate, how teaching is conducted, and how students utilize the resources. Near the end of the day, the Committee met with 5 students and graduates from the School for a question-and-answer session. In addition, via Skype, the Committee met with two more part-time faculty members and an additional alumnus.

Before leaving the campus, the Committee shared their general impressions with the three full-time faculty. A cordial farewell dinner for the Committee was hosted by the General Secretary of the University and attended also by the three full-time members of the School.

On 12 February, the Committee members devoted the entire day in the hotel to further discuss findings and impressions and to compose the report.

II. The Internal Evaluation Procedure

The materials and documents which had been submitted in advance of the visit were, in the Committee's estimation, minimally informative. The Internal Evaluation Report was very brief, lacking much essential information needed by the Committee in order to form genuine initial impressions of the quality of the School.

On the other hand, the Committee believes that the on-site visit was extremely useful and very well-organized, providing many details crucial to a fair evaluation. The

campus visit was the main source of information. In particular, the person-to-person exchanges that took place in formal meetings and informal conversations established a healthy and open atmosphere for exchange of ideas and provided the most reliable foundation for a fair and accurate assessment. This spirit of open communication and exchange of ideas applies both to the in-person and on-line meetings and interviews. The personal contact and in-depth information that arose from the on-site visit was especially beneficial in enabling the Committee to evaluate and assess the School's programs and resources as presented on websites and in the documents provided.

The Committee also notes, however, that the time allotted by the schedule which had been mandated by ADIP imposed an undue burden and stress on both the Committee and the School, potentially resulting in an evaluation that may not do full justice to this impressive School. The two full days, which included driving from Athens to Patras, were overscheduled and did not allow the Committee time to reflect and discuss their observations among themselves. If the Committee had been permitted to devote the amount of time normally allotted for such reviews (i.e., three full visiting days that include time to reflect and share impressions, followed by two days *in situ* to compose the External Evaluation Report), this evaluation may have been significantly stronger and more precise.

A. Curriculum

To be filled separately for each undergraduate, graduate and doctoral programme.

APPROACH

The School's "niche" combines arts (graphic, light, sound, and multimedia) and digital technology with the currently evolving pedagogy of Distance Learning. In keeping with the mission of the HOU, the School is "open" not only in making graduate-level education accessible to non-traditional students throughout Greece but also in "opening" doors and career opportunities to the university-educated population. Alumni of this School are well-positioned to pursue meaningful careers and contribute significantly to the business/commercial sector and to the cultural/artistic/technological society of all of Greece. The School is also "open" in bringing together a large faculty of part-time tutoring instructors from throughout the country who teach, coordinate and direct the modules of each program. A "Distance Teaching" culture is evolving from the HOU and this School. Many of these instructors are themselves highly accomplished and active scholars/artists, employed on a full-time basis in other areas of higher education. The School of Applied Arts is making maximum use of the most highly educated people in Greece.

The School currently offers two Masters programs: one in Graphic Arts-Multimedia and one in Lighting Design. Beginning October 2014, the School will launch its third

program, in Sound Design. Teaching materials are currently in press.

Full-time students earn the degree by completing 2 years of study modules (2 per year), followed by a third year of thesis work. Part-time students have the option of taking more time, according to their personal circumstances. Each module provides complete teaching materials (in-print and online) and a detailed weekly schedule. Via Distance Learning, the students meet with their tutors as they study. In addition, students meet 5 times per year (approximately every 2 months) in person with their tutors and fellow students. The modules require projects, which are carried out through individual and group work, and a final examination. The School has developed a weighting mechanism guaranteeing that students receive appropriate exposure to theory and creative activity. The examinations include multiple-choice questions, short answers and essays. Throughout each module, students maintain regular contact with the tutors through email and telephone.

At the moment, class size is set at 20-30 students per section. The Committee recommends that, with regard to courses in Design, the maximum enrollment be lowered to 15 or even less. This revision would bring the Design components into a better alignment with international standards and practice.

On both the Masters and Doctoral levels, the degree programs are innovative, interdisciplinary, and efficiently managed. The programs have been designed and implemented by a full-time faculty who are visionary with regard to education and its expansion via technology.

In addition, the School places a high value on exposing students to the international aspects of applied arts. For example, they hosted a number of summer schools through ERASMUS.

IMPLEMENTATION

See above

RESULTS

- How well is the implementation achieving the Department's predefined goals and objectives?
- If not, why is it so? How is this problem dealt with?
- Does the Department understand why and how it achieved or failed to achieve these results?

Student demand for these programs is high: in each program, 60 students are admitted every year out of 250 applications, resulting in an overall acceptance ration of approximately 1:5.

Interviews with the School's alumni indicate a very high degree of student satisfaction with the program and a pride in the School.

IMPROVEMENT

- Does the Department know how the Curriculum should be improved?
- Which improvements does the Department plan to introduce?

Because the domain of Distance Learning implies also Distance Teaching, the School should explore ways of enriching the student experience by incorporating such events as guest lecturers from abroad (via Skype and other projections). Such educational outreach might extend to co-teaching of different modules by experts within their fields.

Because this is a School of *Applied Arts* that relies on *Distance Learning*, the “real” world of business, culture, and commerce can be utilized as a new kind of “classroom.” Students who lack access to a conventional campus might thereby benefit in multiple ways from greater interactivity with non-academic venues.

Although the School's vision extends to the international level, attention might also be given to establishing and cultivating more systematic relationships with local and regional bodies within Greece. The successes already achieved via networking with Phillips Hellas in Lighting Design (in Athens), for example, provides a model for further outreach. Such new contacts might be developed by expanding the links that current student and alumni have already established through their current or future employers. The Committee believes that such contacts could be organized and formalized under an umbrella, such as a “Friends of Applied Arts School of HOU”. These alliances linking the academic and business worlds may prove quite prolific in providing access to specialized facilities (that the School currently lacks) and to art studios that can significantly advance their education. Furthermore, such partnerships can provide scholarships, training, internships and business-sponsored donations to the program.

Departmental plans are underway for an “Erasmus+” program, for developing teaching materials in English, and a Joint Masters Program so that international students can enroll in these degree programs which are not only distinctive but

unique on an international level. In addition, the faculty are seeking to extend the programs to students in Turkey and Asia.

The School should consider the creation of new Masters programs in other areas such as: interactive media, web design, technologies in theater and cinema. Some of these programs could be developed also for international students and develop teaching materials in the appropriate languages.

The School has articulated a clear strategy and approach to PhD supervision, which includes regular student-faculty meetings, annual progress reports and a final defense of dissertations. To date, one PhD candidate has completed the program, and six are *in cursu*.

B. Teaching

APPROACH:

The School has clearly succeeded in humanizing and personalizing both Distance Learning and Distance Teaching. Committee interviews with students and alumni revealed that students feel a strong connection with the School, despite the fact that most students are not physically present on the main campus. Through the small-group projects that are an integral part of the curriculum, students have succeeded in forming “mini-communities” in which they support each other.

The students and alumni with whom the Committee met (both in-person and via Skype) unanimously expressed pride in and fondness for the School, its programs, and the faculty. Students also indicated that, despite their physical separation for one another, they had established friendships through meeting in person at the bi-monthly plenary sessions with the tutors.

Before beginning their tutoring duties, incoming part-time faculty attend orientation and training seminars that are useful and effective in acquainting them with Distance Learning.

The success rate of students who complete the degree is strong (60%). This is especially significant when one considers that the lottery system through which students are selected admits many who lack the necessary background for graduate study in these particular and highly specialized disciplines.

Since this is a School of Applied Arts, students are exposed to non-academic

activities related to their field of study: for example, visits to the “Phillips Hellas” plant and “Pallas Theater” in Athens have taken place. Participation in the “Athens Festival Plaython” took place in 2012.

Interviews with full-time and part-time faculty, furthermore, revealed a commitment by the tutors toward their students. Faculty are accessible, as are the support staff on the main campus in Patras, who respond in timely fashion to requests for assistance, materials, etc.

IMPLEMENTATION

Please comment on:

- Quality of teaching procedures
- Quality and adequacy of teaching materials and resources.
- Quality of course material. Is it brought up to date?
- Linking of research with teaching
- Mobility of academic staff and students
- Evaluation by the students of (a) the teaching and (b) the course content and study material/resources

The School relies heavily on printed materials which are published and controlled by the HOU. Despite the administrative efficiencies in assembling and disseminating these hard-copy materials, the very bulk of these books and packets presents a conventional model and inefficient image to students who expect state-of-the-art delivery and methods. In addition, the time-lag required to produce an in-print book results in the publication of materials and methods that may be obsolescent by the time they appear. For example, students in the Graphic Arts-Multimedia program indicate in their course evaluations that the teaching materials are outdated. Faculty members confirm this. The Committee understands that financial and bureaucratic pressures add to these delays and problems.

RESULTS

Please comment on:

- Efficacy of teaching.
- Discrepancies in the success/failure percentage between courses and how they are justified.
- Differences between students in (a) the time to graduation, and (b) final degree grades.

- Whether the Department understands the reasons of such positive or negative results?

See above

IMPROVEMENT

- Does the Department propose methods and ways for improvement?
- What initiatives does it take in this direction?

Like other Distance Learning Schools (both nationally and internationally), the drop-out rate in this School during the first year is high. The Committee therefore recommends that the School develop and circulate informational/publicity materials to guide prospective students before they decide to submit an application and enter the lottery pool. Although some students stop as a result of personal circumstances, others quit because they either are unable to comprehend and master the material or because they had formed an inaccurate picture of what their program entails. School guidelines and further refinement of the need for background preparation in specific areas (e.g., art, math, physics) may serve as an advising instrument to help students select a program to which they are suited and for which they are both interested and qualified.

To further the goal of attracting and retaining better-qualified students, the School should consider forming small local study-groups (either student-initiated or, preferably, faculty-guided) especially within the first year so as to provide an ongoing orientation to the specific areas of study. For many students, both the course content and the means of teaching are new, requiring a significant cognitive shift and adjustment as to how this mode of education “works.” By relying on social media to facilitate such discussions and communications, students would significantly reduce the current need for such traditional services as expensive private tutoring.

Although the School has established, via its Internal Review Committee, an impressive technological network for collecting and publishing data for various modules and programs (course evaluations, student responses to teaching materials, etc.), such data has yet to be explored with the goal of creating an environment in which the methodologies and potentials of Distance Learning/Teaching become themselves a focal point for School identity and activity. Colloquia, workshops, and seminars might be organized for the discussion and advancement of this new pedagogy and its potentials.

With significant support from the University, the School should explore more efficient means of developing and distributing all teaching materials so that both

content and methods remain up-to-date within these rapidly and constantly evolving disciplines. The Committee finds the current “in-house” system of production of printed course materials costly, time-consuming, and cumbersome. Counter to the spirit of Distance Learning, an over-reliance on traditional printed teaching materials persists. Students in Graphic Arts and Multimedia, in particular, report that course materials are already outdated. Likewise, although the newest in-print and in-press materials for Light Design/ Sound Design Multimedia are appropriate and impressive, these books are likely to become soon obsolescent.

In order to further expand the exposure of students to international trends the Committee suggests that, in addition to the 5 meeting sessions required every year, students be given the opportunity to attend lectures (either in person or online) by Greek and international artists, designers, architects, researchers, theorists and the like. In addition, students would benefit from systematic contact with professionals working in cinema, lighting, sound and theater. To build on the new tradition of Distance Learning, the School should furthermore archive and electronically distribute these lectures, talks and demonstrations to current and prospective students.

The School should establish its own exhibition area in which students and faculty can present their creative work to the general public. This space can also act as a venue for seminars, workshops and community outreach (including the “Friends of the School” mentioned earlier). Because this is a School of Applied Arts, student creative activity should manifest itself in a concrete and physical format and not remain strictly online.

Furthermore, the School should consider taking advantage of the flexibility inherent in the internal design of each module with the goal of making the program even more applied. The Committee recommends that one or two of the assigned projects be replaced with practical training. Such an internship might include a one-week placement with professional practitioners at the end of which the student submits a written report. In this way, students can establish contacts with industry.

The ERASMUS program should be expanded to include educational excursions, visits to museums, art galleries and theaters, etc. In addition, exposure of the highest-performing students to international residencies, short-term workshops abroad, and international design competitions would be of benefit to the entire program.

The Committee strongly believes that the School is unique in offering Distance Education in Creative Arts. This provides an opportunity to initiate an annual conference series dedicated to “Distance Education in Creative Arts and Design.”

This international conference has the potential to attract international experts, academics, artists, researchers, and business people who specialize in this specific domain. The conference will include paper presentations, panels, workshops and seminars. Full-time and part-time faculty and students will have a forum through which to learn and develop new pedagogy methodologies and approaches. They will also have the chance to share their own experiences with international colleagues. This conference will be co-hosted in conjunction with the annual student work exhibit and serve to recruit prospective students and faculty.

C. Research

For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate level, if necessary.

APPROACH

- What is the Department's policy and main objective in research?
- Has the Department set internal standards for assessing research?

The full-time faculty of the School, consisting currently of three members (specializing in Physics, Architecture, and Graphic Arts/Interactive Design), is interdisciplinary. The small size of this group is, understandably, not conducive to forming research collaborations. As a result, no specific "research team" has yet evolved. Nevertheless, these individuals have brought to the School significant research and study experience (such as the Phillips Research Laboratory) that provides potential for development.

In addition to the small number of full-time faculty, the School's research potential is hampered by the many managerial and administrative duties they have undertaken in order to deliver the programs. The Hellenic Open University is a teaching-focused institution with 40,000 students and a small number of full-time faculty. Within this context, it is especially commendable that some junior members have a publication record that far surpasses their current rank.

IMPLEMENTATION

- How does the Department promote and support research?
- Quality and adequacy of research infrastructure and support.
- Scientific publications.
- Research projects.
- Research collaborations.

The School does not provide dedicated research labs for either faculty or PhD candidates. At present, the bulk of faculty research activity takes place in traditional office spaces or at nearby facilities of other universities or research centers.

The constraints under which the School operates (inadequate funding for research equipment, limited travel funds to international academic conferences and events,

absence of research positions, lack of dedicated physical facilities: all inhibiting factors in addition to faculty shortages) have a pronounced negative impact on actualizing and maximizing the full research potential of the School. The Committee considers this situation unfortunate, especially since this School is cutting new paths in the application of Distance Learning to arts and technology. The very mission and operation of this particular School constitutes a new field of interdisciplinary research in which arts, technology, and the evolving pedagogy of Distance Learning interface and inform one another.

By organizing ERASMUS IP summer programs, the School has established links with international entities which focus more on student training than on basic research. If funding becomes available, opportunities for further collaboration and research partnerships will surely arise.

The Masters theses produced by students often provide the basis for conference and journal papers presented by the faculty. The low number of citations which these publications and presentations have generated is perhaps due to the fact that the level of research is not equivalent to more ground-breaking findings as traditionally occurs in academic units with flourishing PhD programs.

Although the current full-time faculty have not secured external funding for research projects, they have submitted proposals for funded projects.

The three full-time faculty produce a steady stream of journal and conference publications (approximately 7 journal articles and 5 conference papers per year). Given the low number of citations (approximately 50 per year), the Committee suggests that the faculty continue to publish at the same rate but, where possible, attempt to target higher-impact journals and conferences. In addition, the recently issued EU calls for funding (Horizon 2020) may provide opportunity for research projects with wide international scholarly potential and prestige. Acquisition of such funding would strengthen and confirm the momentum of the School.

In making these recommendations, the Committee notes that “conventional ” formats for measuring scholarly activity and output, as required by the ADIP evaluation model, may result in an unfair and skewed assessment of a faculty housed in the Hellenic Open University whose unconventional mission stresses teaching. It is also to be noted that the part-time faculty who serve as tutors are, to a very large extent, accomplished researchers and artists, as a study of their CVs reveals.

RESULTS

- How successfully were the Department’s research objectives implemented?
- Scientific publications.
- Research projects.
- Research collaborations.
- Efficacy of research work. Applied results. Patents etc.
- Is the Department’s research acknowledged and visible outside the Department?
Rewards and awards.

See above

IMPROVEMENT

- Improvements in research proposed by the Department, if necessary.
- Initiatives in this direction undertaken by the Department .

To cultivate and strengthen the Department research culture, the Committee recommends the following:

- The faculty should identify the School's unique research focus. Committed to the teaching and delivery of art education via Distance Learning, the faculty find themselves at the intersection of many fertile disciplines in which pedagogy, technology, arts, and sciences inform one another. The School has an opportunity to take an internationally leading role in this evolving dynamic.
- The University should explore ways of providing consistent and adequate funding for research/conference travel for faculty and PhD students. Junior faculty should be provided with funding (especially equipment and research time) for initiating and executing research projects.
- As the main campus of the Hellenic Open University continues to grow, plans its future buildings, and designates space, the central administration should incorporate research laboratories for the School of Applied Arts. In terms of budgeting, furthermore, allocations must be provided for up-to-date research equipment, including software and all licenses, especially those suited to Distance Learning and Communication. Such equipment would also establish a better environment for research collaborations and outputs.
- The School should further strengthen its links with other established research institutions in Greece and abroad. The Committee notes that links with University of Patras and CTI, for example, already exist.
- The School should establish a PhD seminar in which candidates are given the opportunity both to present their work to faculty and peers and to receive feedback. It is especially important that doctoral candidates in a Distance Learning context do not become isolated researchers. Such seminars might be linked to the "Distance Learning Conference" proposed in the Teaching section of this report.

D. All Other Services

For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate level, if necessary.

APPROACH

- How does the Department view the various services provided to the members of the academic community (teaching staff, students).
- Does the Department have a policy to simplify administrative procedures? Are most procedures processed electronically?
- Does the Department have a policy to increase student presence on Campus?

The Committee finds the various administrative services provided to the faculty impressive. The Hellenic Open University has received an ISO accreditation for its services and has established a strong “horizontal” administrative structure through which central services provide support to the various schools.

It is also impressive that students can perform all their activities online (e.g., register for modules, follow course schedules, download and upload assignments, receive transcripts, track grades, borrow physical copies of books from the library, etc.). The University also provides impressive services for Distance Learning pedagogies and quality assurance in teaching, complete with sophisticated online systems through which student feedback is recorded and analyzed.

The University offers scholarships for especially meritorious students and for students with financial and special needs.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Organization and infrastructure of the Department’s administration (e.g. secretariat of the Department).
- Form and function of academic services and infrastructure for students (e.g. library, PCs and free internet access, student counseling, athletic- cultural activity etc.).

The administrative staff of the HOU are well–trained. Clear and efficient procedures are in place for all administrative tasks.

With regard to the University Library, students and faculty report a lack of holdings in art and design textbooks that are of central importance.

The university provides wireless internet access throughout its campus.

RESULTS

- Are administrative and other services adequate and functional?
- How does the Department view the particular results.

The Committee finds that the support services work well and effectively. The School expressed a similar opinion and seems to be generally satisfied with the support provided. Interviews with the students confirmed these impressions.

IMPROVEMENTS

- Has the Department identified ways and methods to improve the services provided?
- Initiatives undertaken in this direction.

Although the University has implemented a very successful horizontal system of administrative services, the Committee feels that there is also a need for a dedicated administrator at the School level. A School administrator can serve as a liaison between the faculty and the University administrative services, assisting in

alleviating the current workload of the full-time faculty. Such a liaison would also contribute to making communication between the School and various services even smoother.

The School also needs to put more emphasis on documenting and following the employability and future careers of its alumni. Examples of successes and accomplishments by the alumni were shared with the Committee, but these remain anecdotal. No fully designed system for monitoring and recording these accomplishments and for tracking alumni is in place. Given the importance of such data for future evaluations and eventual accreditation, priority should be given to forming a School Alumni Association. It is particularly important that a Distance Learning school consolidate alumni successes and maintain contact with all of its graduates.

Collaboration with social, cultural and production organizations

Please, comment on quality, originality and significance of the Department's initiatives.

The School's initiatives include the organization of ERASMUS Intensive Programs (IP) summer schools (with international participation) and participation at local art exhibitions. The Committee encourages strengthening these outreach efforts both in order to expose the School to society at large and to provide important cultural and educational services to the community (see the Teaching Section for suggestions on how to expand outreach to local organizations and business).

E. Strategic Planning, Perspectives for Improvement and Dealing with Potential Inhibiting Factors

For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate level, if necessary.

Please, comment on the Department's:

- Potential inhibiting factors at State, Institutional and Departmental level, and proposals on ways to overcome them.
- Short-, medium- and long-term goals.
- Plan and actions for improvement by the Department/Academic Unit
- Long-term actions proposed by the Department.

The HOU has managed, through its tuition system, to be financially independent:

unlike conventional state universities in Greece, which receive the majority of their funding from the state, the HOU receives only 10% of its funding from state sources. Approximately 90% of its budget comes from tuition and other sources of self-funding (e.g. external research grants). This university is therefore in a very good financial situation and in a position to expand and prosper as it broadens its support for this particular School.

Despite the HOU's efficient administrative services and procedures, however, legislative instability and state bureaucracy continues to impose numerous restrictions on the School and its faculty. For example, the Committee learned that the School must first obtain approval from the Ministry of Education before it can offer new programs. This requirement extends to the level of module modification, resulting in serious impediments that make it virtually impossible for the School to update even specific modules. By the time the School is finally authorized to implement programmatic revisions, these revisions are themselves already outdated. With regard to faculty, furthermore, legislative bureaucracy is responsible for long delays in professional advancement (tenure track hirings, promotions, replacement of faculty lines).

The most pressing challenge facing the School is its shortage of full-time faculty. There is an urgent need for approving and staffing the 3 new positions which the School has requested. Such additions will lighten the current faculty's administrative burden and allow greater focus on both teaching and research.

The on-site visit and discussions with the faculty revealed that the School has well-defined plans for development. These include, but are not limited to, recruiting faculty who specialize in the new Masters programs in Sound and Lighting Design, initiating more collaborations with international entities, updating current teaching materials, moving teaching content online, and developing new Masters programs in other specializations.

F. Final Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC

For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate level, if necessary.

The Committee summarizes its key findings in the three areas below.

Particular strengths include the following:

- On both the Masters and Doctoral levels, the degree programs are innovative, interdisciplinary, and efficiently managed.
- The School has been designed and implemented by a full-time faculty who are visionary with regard to education and its expansion via technology.
- Student demand for these programs is high.
- The School has clearly succeeded in humanizing and personalizing both Distance Learning and Distance Teaching.
- The students and alumni expressed pride in and fondness for the School, its programs, and the faculty.
- Serving as tutors, the part-time faculty exhibit a commitment to their students.
- The success rate of students who complete the degree is strong (60%).
- The full-time faculty and leadership of the School have a clear understanding of the potential for expansion to international audiences.
- Relationships have been established with artistic and technological specialists from England, France, Germany, Switzerland, Spain and elsewhere.
- Outreach activities to local and regional organizations have begun and are ready to be expanded and formalized.
- The School is positioned to contribute to the intellectual, cultural, and business activities in the various tutorial centers located throughout Greece (e.g. Athens, Thessaloniki).

As the School looks to the future, the Committee advises the following improvements and modifications:

- The University must increase the numbers of its current full-time faculty who oversee the School (currently one professor, one assistant professor, and one lecturer). The School has expressed a need for three additional full-time faculty in various specialties over the next seven years. The Committee supports this request. In order to raise the School's status, visibility, and reputation to the levels it deserves, the HOU must support research.
- The current full-time faculty are overly distracted by management responsibilities. Actively engaged in Distance Learning, these faculty members find themselves on the cutting edge of an emerging scholarly discipline (namely, the interface of Distance Learning and arts/technology) in which they are leaders. They require institutional support in order to advance and publish their investigations.
- To address the problem of first-year dropouts, the Committee recommends that the School develop and circulate informational/publicity materials to guide prospective students before they decide to submit an application and enter to lottery pool.

- To further the goal of retaining better-qualified students, the School should consider forming small local study groups (either student-initiated or, preferably, faculty-guided) especially within the first year.
- Because the domain of Distance Learning implies also Distance Teaching, the School should explore ways of enriching the student experience by incorporating such events as guest lecturers from abroad (via Skype and other projections).
- With significant support from the University, the School should explore more efficient means of developing and distributing all teaching materials so that both content and methods remain up-to-date within these rapidly and constantly evolving disciplines.

Finally, the Committee recommends the implementation of the following 3 initiatives:

- In preparing for further external evaluations and ultimate accreditation reviews, the School should formally institute a School Alumni Association.
- Although the School's vision extends to the international level, attention might also be given to establishing and cultivating more systematic relationships with local and regional bodies within Greece. The Committee recommends the establishment of a "Friends of the School of Applied Arts of HOU"
- Establish an international conference series in "Distance Education in Creative Arts and Design."

The Members of the Committee

Name and Surname	Signature
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