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Accreditation Report
for the Undergraduate Study Programme
(Integrated Master) of:

Agricultural Economics and Rural Development
Institution: Agricultural University of Athens
Date: 2 July 2022



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



Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the Undergraduate Study Programme (Integrated Master) of **Agricultural Economics and Rural Development** of the **Agricultural University of Athens** 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 Undergraduate Study Programme (Integrated Master) of **Agricultural Economics and Rural Development** of the **Agricultural University of Athens** comprised the following five (5) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

- 1. Harold W. Eberhard Distinguished Professor Konstantinos Giannakas (Chair)**
University of Nebraska-Lincoln, U.S.A.

- 2. Professor Emeritus Spiros Agathos**
Université Catholique de Louvain, Belgium

- 3. Professor Konstantinos Karantininis**
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Lomma, Sweden

- 4. Mr Loukianos Kontelas**
Geotechnical Chamber of Greece

- 5. Student Ms Maria Vargiami**
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel (the Panel) members, Professor Konstantinos Giannakas, Professor Spiros Agathos, Professor Kostas Karantininis, Mr. Loukianos Kontelas and Ms. Maria Vargiami started communicating about the review process via email shortly after the formation of the Panel.

The Panel was provided, prior to the formal beginning of the review process, with the required documentation for study and evaluation. These documents included the Proposal for Accreditation of the Department, the University's Quality Assurance Policy, the Department's external evaluation report of 2011, the study guide, and other relevant documentation. Additional documents were provided during the visit upon the Panel's request.

The formal part of the evaluation & accreditation process began on Monday, June 27, with a private teleconference meeting where the Panel discussed the Department's accreditation proposal and guidelines of the study program evaluation & accreditation process and allocated the tasks of the review process.

Following the private meeting, the Panel had a teleconference meeting with the Rector/President of MODIP, Professor Spyridon Kintzios and the Head of the Department, Professor Efstathios Klonaris who presented the history of the Department and its current status and stated their support of the external evaluation & accreditation process. An overview of the Agricultural University of Athens and its relevant policies was also presented.

The next meeting was with members of the Internal Evaluation Group (OMEA) Professors Efstathios Klonaris, Konstantina Kostopoulou, Stavros Zografakis and Alexandros Koutsouris, Associate Professors Georgios Georgakopoulos and Pavlos Karanikolas, and Assistant Professor Konstantinos Chatzimichael and MODIP Member Professor Athanasios Kampas and Secretary Alexandra Ntouka to discuss the undergraduate program of studies, and the ways in which the unit complies with the Accreditation Standards.

The first day of the review process was concluded with a private meeting of the Panel where its members had the opportunity to reflect on the previous meetings and prepare for the day after.

The review process on Tuesday, June 28, began with a teleconference meeting with teaching staff members Professors Antonios Rezitis and Konstantinos Tsimpoukas, Associate Professor Christos Papadas and Assistant Professors Georgios Vlahos, Chrisovalantis Malesios, Sotirios Karetsos, Maria Ntaliani and Achilleas Vassilopoulos to discuss professional development opportunities, mobility, workload, student evaluations, competence and adequacy of the teaching staff to ensure learning outcomes, links between teaching and research, faculty

involvement in research activities directly related to the teaching program, and possible areas of weakness.

The day progressed with teleconference meetings with undergraduate students, alumni, and employers and social partners. Discussions with students and alumni centered on student experiences and satisfaction with the Department as well as their views on the program of studies.

The external stakeholders (Mr. Baginetas, Mr. Lianos, Mr. Vardas Mrs. Lazaridou, Mrs. Tzouramani, Mr. Stachtiaris, Mrs. Malamateniou, Mr. Vakamis and Mr. Mpellis) expressed positive feelings and very strong support for the Department and described their experiences and cooperation with the staff and graduates of the Department.

Between the meetings the Panel was given an online tour of the facilities and learning resources and had the opportunity to discuss the state of these facilities with the Department Head, the secretary of the Department and specialized and laboratory teaching staff.

The second day of the review concluded with a short private meeting of the Panel.

Our interactions with the members of the evaluated unit on Wednesday, June 29, began with a teleconference meeting with the OMEA and MODIP representatives to discuss several points and findings that required further clarification, and concluded with a brief meeting with the Vice-Rector/President of MODIP, the Head of the Department, and representatives of MODIP and OMEA during which the Panel presented the key findings of its evaluation.

The Panel acknowledges the collegial and professional attitude of the individuals involved in the review process and recognizes and applauds their interest in, and willingness to support the University's quality assurance policy and efforts.

Following the meetings with the AUA members, the Panel focused on the development of its Evaluation & Accreditation Report based on the provided documents and the information acquired during the visit.

III. Study Programme Profile

A. HISTORY

Following the recommendations of the previous external evaluation Panel (Nov/2021), the Department made the following improvements:

1. Reduced the total number of courses from 60 to 52 (by decreasing compulsory courses from 53 to 44 and increasing electives from 7 to 8), while offering a total of 30 optional courses.
2. Increased the number of compulsory economics courses from 22 to 23 and electives from 7 to 13.

Years of study could not be reduced from 5 to 4, as initially accepted by the DAERD. Instead, the 5-year program was designated as "integrated master."

B. ACADEMIC REMIT

The promotion of knowledge and the training of scientists specialized in research and solving problems related to the economic, social, political and environmental dimension of sustainable rural development in the context of European integration and the requirements of the adaptation of the country's agri-food system to the global market for agricultural products, food and services.

C. DURATION OF STUDIES

5 years or 10 semesters.

D. QUALIFICATION AWARDED

Degree: Agronomist (Γεωπόνος) with specialisation in Agricultural Economics. Graduates have the option of joining both the Geo-Technical Chamber and the Economic Chamber of Greece.

E. EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Most graduates of DAERD are employed in the agri-food industry and the general government, while few are self-employed. There is a small number of graduates that pursue graduate studies abroad. There is virtually no data on employment of DAERD graduates, as the first cohort of the revised program of studies has only recently graduated.

F. ORIENTATION CHALLENGES

Both DAERD students and graduates expressed an ambivalence regarding their disciplinary identity. It is unclear to them whether they are Agronomists or Economists. This has significant ramifications in their studies at the AUA as well as their employment opportunities. Most employers do not yet understand the qualities of the DAERD graduates. This is critical and needs

to be addressed decisively by DAERD and the AUA. The faculty needs to develop a strategy and plan of action to communicate the profile and strengths of the unique and valuable discipline of Agricultural Economics.

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

Principle 1: Academic Unit Policy for Quality Assurance

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

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

The quality policy statement of the academic unit includes its commitment to implement a quality policy that will promote the academic profile and orientation of the programme, its purpose and field of study; it will realise the programme's strategic goals and it will determine the means and ways for attaining them; it will implement the appropriate quality procedures, aiming at the programme's continuous improvement.

In particular, in order to carry out this policy, the academic unit commits itself to put into practice quality procedures that will demonstrate:

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

Study Programme Compliance

The Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development (DAERD) of the Agricultural University of Athens (AUA) has a Quality Assurance Policy consistent with the standards of the European Higher Education Area and the guidelines of the Hellenic Agency for Higher Education (HAHE). The procedures leading to quality assurance are coordinated by the Team of Internal Evaluation (OMEA) in collaboration with AUA's Unit of Quality Assurance (MODIP). Annual review procedures and internal audit of the quality assurance system are in place.

There is a clear pathway of implementation involving regular deliberations in the Department's General Assembly towards monitoring and improvement of the Undergraduate Program (UP). Overall, the UP's objectives are being achieved through dedication to attaining the learning

objectives, outcomes and student qualifications through high-quality and effective teaching. As a result, program graduates are endowed with skills allowing them to be successful in immediate work placement or in pursuing further post-graduate training.

The text describing Quality Policy does not appear on the DAERD website.

The Document B6 (Στοχοθεσία Ποιότητας ΠΠΣ) does not seem to have gone beyond 2020 and it is not clear whether the targets have been achieved.

KPIs are presented and calculated, however it is unclear as to how they are further analysed and implemented.

Panel Judgement

Principle 1: Academic Unit Policy for Quality Assurance	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- In addition to the annual monitoring of the UP and adjustment of specific issues, strategic objectives of quality improvement should include longer-term plans (5-to-10-year horizons) in order to articulate the Department's/UP's vision and identity (especially in view of current reflections of several Faculty Members regarding the latter) in line with a rapidly changing landscape (agri-food production and security, environment, resources, globalization, digital transformation).
- Alumni and other stakeholders should be invited to contribute to the constant improvement of the program, enhancing and expanding its relevance.
- Educational objectives should be informed not only by current and anticipated scholarly developments in the relevant fields of DAERD (food security, sustainability, environmental threats, resource scarcity, digital economy etc. with conceptual and methodological tools such as Big Data analysis and Statistics) but also by modern, multi-faceted and hybrid teaching methodologies.

Principle 2: Design and Approval of Programmes

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

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

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

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

Study Programme Compliance

The DAERD Program of Undergraduate Studies has undergone a significant restructuring in 2015 motivated by the suggestions of the previous External Evaluation Panel and the Department's obvious desire to modernize its curriculum. The result is a modern program of studies that can be better tailored to student interests and market and policy needs to address important current and emerging issues of the agri-food and agri-environmental systems in Greece and beyond. These changes have been implemented both in the design and management of the Program of Studies under the guidance and monitoring of OMEA and MODIP within the context and spirit of a disciplined Quality Assurance Process.

Based on the DAERD Proposal of Accreditation and the teleconference meetings, the Panel determined that the Undergraduate Program of Studies, both in its implementation and occasional revisions, takes into consideration and incorporates the following aspects and requirements:

- It incorporates adequate procedures and support mechanisms to facilitate the student progress and success.

- It ensures that the per semester total student workload is in accordance with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (30 ECTS units). The workload required of the students appears to be appropriate with regard to the learning outcomes and final qualifications.
- It receives input for improvement from academic staff and some external stakeholders.
- The Undergraduate Program revision process is consistent with the rules and regulations of the Agricultural University of Athens and HAHE guidelines.
- It encourages, when possible, the inclusion of faculty research in course development and teaching.
- It provides opportunities for students to obtain work experience through practical training programs (internships) in various University labs, research institutes and relevant agri-business companies.

The Undergraduate Program of Studies, as its title indicates, is a specialized Agricultural Economics and Rural Development Program. The program in its present form is a five-year program designated as an “Integrated Master” and consists of 52 courses for a total of 300 ECTS and a mandatory diploma thesis for 22 ECTS. From the total number of courses, 44 are compulsory courses and 8 are elective. The comprehensive list of Departmental course offerings is included in the Department’s accreditation proposal document and the Departmental web site.

The Panel feels that the design of the program serves its intended mission of educating and training individuals in Agricultural Economics and Rural Development quite well. This undergraduate program is designed to prepare its graduates to address important issues facing some of the most important sectors of the National economy.

In addition, the recent inclusion of IT/computer science faculty in the staff of the Department provides DAERD with a wonderful opportunity to delve into the areas of big data/data analytics, machine learning, digital economics and digital transformation that are expected to shape the future of the agri-food system (and Agricultural Economics and Rural Development).

The Study Guide seems to be comprehensive and [up-to-date](#) even though it does not appear directly on the departmental website’s menu and is not connected with a hyperlink to the curriculum (http://www.aoa.aua.gr/el/?page_id=4628).

Panel Judgement

Principle 2: Design and Approval of Programmes	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel agrees that this Programme leads to a Level 7 Qualification according to the National & European Qualifications Network (Integrated Master)	YES	NO*
	X	

Panel Recommendations

- The current curriculum structure is modern, flexible, and adaptable to the individual student needs and interests. This dynamic needs to be maintained through the continuous adaptation of the curriculum to current and emerging areas of relevance and significance to the agri-food systems of Greece and beyond, so that students are prepared to help address important issues like food security, food waste, water quality and availability, sustainable development, digital transformation, climate change, circular economy etc.
- Better communication of the nature of this program and the major socioeconomic, resource and environmental issues it addresses to potential students and their parents through media used by these group so that highly qualified secondary school graduates may apply for admission.
- Better communication to potential employers and students of the nature of this program and the significant advantages that its differentiation from mainstream economics programs provides the graduates of DAERD.
- Better communication to the students of the significance of academic advising so that they can better utilize this very important service.
- DAERD should embrace the computer science colleagues and utilize their academic interests and skills in the design of a top-notch segment of the curriculum focusing on big data analysis, machine learning, digital economics and digital transformation that are expected to shape the future of the agri-food marketing system and rural development. This could significantly bolster the Department's ability to effectively address the important issues facing the agri-food and agri-environmental systems with potential positive spillover effects on its relevance, reputation, standing and placement of its graduates. It could be a key differentiating attribute of DAERD from other Agricultural Economics and/or Rural Development programs. The Department needs to ensure, however, that this orientation does not hamper the momentum gained over the past 6 years or alter the core character and profile of DAERD, its name and its educational program. The DAERD is currently using

several quantitative methods, such as econometrics, statistics, and mathematical programming. The new data analysis methods would be added to the toolbox of researchers and integrated successfully into the core areas of DAERD. Such endeavour would also require highly effective and up to date computer facilities, storage, high speed internet etc.

- The hiring or/and involvement of colleagues with an expertise in Statistics and big data analysis and machine learning will further enhance the Department's ability to effectively address issues related to the digital transformation of the agri-food system. This should take place in close collaboration with other units within AUA that already have advanced research and applications in automation, robotics smart farming, remote sensing, bioinformatics etc.
- While the program of studies reflects a strong undergraduate program in agricultural economics, the program is not a graduate one – the “Master” part of the “Integrated Master” title does not reflect the true nature of this program. The Department might want to consider a 4+1 model where in year 5 students would be taking graduate level courses.
- Continue the efforts to increase the number of meaningful continuous 4-month internships outside the University, both in Greece and abroad.
- Create a formal mechanism to facilitate the involvement of students and external stakeholders in future developments and reviews of the program of studies.
- The program of studies would also be strengthened by the addition of a course preparing students for the challenges and opportunities associated with the job market, like cv and cover letter preparation, presentation, and interview strategies etc.
- The recently instituted role of Faculty Advisor should be more actively utilized so that students are monitored on a regular basis as to their progression through the undergraduate program, the accumulation of ECTS, and the timely selection of career-defining electives, practical training internship, diploma thesis etc.

Principle 3: Student- centered Learning, Teaching and Assessment

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

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

The student-centred learning and teaching process

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

In addition :

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

Study Programme Compliance

The DAERD staff is offering a program that aspires to be student-centered, supporting their students to excel in their academic endeavours. The principle is to guide and simultaneously give freedom to students to choose among a number of elective courses. Although the committee was not offered the opportunity to meet any students with special needs (AMEA) or any minority students, it was noted during interviews with faculty that the teaching staff make significant efforts to accommodate special needs of students, like adopting special methods of examinations for the visually impaired.

Teachers are, in general, open to student suggestions on their pedagogical method. However, there is no evidence that students actually contribute actively to the formation or update of the

program. Very characteristic is the absence of student representative(s) from the current accreditation process.

Students are encouraged to fill in the evaluation forms for each course. These forms are available in advance. However, there is a limited participation of the students in this process. In fact, only 19.3% of students actually completed the evaluation forms in 2020-21, markedly lower than the student participation before the pandemic (up to 28.4% in 2017-18).

During the committee's discussion with students, graduates, and faculty, it became apparent that students do not understand/appreciate the importance of course evaluations. Students consider the evaluation process as part of the university bureaucracy. One student even expressed the opinion that students do not have appropriate knowledge to evaluate their teachers. It is also evident that low participation in evaluations is also a result of low attendance in classes.

Some of the graduates expressed the disturbing complaint that they are "discriminated against in the priority of access to science labs because lab personnel consider that students of the DAERD should not have the same priority as students of other more 'agronomic' or 'scientific' disciplines." No specific labs were mentioned but the committee considers this a very disturbing allegation that requires immediate attention.

A variety of methods of teaching are used: lectures, group work, term papers, assignments, tutoring, use of PPT, and distribution of study notes and books. While courses were taught remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic, remote teaching is now forbidden by law. The Panel feels that a hybrid system involving both in-presence and remote teaching (livestreaming and availability of pre-recorded sessions) is a must, as is the case in the majority of EU and North American universities after the pandemic. This is now a global trend and AUA should not stay behind.

In addition to traditional types of examination procedures such as written essay-type and oral, multiple other kinds of examinations are also in place (multiple choice, problem-solving exercises, practical examination) that reflect well the learning outcomes of the subject taught. However, there is no evidence that any systematic (including statistical) analysis of the student performance in the exams is undertaken. More worrisome is the persistent low-grade performance of the majority of students that has only marginally improved since the previous evaluation of the Department in 2011.

The curriculum does not seem to be sufficiently flexible as to allow students to choose special orientations (the students appeared to suggest the need for more electives, especially in order to respond to the expectations of distinct "industries" or career areas). Such orientations (or specializations) could be reflected in the Diploma Supplement.

The committee was very pleased to hear both current students and graduates of the Department expressing strongly that they feel respected and well-attended by their teachers. This was in contrast to teachers' concerns that students, in general, are reluctant to communicate with them. The committee feels that there is a lack of communication between the two parties and that this very positive climate must be better communicated and promoted. There were some indications from our discussions with students and alumni that more workplace-relevant content would be desirable. The Department should be praised for the

recent trend involving the participation of students in competitions and innovation-oriented events.

The DAERD (and the AUA as a whole) do not have a process of pedagogic training of teachers. There are only two (2) faculty members who have formal training in pedagogics. No other member of the DAERD has any formal training with pedagogic and teaching methods. The Internal evaluation committee expressed concerns over this fact, and also that they receive no information or training on how to handle students with special needs. It is hoped that the broader institution of a Teaching and Learning Service in each Greek University will alleviate this problem.

Panel Judgement

Principle 3: Student- centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

It is evident that faculty exerts significant effort to fulfil their teaching obligations and create a student-friendly environment. However, the committee feels that there are a number of considerations that need attention:

- It would increase student participation if hybrid teaching would be formally allowed and applied, where possible.
- A process of faculty mentoring should be established. Young faculty should be paired with a senior member who will introduce and guide them to pedagogics and, perhaps most importantly, to the Department's culture and values.
- The committee would like to recommend the establishment of the position and office of a *Student Ombudsman*. The *Ombudsman* will be an independent, appropriately trained person supported by staff, if necessary, who will handle impartially and within the existing academic and legal framework the student complaints regarding teaching, or any other violation of student rights. The institution of *Student Ombudsman* will certainly improve the student experience and the student-faculty relations.
- In addition to strengthening and streamlining the role of the Academic Advisors, a structured procedure should be put in place for the assessment by students of the specific Faculty Members in their role as their individual Academic Advisors.

- The students must be educated on the importance of course evaluations. In this process, the HOD or any other appointed faculty member(s) must clearly inform, encourage and urge students to carefully complete the evaluation forms. It is important that DAERD must provide clear evidence that they have been taking the evaluations seriously by showing, for example, how many and which complaints or suggestions of the students have been implemented in teaching in the past.
- The DAERD and the AUA must establish an on-going process of pedagogic training of faculty. In this context, DAERD could encourage faculty with special pedagogic training to offer seminars and workshops on pedagogic methods.
- The DAERD and AUA authorities must make sure that DAERD students are treated equally in lab access and other university facilities that "belong" to other Departments and programs. In addition to improving DAERD students' training, it will also improve students' personal and professional confidence, which were found to be in deficit.

Principle 4: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification

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

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

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

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

Study Programme Compliance

Although the institution of Academic Advisors is judged as positive, it is not clear to what extent they are helpful in the progress of students, especially in the critical 1st and 2nd years.

There is an excessive number of students that do not graduate within an acceptable duration (v+2 years), which places considerable strain on resources.

The low diploma grade point average (GPA) achieved by the students graduating from the DAERD program is highly problematic and should not be lightly attributed solely to the students.

The Erasmus+ program is managed well but the resulting mobility is rather low.

Drawbacks appear in the practical training internship as it is split in two 2-month segments.

There is a good, up-to-date and comprehensive [Study Guide](#). However, this Guide is not on the website menu (problem with the design and accessibility of the information: the logical place could be a link to the UP curriculum (http://www.aoa.aua.gr/el/?page_id=4628)).

Very few students (<4%) graduate soon after the 10th semester. Moreover, as can be seen from the supplementary data supplied by the HOD, the average duration of studies over the last decade is marginally lower than 8 years.

An asset towards successful career paths for DAERD graduates of the Department is the existence of a legal framework that provides them with employment rights (επαγγελματικά δικαιώματα) as both Geotechnical and Economist experts.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The DAERD is encouraged to enforce rigorous prerequisites to reduce the number of stagnant students or at least implement a numerical % of ECTS completion before progressing through key checkpoints in the program of studies.
- The Department should proceed to establish an Alumni organization that would maintain the ties between faculty, current students and alumni and could be helpful in the guidance of the students through their studies as well as in their career paths.

Principle 5: Teaching Staff

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

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

- *set up and follow clear, transparent and fair processes for the recruitment of properly qualified staff and offer them conditions of employment that 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.*

Study Programme Compliance

The teaching staff of DAERD are well qualified to carry out the teaching and advising functions of the Department. Current and past students with whom the Panel interacted were very complementary and very thankful of the Departmental teaching and advising efforts. This was not the case with teaching staff of other Departments of AUA, however, as DAERD students feel they are discriminated against during the various classroom and laboratory interactions with these faculty members because they are viewed as social scientists/economists. It should be noted, however, that these views were expressed by the very small number of students that participated in our meetings.

While the students participating in our meetings were very complimentary of the teaching staff, they were not able to explain either the very low student attendance of the relevant courses or the low utilization of the academic advising services offered by the Department. The adoption of a hybrid model of in-person and online (synchronous and/or asynchronous) teaching, specialised pedagogic training of teaching staff, and better communication of the merits of academic advising could help address these issues.

There is significant heterogeneity in terms of academic interests, which can create synergies that can serve the Department well in its pursuit to be a relevant and significant member of the academic community. There is also a, less desirable, heterogeneity regarding the research output where a small number of faculty account for the vast majority of notable contributions.

This asymmetry in research efforts and contributions appears to be affecting also the meaningful connection of research and teaching in the course offerings of the Department. While clearly not desirable, the asymmetries in research contributions are certainly not surprising given that the Department does not really encourage high quality research activity as it does not reward quality. As was communicated to the Panel, all journal articles, basically, count the same. As the Lemons theorem implies, in such cases the low quality tends to drive the

high quality out of the market, with the presence of high quality being left to the intrinsic academic motivation of individual faculty members. While such motivation is commendable, it cannot form the cornerstone of the quality policy of a (any) Department. Quality recognition and reward through things like annual teaching and research awards could go long ways towards addressing these issues.

The Department’s processes for the hiring of new faculty and the promotion of existing ones appear, for the most part, fair, reasonable and consistent with best practices and the rules and regulations of the Agricultural University of Athens and the Ministry of Education, in accordance with the national legal framework and with support of the well-established Apella platform. A key constraining factor of DAERD’s hiring process appears to be the complete lack of a formal framework for the recruitment of highly qualified staff. This lack of proactive recruiting efforts was provided by DAERD as the key reason behind the unacceptably low gender diversity of its academic staff. The number of female faculty members is extremely low and certainly not a reflection of the student body and the more recent composition of PhDs in the academic areas represented in DAERD.

While the diversity of DAERD staff is low, the percentage of teaching staff that have received their doctorate degrees from the Department is high, creating concerns about potential negative impacts of academic inbreeding in DAERD. This is particularly concerning as teaching staff makes limited use of meaningful professional development opportunities, like sabbaticals and other faculty mobility programs, participation in transdisciplinary research teams, participation in international conferences and workshops, Departmental seminars etc.

Panel Judgement

Principle 5: Teaching Staff	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- DAERD and AUA need to make sure the students of the Department are treated with dignity and respect by all teaching staff involved in their educational experience.
- The Department should better inform students about the merits of course evaluation and academic advising and consider providing additional incentives for the increased student participation in these processes. The establishment of office hours might encourage students to reach out to the teaching staff.

- The Department should seriously consider the adoption of a hybrid model of in-person and online (synchronous and/or asynchronous) teaching, and the periodic provision of specialised pedagogic training to teaching staff.
- Junior teaching staff and other faculty members could also benefit from peer teaching reviews (where their teaching is evaluated by another colleague with knowledge of the field) and mentoring.
- The Department should recognize and encourage/incentivize high quality research and teaching activity through the provision of annual teaching and research awards, travel and/or research grants, reduction of teaching load and administrative duties, broader communication of the research findings etc. High quality research in better quality journals by a larger number of faculty members will improve the relevance and stature of the Department as well as the value of its services to external stakeholders and its students (through better connection of high-quality research and teaching, experiential learning and broader student involvement in important research endeavours).
- The overall quality of the academic staff would benefit from a structured (even if informal) approach of mentoring new or “stagnant” faculty members by senior and/or more successful ones. Professional development for junior, newly hired faculty members could be aided by re-establishing a mechanism for start-up funding (e.g., through ELKE, from distribution of overheads, etc.).
- The Department needs to institute a formal academic staff recruitment strategy and increase the gender diversity of its teaching staff through the aggressive recruitment of highly qualified female colleagues.
- The Department needs also to more aggressively pursue competitive external funding opportunities. Such funding could go long ways towards enhancing the relevance and significance of DAERD, assisting the update of equipment, international collaborations, conference participation, sabbatical leaves, the provision of experiential learning to students, the attraction of qualified PhD candidates etc.
- Faculty development, including help towards a more aggressive pursuit of external competitive funding opportunities should be encouraged and facilitated through increased participation in faculty mobility programs (like Erasmus+), meaningful sabbaticals, conferences, high-visibility summer schools, international collaborations and Departmental seminars by distinguished colleagues invited to visit the Department and interact with faculty and students.

Principle 6: Learning Resources and Student Support

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

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

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

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

Study Programme Compliance

The committee was offered a virtual tour of the facilities. The Department is housed in AUA's Campus with fully adequate facilities like amphitheatres, classrooms, library/reading rooms, museum, etc. Teaching areas and laboratories appeared clean and ordered. There was some conflicting information received by the committee regarding accessibility (ramps, sensor-equipped doors, etc.) to people with special mobility needs (AMEA). Apparently, not all buildings are accessible to AMEA. As a result, sometimes faculty members need to make special effort to meet AMEA students in accessible facilities. There was a small number of AMEA students in the program (3 in 2017/18 and 2016/17). One comes to wonder whether this is a self-selection and that candidates do not consider applying to the DAERD (or AUA) worried that they may not have full access to educational facilities.

There are two computer labs used by DAERD students. This space is essentially the informatics lab common to all AUA students. In the Accreditation Proposal, DAERD states that there is no special staff for computer maintenance, which must be taken care of on an ad hoc basis. During the interviews, however, the staff assured the committee that computer facilities are adequate and up to date. Students, on the other hand, expressed some complaints that sometimes there are not enough computers for all students in the computer labs. Other times, computers were not functioning.

Internet access is provided to all facilities. Internet bandwidth is adequate as it handled very well the special needs of heavy loads of remote teaching during the pandemic. However, Wi-Fi is not available adequately in all buildings or in the open areas of the campus.

The Department features a lab established for behavioural experiments with funding from external grants. Similarly, several facilities are funded through external funding (% is not available).

The administrative staff appeared friendly, engaged, and hard working to handle the difficult situations and special requirements during the pandemic.

The Study Guide offers information to students about the availability of facilities, laboratories, etc.

The students are provided with notes and books which are offered free according to a long-established government policy through the EUDOXUS platform (<http://eudoxus.gr>). The library is accessible and offers a variety of resources. Based on the Accreditation Proposal, there are some essential journals missing from the library. However, in the discussion with the faculty, the committee was assured that there were subscriptions and full electronic access to most academic resources.

Although the AUA does not have its own student dormitories, DAERD students that fulfil low-income requirements have access to the 30 rooms allocated to AUA students at the dormitories of other Universities in the metropolitan Athens area.

There is an AUA restaurant where students can find decent food at very low prices. Students with certified low incomes can be provided meals at especially low prices (€2,24/meal). The university restaurant is fully accessible and provides free Wi-Fi. Additionally, AUA has its own sport facilities, and student athletic clubs.

Internships are mandatory for four (4) months during the summer months of the 6th and 8th semesters. Most often internships are split between semesters in 2+2 months. This is certainly not functional if internships are to provide practical knowledge and networking opportunities for students and be of some use to the organizations offering them.

It was not entirely clear to the Panel whether the role of the Academic Advisor addresses mainly the students' academic activities, or it also includes structured help for insertion of students into the job market and informing the potential stakeholders about students' potential.

The faculty exhibits very low international mobility, like academic visits and placements, sabbatical leaves etc. Between 2014-18 only one member of the faculty has visited another university abroad, and, currently, there is one faculty member at an academic visit in the USA.

Similarly, there is very low student mobility. Students do not take advantage of the much-acclaimed EU-funded program Erasmus+. An average of only 6 students annually visited foreign universities during the period 2015-18. Similarly, there is an equally low inflow of foreign Erasmus students. The committee strongly feels that of low faculty and student mobility are alarming as they show an isolation of the DAERD which does not correspond, for example, with considerable externally funded projects.

Funding for teaching and related activities is very limited. Especially very low funding is provided for attending international conferences. Certainly, this limited funding (€1300/year for all DAERD faculty!) does not suffice if a University Department aspires to develop its faculty to exhibit an international profile.

There is a number of resources available for the development of students:

- a. Office for exchange (EU programs office).
- b. Language lab. It offers language courses during the first 6 semesters.
- c. Library and information centre. Fully accessible for AMEA and visually impaired students.
- d. Internships office.
- e. Placement office. In charge of connecting students to future employers and graduate studies.
- f. Office of innovation and entrepreneurship.
- g. Student support office. Offering counselling services in confidential situations by a certified psychologist.

Panel Judgement

Principle 6: Learning Resources and Student Support	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- Continue the efforts to provide access to AMEA to all relevant facilities of the Department and the University.
- Establish a policy of updating computers and software by specialized staff. State-of-the-art computer equipment are particularly important if DAERD decides to be a player in the new era of digital transformation of the agri-food system. In this context, and the well-known institutional constraints notwithstanding, the Department should actively pursue external funds (χορηγίες) to maintain and upgrade its facilities. If there is difficulty with charitable donors or industry, this can be done, for example, by the increased overhead from further augmenting and enhancing the services provided to industrial outfits, public organizations like local government and other sectors based on the Department's know-how (predictive models, consulting services, designs of applications, etc.) as well as from post-graduate tuition fees.
- DAERD and AUA need to better encourage and support the internationalization of faculty and students. Funding from international projects and other resources (such as the fees from the MBA program) must have a portion dedicated for this purpose.
- Faculty that develops an international profile must be rewarded and mobility must be incentivized. Faculty mobility must become a formal or informal prerequisite for faculty hiring and promotion.

- In order to increase students' mobility, proficiency in English should be encouraged through usage. Students must be encouraged (and, if possible, required) to use readings in English. Students could also be encouraged to write term papers and their final thesis in English.
- The internship program must be reorganized to offer a continuous placement for 4 months when possible.
- The placement must be extended to international firms and agencies – especial EU Commission, lobby groups, EU agencies, and other organizations. Similarly, the AUA and DAERD should investigate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs the placement of students in the trade offices of Greek embassies around the globe.

Principle 7: Information Management

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

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

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

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

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

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

Study Programme Compliance

Within AUA and in compliance with HAHE guidelines, MODIP is the central Unit of the University that sets and disseminates the procedures for the internal and external evaluation of the Academic Departments, including UP Curricula, and oversees the Quality Assurance of the entire University.

The DAERD has developed a satisfactory information management system for its current students. Suitable KPIs have been established, and there is clear availability of learning resources (mostly through the infrastructure of MODIP), as well as student support both formal and informal. Student progression, success, and stagnation rates are monitored.

The Department should be praised for maintaining good collaborations with some of its alumni that include joint research projects, field application or policy consultations and some of these interactions positively affect educational activities. The career paths of graduates are not monitored systematically. This is a complex but important task, and a systematic approach should be implemented towards the collection of relevant data (e.g., Alumni Association) for subsequent use in the guidance of program graduates. At the moment, a good initiative going some way towards this goal is the LinkedIn Alumni Group that attempts to establish active interactions between alumni, Department actors and students in view of enhancing career prospects, possibilities of internship placements, etc.

Panel Judgement

Principle 7: Information Management	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- Establish an official Alumni Association and track their employability
- Track career paths of alumni and keep them involved with the Department's students

Principle 8: Public Information

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

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

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

Study Programme Compliance

The Department communicates its teaching and academic activities mainly through its website. Undergraduate Programme Guide curriculum (Study Guide) is available on line in a downloadable format both in Greek and English as a single file and is both comprehensive and [up-to-date](#). The website provides details about the structure of the program, human resources, laboratories, and other relevant infrastructure. Announcements and press releases are available at the home page. Department uses all Social Media Platforms to communicate with students and stakeholders.

A large number of Departmental activities (like meetings, conferences, and connections to various stakeholders) are not provided on the website. The students' professional prospects and relevant stakeholders' chambers and associations' involvement are not described clearly. Some information dealing with audits, mobility grants and internships is provided and/or being redirected to the Department's website. The tab dealing with the practical exercise (internship) incorporates information regarding the rules and the evaluation process with the students' online questionnaires. There is a template (procedure and form) for submission of complaints by students and other personnel.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The English version of the website needs to be upgraded to reflect all topics presented in the Greek version.
- Faculty members' CVs and academic information format should be standardized.
- Amendments are needed to several sub-links including: (1) upload of internal audits and reviews, (2) mobility opportunities of both students and staff, (3) internships, (4) professional prospects of graduates, documenting the existence of the representative professionals Chambers (GEOT.E.E. & O.E.E.) that assure their professional rights, (5) outreach activities, and (6) Study Guide.
- The Department is encouraged to take advantage of social media to increase the visibility of its research and teaching activities and enhance its extension activities and potential.
- The LinkedIn Social Media Platform will also allow to track alumni's career paths given the current absence of a proper Alumni Association.

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

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

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

The above comprise the evaluation of:

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

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

Study Programme Compliance

The committee was pleased to find that the evaluation report of 2011 was taken very seriously by the DAERD and was implemented to its greatest extent. That process led to a transformation of the DAERD from an Agricultural Department with some economics and sociology, into a modern Agricultural Economics Department. This gives a special responsibility to the committee and the accreditation process to ensure that the DAERD is now matured and will continue on the path it followed during the past decade. All the indications are that there is willingness of DAERD faculty and the AUA leadership for the Department to continue in this path.

The self-assessment report (*Πρόταση Πιστοποίησης*) provides a proper assessment of the process and the status quo up until 2018 (the report was submitted in April/2019). Unfortunately, there has been no updating of the report to the current time, i.e., to include the – very difficult – years 2019, 2020 and 2021. This, of course is a limitation to the evaluation and accreditation process, although the progress until 2018 provides a good enough material for the evaluation.

The DAERD has certainly responded properly and made significant changes to the Curriculum, by increasing the number of economics courses, reducing non-necessary agronomy-related courses and, finally, delivering a proper Agricultural Economics program. The current program was first implemented in 2015/2016. It is, therefore, very recent and there is only one generation of graduates, making the evaluation in the placement of graduates very difficult.

The program is reviewed and revised or updated (*επικαιροποιείται*) in "regular intervals" - these intervals are every semester and annually (p.8). The DAERD bodies in charge of evaluation and implementation are:

- a. "Studies Committee" (SC) consisting of the directors of the 6 laboratories.
- b. The members of the faculty of DAERD.
- c. The general assembly of the DAERD.

The program study guide is updated annually and uploaded on the Department's web page.

In the evaluation process, the SC receives input from faculty and students, assesses it, and then moves the decision to the general assembly meeting of the Department.

In the self-assessment report, it is not clear how the DAERD adheres to the changing needs of science and society. They focus on two criteria: a. Change in the number and quality of the incoming students and b. Professional placement of graduates. The former is limited by existing restrictions of the Greek system of entrance exams, while for the latter there is simply no data to assess.

The DAERD, through its research and teaching, is making contributions to the society and especially to the Greek agricultural sector and policy, with direct consultations and policy advice at the highest level. One example of a major contribution, highlighted by the Vice Rector, is the writing of the country's CAP strategic plan for 2023-27.

However, these contributions do not appear to be capitalised into developing a solid and prestigious profile for DAERD, its Program of Studies, and its graduates. Part of the reason students and graduates of DAERD suffer from some form of identity crisis is that their Department has not yet registered its strong identity within the AUA, the marketplace and the society at large. In addition, DAERD has limited presence in addressing the current challenges of Greek, European and global agri-food systems.

One of the major societal challenges of today is that of sustainable development. Contribution to the sustainable development goals (SDGs) has been a key challenge during the past decades and is expected to be relevant for the rest of this century. This challenge has shaped policies in all world governments, the EU with the ambitious €1,3 trillion Green Deal program, and international fora, the UN, the CCCP and others. The AUA and the DAERD need to increase their involvement with this and other challenges facing the agri-food and agri-environmental systems.

Since the previous external evaluation, DAERD has taken a quantum leap towards becoming a modern Agricultural Economics Department. Still the DAERD needs to articulate its clear vision. In lieu of the DAERD's positive trajectory, we feel that DAERD needs to reflect and develop a vision of, and mission for its future. These should then be embodied in each faculty member's teaching, research and career path, embraced by its students and delivered strongly and clearly to the AUA, the society and the world.

This committee's view is that the DAERD's vision should build on the fact that the DAERD is the key social sciences unit in a thematic university such as AUA, in a unique position to play a pivotal role in the AUA, in the agri-food industry and society at large. DAERD is the single unit within the AUA that has the scientific tools to develop the "big picture" and, together with the other units of AUA, to address current and emerging issues of relevance and significance to Greece and beyond.

Since the purpose of this evaluation process is the betterment of the DAERD's teaching program, we are certain that by making the addressing of these challenges a key component of its research and teaching, the DAERD will improve its profile and will provide a great impetus to its future graduates. The problem of the identity of an agricultural economist is not unique to the DAERD, as it is endemic in many Agricultural Economics Departments around the world.

The developments in the agri-food industry and the society will need more of the DAERD's graduates, as experts who have the tools to understand the challenges and be able to communicate using interdisciplinary concepts and tools. This is a key comparative advantage of the DAERD graduate. The DAERD faculty and the AUA leadership need to work hard on both the demand and the supply of skills and competencies. The need for such expertise needs to be well communicated and understood within the AUA, the agri-food industry, the Government, and society. Secondly, they must train and equip the DAERD graduates with the skills to serve this critical role.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The Department should consider developing an Advisory Board (AB) that consists of industry and policy stakeholders. The AB would meet regularly and would generate reports and recommendations.
- The Department should consider developing a more issue-oriented approach. This could be accomplished through a seminar-type course that runs across several semesters. This course would be coordinated by a senior faculty member and would be taught collectively by many faculty members with interest and expertise in the area, as well as by guest lecturers from other Departments, industry, government, and society. The course would expose students to a systematic approach of major current and emerging issues (like food security, sustainable development, digital economy and climate change) and could facilitate the creation of research collaborations between the parties involved.

Principle 10: Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programmes

PROGRAMMES SHOULD REGULARLY UNDERGO EVALUATION BY COMMITTEES OF EXTERNAL EXPERTS SET BY HAHE, AIMING AT ACCREDITATION. 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 committee of independent experts. HAHE grants accreditation of programmes, with a specific term of validity, following to which revision is required. The accreditation of the quality of the programmes acts as a means of verification of the compliance of the programme with the template's requirements, and as a catalyst for improvement, while opening new perspectives towards the international standing of the awarded degrees.

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

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

Study Programme Compliance

The previous external evaluation of DAERD, which was conducted on-site during the period November 7-11, 2011, and included two of the current panel members (Professor Konstantinos Giannakas as Coordinator and Professor Kostas Karantinis) made a comprehensive assessment of the UP and offered a number of recommendations including:

- The reduction of the average duration of studies until graduation (from five to four years)
- The reduction of the total number of courses offered
- The increase of elective courses at the expense of compulsory ones
- The increase of the proportion of courses related to the economics and social science subjects within the UP and
- The introduction of a Faculty Member Advisor as a mentor for each undergraduate student

With the exception of the first recommendation which was impossible to implement due to the existing legal framework, all others were incorporated in the new UP curriculum, which was approved in 2015-2016 and is in force until today. This is a commendable outcome showing the Department's willingness to adhere to a policy of continuous quality improvement and the aspiration to reach excellence in its educational, research and extension activities.

In this context, it is important to mention some specific interventions contributing to the modernization of the UP curriculum e.g., the introduction or enhancement of the obligatory courses Accounting I, Agricultural Investment Assessment and Accounting II as well as the relevant elective courses of Financing & Financial Analysis of Agricultural Enterprises, and Accounting III (thus, approximating a chain of pre-requisites). Other corrective actions aimed at

increased collaborations with social partners and other stakeholders as well as taking into account the students' teaching evaluations in faculty members' promotion and tenure process.

Finally, and significantly, a tangible result of the previous external evaluation has been the continual evaluation of the effectiveness of the procedures and actions taken with respect to the quality of the curriculum by the Departmental Curriculum Committee, the Internal Evaluation Team OMEA, and the General Assembly of the Department.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- Through consultation with economic and social stakeholders, employers and alumni, the UP curriculum should be made even more flexible and adaptable in order to accommodate and, ideally, anticipate the evolution of new concepts and tools in AERD and the implementation of progressively higher standards.
- The current practice of the Department to be cognizant of the trajectory of highly ranked peer institutions should continue, so that the DAERD program's performance may be more meaningfully assessed. Also, regular experience-sharing forums and events should take place for the exchange of ideas and the identification of best practices with view of longer-term planning towards sustained excellence.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

- The DAERD Program of Undergraduate Studies has undergone a significant restructuring in 2015 motivated by the suggestions of the previous External Evaluation Panel and the Department's obvious desire to modernize the curriculum. The result is a modern program of studies in Agricultural Economics that can be better tailored to student interests and market and policy needs to address important current and emerging issues of the agri-food and agri-environmental systems in Greece and beyond.
- The Department provides an inclusive, student-focused environment with orientation and advising services at various stages of the educational process.
- The teaching staff of DAERD are very collegial and well qualified to carry out the teaching and advising functions of the Department. Current and past students with whom the Panel interacted were very complimentary and very thankful for the Departmental teaching and advising efforts.
- Similarly complimentary to the academic staff were stakeholders from various agri-business firms, banks, research institutes and policy-making bodies that collaborate with the Department.
- The recent inclusion of IT/computer science faculty in the staff of the Department provides DAERD with a wonderful opportunity to delve into the areas of big data and data analytics, machine learning and digital transformation that are expected to shape the future of the agri-food system (and the areas of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development).
- DAERD is an active participant in InnovInAgri, a commendable initiative with multi-level benefits for all those involved.
- DAERD graduates have professional rights both as economists and as agronomists.
- Faculty members have been playing a key role in the country's agricultural policy design and/or implementation over the years.

II. Areas of Weakness

- There seems to be a lack of understanding (and, therefore, appreciation) by the DAERD students of the significant advantages their degree provides relative to mainstream economists and general agricultural scientists. This lack of understanding has obvious impacts on the self-esteem and self-confidence of students and their ability to communicate and convince potential employers of the value they can add to their institutions.
- While the program of studies reflects a strong undergraduate curriculum in agricultural economics, the program is not a graduate one – the “Master” part of the “Integrated Master” title does not reflect the true nature of this program.

- DAERD students have an equity and inclusion problem with staff of other academic units. In particular, students feel discriminated against during various classroom and laboratory interactions with teaching staff from other Departments of AUA, as they are viewed as social scientists/economists.
- Very low student attendance of the relevant courses, low participation in course evaluations, large number of v+2 students, low utilization of the academic advising services offered by the Department, and low GPAs.
- There is significant heterogeneity regarding the research output of the Department where a small number of faculty account for the vast majority of notable contributions. This asymmetry in research efforts and contributions appears to be affecting also the meaningful connection of research and teaching in the course offerings of the Department. While clearly not desirable, the asymmetries in research contributions are certainly not surprising given that the Department does not really encourage high quality research activity as it does not reward quality.
- There is extremely low gender diversity in the Department's academic staff. The number of female faculty members is certainly not a reflection of the student body and the more recent composition of PhDs in the academic areas represented in DAERD. The lack of a formal framework for the recruitment of highly qualified staff was provided by DAERD as the key reason behind this issue.
- The percentage of teaching staff that have received their doctorate degrees from the Department is high, creating concerns about potential negative impacts of academic inbreeding in DAERD. This is particularly concerning as teaching staff makes limited use of meaningful professional development opportunities, like sabbaticals and other faculty mobility programs, participation in transdisciplinary research teams, participation in international conferences and workshops, Departmental seminars etc.
- Very limited access of individuals with special needs and mobility challenges to many facilities of the Department and the University.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

- Better communication of the nature of this program and the major socioeconomic, resource and environmental issues it addresses to potential students and their parents.
- Better communication of the nature of this program and the significant advantages that its differentiation from mainstream economics programs provides the graduates of DAERD to potential employers as well as the students and graduates of the program.
- Better communication to the students of the significance of the academic advisor so that they can better utilize this very important service.
- DAERD should embrace the computer science colleagues and utilize their academic interests and skills in the design of a top-notch segment of the curriculum focusing on big data analysis, machine learning, digital economics and digital transformation that are expected to shape the future of the agri-food marketing system and rural development. The

Department needs to ensure, however, that this orientation does not alter the core character and profile of DAERD, its name and its educational program.

- The hiring or/and involvement of colleagues with an expertise in Statistics and big data analysis and machine learning will further enhance the Department's ability to effectively address issues related to the digital transformation of the agri-food system.
- The Department needs to more aggressively pursue competitive external funding opportunities.
- Continue the efforts to increase the number of meaningful continuous 4-month internships outside the University, both in Greece and abroad.
- Create a formal mechanism to facilitate the involvement of students and external stakeholders in future developments and reviews of the program of studies.
- Develop a course preparing students for the challenges and opportunities associated with the job market, like cv and cover letter preparation, presentation and interview strategies etc.
- The DAERD is encouraged to enforce rigorous prerequisites to reduce the number of stagnant students or at least implement a numerical % of ECTS completion before progressing through key checkpoints in the UP.
- DAERD and AUA need to make sure the students of the Department are treated with dignity and respect by all teaching staff involved in their educational experience.
- The Department should better inform students about the merits of course evaluation and academic advising and consider providing additional incentives for the increased student participation in these processes.
- The Department should seriously consider the adoption of a hybrid model of in-person and online (synchronous and/or asynchronous) teaching, and the periodic provision of specialised pedagogic training to teaching staff.
- The Department should proceed to establish an alumni organization that would maintain the ties between faculty, current students and alumni and could be helpful in the guidance of the students through their studies as well as in their career paths.
- Junior teaching staff and other faculty members could also benefit from peer teaching reviews and mentoring.
- The Department should recognize and encourage/incentivize high quality research and teaching activity. High quality research in better quality journals by a larger number of faculty members will improve the relevance and stature of the Department as well as the value of its services to external stakeholders and its students.
- The overall quality of the academic staff would benefit from a structured (even if informal) approach of mentoring new or “stagnant” faculty members by senior and/or more successful ones.

- Create an advisory board that can assist in the design and implementation of the vision and mission of the Department.
- The Department needs to institute a formal academic staff recruitment strategy and increase the gender diversity of its teaching staff through the aggressive recruitment of highly qualified female colleagues.
- Faculty development, including help towards a more aggressive pursuit of external competitive funding opportunities should be encouraged.
- Make every effort to increase access to the Departmental and University facilities of individuals with special needs and mobility challenges.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: **1, 2, 7 and 10.**

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: **3, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9.**

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	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel agrees that this Programme leads to a Level 7 Qualification according to the National & European Qualifications Network (Integrated Master)	YES	NO
	X	

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname

Signature

- 1. H.W. Eberhard Distinguished Professor Konstantinos Giannakas (Chair)**
University of Nebraska-Lincoln, U.S.A.
- 2. Professor Emeritus Spiros Agathos**
Université Catholique de Louvain, Belgium
- 3. Professor Konstantinos Karantininis**
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Lomma, Sweden
- 4. Mr Loukianos Kontelas**
Geotechnical Chamber of Greece
- 5. Student Ms Maria Vargiami**
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece