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**Εθνική Αρχή
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Hellenic Authority
for Higher Education

Αριστέιδου 1 & Ευριπίδου 2 • 10559 Αθήνα | 1 Aristidou str. & 2 Evripidou str. • 10559 Athens, Greece
T. +30 210 9220 944 • F. +30 210 9220 143 • E. secretariat@ethaae.gr • www.ethaae.gr

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

Forestry and Natural Environment Management

Institution: Agricultural University of Athens

Date: 1 April 2023



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



Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the New Undergraduate Study Programme in operation of **Forestry and Natural Environment Management** 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 new undergraduate study programme in operation of **Forestry and Natural Environment Management** of the **Agricultural University of Greece** comprised the following four (4) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

- 1. Professor Constantin Vamvakas (Chair)**
f. Academic Counsellor, University of Ghent, Belgium

- 2. Professor Emeritus Spyros Pavlostathis**
Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, GA, USA

- 3. Dr. Evangelia Daskalaku**
Member of the Geotechnical Chamber of Greece

- 4. Ms Aphrodite Lioliou**
Student, Department of Agriculture, International Hellenic University, Thessaloniki, Greece

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

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

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

The accreditation review started on March 27th at 6:30 pm Greek time, according to the schedule prepared by HAHE. The EEAP met with the Vice-Rector, Prof. Emmanouil Fletmetakis, and the Department Head, Prof. Spyridon Kaloudis. The Vice Rector also serves as the President of the Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP). The EEAP was briefed with a power-point presentation on the history and academic profile of the University. The Department Head presented a power-point about the Department profile, its policy on quality assurance, and other issues related to the study programme. In the next meeting, EEAP met with the representatives of Quality Assurance Policy of the Department OMEA Prof. Anastasia Pantera, Vice-President of the Department and President of the OMEA, Ass. Prof. Georgios Fotiadis, Assist. Prof. Stavroula Galanopoulou and the MODIP representatives Prof. Emmanouil Fletmetakis, Vice-Rector and president of MODIP, Prof. Georgios Zervakis, MODIP member and Ms. Alexandra Ntouka MODIP secretary. EEAP discussed with these representatives the compliance of the undergraduate programme (UP) to the standards for quality accreditation and other issues concerning the students' assignments, the theses, and the examination material.

The following day EEAP included six (6) teleconference meetings with:

1) Seven teaching staff members: Prof. Andreas Papadopoulos, Assist. Prof. Stergios Tampekis, Assist. Prof. Dimitra Lazaridou, Assist. Prof. Dimitrios Zianis, Lecturer of Applied Sciences Efstratios Aidinidis, Dr. Konstantinos Katsinikas (teaching contract) and Dr Dimitrios Koutsianitis (teaching contract). The main points of the discussion were: professional development opportunities, mobility, workload, student evaluations; competence and adequacy of the teaching staff to ensure learning outcomes; the link between teaching and research; teaching staff's involvement in applied research, projects, and research activities directly related to the programme; and possible areas of weakness.

2) Seven students of different semesters: 1 student from 2nd semester; 2 students from 4th semester; 2 students from 6th semester and 2 students from 8th semester. The discussions were mainly about their satisfaction with the study experience and the Department/Institution

facilities, their involvement in quality assurance, and any issues concerning student life and welfare.

3) Then, the EEAP attended video and power-point presentations of the classrooms, lecture halls, different laboratories, the library, the restaurant and other infrastructure by: Assoc. Prof. Spyridon Kaloudis, Department Head, Ms Eleni Gatsiou, Special Technical Laboratory Staff, Ms Athanasia Tsouka, Special Technical Laboratory Staff, Mr Nikolaos Gkorogias, Special Technical Laboratory Staff and the Department's Secretary Ms Kassiani Skepetari. A video about the Department was sent also together with the information material before the meetings.

4) The next meeting EEAP discussed the relations of the Department with the following eight external stakeholders from the public and the private sector: Dr. Aristeidis Tassios, Deputy Regional Superintendent of Evrytania Regional Unit; Mr. Nikolaos Soulotis, Mayor of Karpenissi (represented by Mr Tassios); Mr. Ioannis Karkanis, Head of Karpenissi forest administration; Mr Stergios Fysekis, Commander of Prefecture fire Services Administration; Mr. Ioannis Triantafyllakis, Mayor of Xeromero, Aitoloakarnania; and Mr. Tassos Dimalexis, M.Sc. Administrator of National Conservation Consultants.

5, 6) The last two meetings took place with the OMEA and MODIP representatives, the Vice-Rector/President of MODIP and the Department Head, during which the members of EEAP made a short debriefing to reflect on the impressions of the discussions and their key findings.

From March 28th to April 1st, the EEAP worked on the Accreditation Report.

All parties involved conducted themselves professionally and the process was smooth, effective, and efficient.

III. New Undergraduate Study Programme in operation Profile

The Department was established by law in 2019 (Law 4589, Gazette 13/29-1-2019). It was the re-embodiment of the Technological Educational Institution (TEI) of Forestry and Management of Natural Environment of Central Greece which was abolished by the above-mentioned law. It is situated in the town of Karpenissi in Evrytania Prefecture. It comprises sections on different scientific subjects and has an excellent building infrastructure and well-equipped laboratories.

The Department's mission is to provide high quality education to students in the scientific fields of Forestry and Natural Environment Management and the academic excellence to embrace the modern scientific developments and to satisfy the requirements of the market's labour.

The scientific field of the Department is included in the internationally established scientific fields of Higher Education, as determined by the international categorization of scientific fields in education of UNESCO (ISCED 2013) and specifically in the codes: 082 (Forestry) - subcode 0821 (Forestry), 052 (Environment) - subcode 0522 (Natural environments and wildlife), and 071 (Engineering and engineering trades) - subcode 0722 (Materials (glass, paper, plastic and wood)).

The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs determines the number of incoming students yearly. The total number of registered undergraduate students from January 2019 are 695; 76 have already graduated from TEI; 36 have been intergraded from the TEI to the new Department and 21 out of them have already graduated; in the academic year 2022-2023 46 students were enrolled. Currently, there are 6 PhD candidate students.

The Department uses the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), and it is structured on the qualifications framework of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). It has a student-centered education system. The programme duration is ten semesters (5 years), requiring a total of 310 ECTS for graduation: 270 for coursework and 10 for practical training. The 10th semester includes exclusively the preparation of the diploma thesis (total ECTS credits: 30).

Today the Department has nine (9) tenured (DEP), three (3) special technical laboratory personnel (ETEP) and one (1) full-time administrative staff member and another external expert. One (1) DEP member is expected to join the Department in 2023. Up to year 2023, according to SCOPUS, 156 publications were presented by members of the staff.

The Department is actually composed by four well equipped laboratories:

- Agroforestry and Forest Soils Laboratory
- Forest Botany-Geobotany Laboratory
- Dendrochronology Laboratory, and
- Laboratory of Forest Ecosystem Management and Forestry Spatial Informatics.

More laboratories are scheduled to be created in the near future.

The Department has facilities in Karpenissi, which include eleven laboratory exercise rooms with approximately 15-30 seats each and two classrooms, with a total capacity of 210 seats. The Department has a student residence with 25 rooms, 50 beds, but it is not being used at the moment as it is under renovation. It is estimated to be ready for accommodate 50 students by the end of 2024. There is a restaurant with a capacity for 120 students.

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

b. The strategy of the Institution for its academic development

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

c. The documentation of the feasibility of the operation of the department and the study programme

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

- *the needs of the national and regional economy (economic sectors, employment, supply-demand, expected academic and professional qualifications)*
- *comparison with other national and international study programmes of the same scientific field*
- *the state-of-the-art developments*

- *the existing academic map; the differentiation of the proposed department from the already existing ones needs to be analysed, in addition to the implications of the current image of the academic map in the specific scientific field.*

d. The documentation of the sustainability of the new department

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

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

e. The structure of studies

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

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

f. The number of admitted students

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

g. Postgraduate studies and research

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

Relevant documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

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

The Department of Forestry and Natural Environment Management was established by Law 4589, Gazette 13/29-1-2019, and joined the newly established School of Plant Sciences of the Agricultural University of Athens (AUA). Faculty and staff from the previous Technological Educational Institute (TEI) were transferred to the new Department.

The Department aims to provide high quality higher education to its students in the scientific fields of Forestry and Natural Environment Management, as well as to develop a creative research and teaching environment for its staff. Its mission is to serve its educational, research and social goals within the framework of the principles of scientific ethics, accountability, sustainable development and social cohesion.

The scientific field of the Department is included in the internationally established scientific fields of Higher Education designated by UNESCO (International Standard Classification of Education – Fields of Education and Training 2013; ISCED 2013; specific codes: 082-Forestry; 052-Environment, subcodes 0521-Environmental sciences and 0522-Natural environments and wildlife); 071-Engineering and engineering trades, subcode 0722-Materials; 088-Interdisciplinary programmes and qualifications involving agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary); and 089-Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary).

b. The strategy of the Institution for its academic development

The Department's strategy for its academic development conforms to the goals of the AUA. In the short term, the Department emphasizes the upgrading and improvement of its teaching and educational work through a series of well-defined actions, which aim primarily to the education, training and well-being of the students who will be the future managers of the forest natural environment.

The design of the programme study took into account the national and international experience as well as societal and research needs related to the broader area of forestry and natural environment management, leading to a comprehensive education at the undergraduate level, but also to specialization at postgraduate level studies and the advancement of research related to the field of forestry and natural environment management.

Curricula of similar programmes in Greece and abroad were examined. For the development of the programme study, institutional, economic, developmental, as well as societal factors were considered. A SWOT analysis was also conducted.

c. The documentation of the feasibility of the operation of the department and the study programme

As mentioned in section **b**, above, institutional, economic, developmental, as well as societal factors were considered for the development of the Department and its programme study.

The Department is active all over Greece, with a greater intensity in the Region of Central Greece, especially in the Prefecture of Evrytania, but also in the Region of Attica, where is the seat of the AUA. The development and operation of the Department is consistent with and supported by the Region of Central Greece development vision and operation.

Relative to other similar Greek programmes, the new Department is differentiated by its unique, ideal location in the most wooded Prefecture of the country, the existence of several unique laboratories, as well as employment of Faculty and staff with long training and experience. In particular, the proximity of the Department to the surrounding natural environment is unique and offers invaluable opportunities for student training within this natural environment. It should be noted that this is the only Forestry Department in Central and Southern Greece areas which are characterized with a relatively dry climate.

d. The documentation of the sustainability of the new department

The Department is located in the ideal environment for its subject, in one of the most forested prefectures of Greece, with easy access to important forest ecosystems for continuous, direct and active training of its students in their study subjects.

The Department facilities are privately owned and consist of classrooms and laboratories, fully equipped with the necessary equipment and technical infrastructure for the educational and research activities. The laboratories and the laboratory equipment are sufficient and adequate for the instructional needs of the students.

The Department has nine (9) permanent Faculty members (DEP), three (3) educational/laboratory support members (ETEP), one (1) administrative staff. In addition, two (2) Faculty members from the Department of General Studies of the AUA teach in the new Department. For the academic year 2021-2022, seven (7) lecturers taught as external collaborators (contract). The process of hiring one (1) DEP Faculty member is to be completed soon. In addition, several academic scholars and PhD candidates contribute to the educational mission of the Department.

Faculty members carry externally funded research projects, broadly related to forestry and the natural environment management. Funding of research projects is secured from competitive national and international sources as well as municipalities and industry.

e. The structure of studies

The undergraduate programme is a five-year study resulting in a Diploma. The curriculum includes ten (10) semesters of study, of which nine (9) semesters are related to course instruction and the last semester involves preparation of a diploma thesis. To obtain a diploma, the student must have successfully passed courses/laboratories totalling 270 European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits, complete the 4-month practical training (10 ECTS credits) and prepare/complete a diploma thesis (30 ECTS credits).

For graduates of the Department who have successfully completed four (4) semesters and have taken a set of specific courses from a designated list, a Certificate of Digital Skills may be granted. A large number of elective courses are available. The EEAP found that the curriculum is extensive. The Curriculum is based on learning outcomes specified in each course syllabus. A number of published internal regulations exist for all aspects of course and laboratory delivery, examination, and grading, laboratory exercises, preparation of diploma thesis, etc. Modes of teaching include theory, practice exercises, laboratory exercises, homework, and individual or group study assignments. The students' performance and grading are a combination of end of semester examination and other assignments as mentioned above.

As mentioned in section **a**, above, the mission of the Department is to serve its educational, research and social goals within the framework of the principles of scientific ethics, accountability, sustainable development and social cohesion. The Department fulfils its role in imparting knowledge and skills to its graduates.

f. The number of admitted students

The undergraduate program is a five-year study resulting in a Diploma. The number of admitted students per academic year set by the Department is 50. However, 182, 144, 37, and 46 students were admitted in the academic years 2019-2020, 2020-2021, 2021-2022, and 2022-2023, respectively, due to the admission basis set by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. The proposed number of students over a five-year period is 250 (50 x 5). Student transfers from/to similar departments of other Greek Higher Educational Institutes is possible.

g. Postgraduate studies and research

The Department offers a postgraduate study programme entitled "Ecology and Environmental Management". The Department supports doctoral studies. The faculty carry research projects of national and international scope/needs utilizing the laboratory facilities and resources of the Department as well as in collaboration with other Universities, Research Centres, and Industry. It is commendable that the Department has developed a large number of collaborative research programmes. Overall, the research output of the Department should and is expected to increase.

Panel Judgement

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

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

Panel Recommendations

To avoid repetitions, where appropriate, specific recommendations are made under the remaining Principles 2-12 that follow.

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

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

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

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

Relevant documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

The Institution has developed and implements its Quality Assurance Policy as part of its broader strategy. The University has applied this policy at the new undergraduate curriculum of the Department of Forestry and Natural Environment Management, accompanied by annual quality assurance targets for the continuous development and improvement of the academic unit and teaching programme. The Development Strategy and the Quality Policy of the University, as well as the responsibilities of the Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP), the structure of the IQAS and the Quality Manual of the Institution are publicly accessible from the AUA

website as well as the Department websites (See Principle 5, 9). The Quality Assurance Policy of the academic unit includes adequate reference to the delivery of the new undergraduate programme, including commitments to satisfy requirements and strive for continuous improvement. Continuous improvement is promoted via a dedicated webpage on the University's website. The Quality Assurance Policy is sufficiently communicated to all parties involved as it is publicly available via the main University website, as well as via the Departmental webpage. The academic unit has set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely goals and key performance indicators (KPIs) regarding the new undergraduate programme. Goals are monitored, updated, and communicated according to the Quality Assurance Policy.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The EEAP has no specific recommendations for Principle 2.

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

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

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

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

Relevant documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

The undergraduate programme has been designed with the aim to be harmonized with corresponding Greek and European Forestry programmes. The Greek and European standards

concerning higher education have been taken into account. The feasibility study presents in detail the objectives of the programme, the process and the intended training results that graduates are expected to have.

The undergraduate programme is to be revised regularly. The Department curriculum committee responsible for the programme revision process takes into account data from OMEA, MODIP, student course evaluations and external experts, such as scientific associations, etc.

The study guide is well structured and clearly articulates all information deemed necessary for the students, such as details of the Institution, the Department, the structure of the programme, study regulations, registration process, course enrolment, explanation of ECTS, etc.

The former TEI programme is supported by the Department till all TEI students have completed their study programme and graduate, expected to be 2026 (See also Principle 12).

Input to the development of the new undergraduate programme by external academic and other stakeholders was not identified in the material provided by the Department.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

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

- Specify the regularity of updating the undergraduate curriculum, consistent with the HAHE regulation for continuous programme improvement.
- The Department, as it expands its scope and further develops its laboratories, should consider adding new areas in both the curriculum and research. A good example is the use of forest biomass for energy production and/or other value-added wood and non-wood products.
- Critical stakeholders (alumni, companies, graduate schools, and other organizations employing or further training graduates) should actively participate in the continuous assessment, expansion, and improvement of the curriculum. This participation should be done in a formal, systematic, and transparent way with clearly defined objectives, and with feedback solicited in a rigorous way. The EEAP noticed that all stakeholder representatives met, expressed strong support and enthusiasm for furthering their interactions with the Department.
- Establishment of a seminar series and/or short courses given by guest researchers and academics should be considered. Such activities will enrich the students' exposure to new areas of research and will enhance the Department's profile.
- An "Independent Research" elective course could be created in which an individual student will be involved in a semester-long experimental exercise related to a research project conducted by the faculty.
- It is recommended that a greater fraction of the Diploma Thesis be conducted in collaboration with and mentorship by the industry.

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

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

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

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

Relevant documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The programme offers a variety of pedagogical methods and includes flexible learning paths. Students can: take part in team-based activities; participate in exercises during classes; examine case studies; make use of laboratory activities and computer-based projects. Practice-based activities are taking place in the nearby forests.

The assessment criteria and methods are published in advance in every course outline. In addition to final exams, students are assessed through projects and midterm assignments. Although a variety of assessment methods are in place, final exams remain the most frequently used method.

The Department has a detailed system for following students' progression which includes grades, duration of study, percentage of students participating at each examination, percentage of students passing each course examination, etc.

The Department provides courses in English to enhance mobility of international students (e.g., Erasmus+ programme) while promoting outreach and internationalization. Additionally, according to recent national legislation, the mobility opportunity shall have

the possibility to be implemented in other Greek Universities (“Internal Erasmus”).

Students do a mandatory internship that lasts four months (two months in 6th semester and another two months in 8th semester) and its successful completion is a prerequisite for obtaining a Diploma. The undergraduate study programme also offers students a Digital Skills Certificate; the EEAP finds this very positive.

The course/instructor evaluation and student satisfaction surveys are conducted electronically. The participation from students in the evaluation is relatively low, but significantly higher compared to those of other institutions, and shows an encouraging increasing trend in the three-year operation of the Department: for Academic Year 2020-21 the participation was 22% on average, for Academic Year 2021-22 was 28 % on average and for Academic Year 2022-23 was 29% on average. Nevertheless, attention should be given by the Department in trying to remedy this situation by further encouraging student participation.

The Department has established a formal teaching academic advisor scheme to assist students throughout their studies. The Student Advisor assists students in navigating the course curriculum from the beginning and throughout their studies, along with other professional advice. The Department announces their names at the beginning of each academic year on the Department’s website.

There is a formal student appeal process. This enables student appeals/problems to be resolved in a timely, compassionate, and confidential manner. The students we met indicated that teaching staff are helpful and always available when they need advice or assistance in their studies. Academic staff appeared to care for and work closely with students to help them succeed.

II. Analysis

The programme allows students the opportunity to select their specialization. A significant number of elective courses offer students ample opportunities to focus on particular areas of their interests.

There is a formal procedure for student feedback and appeals in place. Students have a variety of channels to provide feedback and ample opportunity to engage with the programme’s development and teaching staff. At times this level of engagement exceeds the regulatory requirements. This develops a relationship of trust which inspires students to openly express themselves and provide constructive feedback.

III. Conclusions

The programme is delivered in a friendly environment that promotes mutual respect. Furthermore, the Department has been implementing several initiatives that put students at the centre of their academic journey. The design of the new undergraduate programme and the faculty members’ approach reflect a student-centered learning and teaching process.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The Department should continue promoting and encouraging student feedback and cultivate a culture of constructive criticism. The Department should consider running the course/instructor and student satisfaction surveys during lectures to increase response rates.
- Improve student engagement and attendance using alternative lecture formats such as mandatory connection with laboratory lessons, student presentations, and group discussions.
- The Department should consider organizing Summer Schools, taking advantage of the unique and ideal surrounding natural environment.

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

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

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

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

as well as

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

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

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

Relevant documentation

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

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

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

Incoming students are primarily admitted via state examinations, and the Department has no control over the number of admitted undergraduate students. After completing the required enrolment process, via <https://eregister.it.minedu.gov.gr/> (relevant announcement is uploaded in the Department's website), incoming students receive instructions on accessing the University services via the University's website at

http://karp.aua.gr/?page_id=196 concerning their academic id issuance, e-secretariat (U-register), email facility, e-classes (openclass), and other useful announcements. The Department's website (www.karp.aua.gr) generally provides adequate information about the studies, internal regulations, its mission and its vision, and the electronic presence of the Department is assisted by the website <https://dasologia.gr> and <https://w1.aua.gr/dasologia/τιμήμα/>. Most of the students' needed information may be found online. A detailed Thesis Handbook has been prepared by the Department and is available, clearly defining the quality requirements for the implementation of the mandatory diploma thesis (http://karp.aua.gr/?page_id=214). The final examination committee achieves quality control for the thesis. Additionally, the procedures and terms for internship, granting of scholarships are available: https://w1.aua.gr/dasologia/announcements/ενημέρωση-για-πρόγραμμα-erasmus/#pll_switcher.

The curriculum is compatible with European and international practices; it is structured based on the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), which facilitates the transfer of credit from studies conducted to other Universities. The ECTS credits need for graduation with a Diploma are 310. On graduation, a Diploma Supplement is given to graduates in both Greek and English.

The EEAP acknowledges the hard work of the faculty to create an inclusive environment for the students. Faculty and staff are dedicated to the programme's success, demonstrated throughout the review and confirmed by the stakeholders. Faculty's compassion, open-door policy, and one-on-one mentoring have been critical to students' success. This is also supported by the fact that the number of active students is relatively small and the city-centre of Karpenissi is the meeting point of the local community.

II. Analysis of judgement

There is a very clear progression path, described in detail in the programme's guide. All additional activities are also governed by specific procedures that are well documented. While all the necessary information is available on the website, it would be useful for the Department to consider enhancing the information dissemination process by organising specific events.

The EEAP had the opportunity to interview and interact with seven (7) pre-selected students and received valuable feedback. No alumni were scheduled to participate due to non-clarification by HAHE, else the Department could have arranged it. The meetings took place without the presence of faculty, administrators or supportive personnel. The EEAP came away with the distinct impression that the students are satisfied with the faculty, the study programme, as well as the administrative and supportive staff. The students spoke in positive terms about their teachers, praised their accessibility, and the promptness with which the

faculty respond to their concerns, either in person or via email. In addition, the students find the electronic data system useful, well organized, up-to-date, and easy to navigate.

Internship opportunities is another area the Department actively seeks to enrich the students' education. A Department committee is in place to oversee and monitor the process.

The EAAP met with employers and social partners, mostly from the local area. All of them spoke highly of their experiences with the students placed in their agencies. The representatives stated that they have every intention to continue and perhaps deepen the relationship.

III. Conclusions

The Department ensures that developed and published regulations addressing all aspects and phases of studies of the programme (admission, progression, recognition and degree award) are followed.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- Increase research expenditures through projects/grants/contracts and expose students to new research areas and technologies. This is critical moving forward for the long-term success and relevance of the study programme.
- Create a stakeholder advisory committee that engages with the Department, staff, and students, providing valuable advice towards further curriculum development and new research directions.
- Scholarships and awards given to students either by the Department, national sources or stakeholders/private sector, can empower academic and career goals.
- Recognize and highlight faculty and student successes and maintain/create press releases on the Department's website.
- A robust data collection processes for its graduates via an external evaluation conducted with employers and stakeholders could enhance the quality of studies, the curriculum update and the attractiveness of the Department.

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

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

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

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

Relevant documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

Most faculty members come from the Department of Forestry and Natural Environment Management, Technical Educational Institute (TEI) of Central Greece, established in Karpenissi city, the capital of Evrytania Prefecture, which was repealed by Law 4589/2019. The newly established Department of Forestry and Natural Environment Management joined the AUA-Faculty of Plant Sciences since the 2019-2020 academic year. The vast majority of the faculty members had corresponding appointments to the prior TEI and transferred to their current positions in the new Department.

Eight out of the nine Faculty members carry qualified doctoral degrees, and one member is (at the moment) a PhD candidate. According to the Departmental Unit for Quality Assurance (OMEA) and the University Unit for Quality Assurance (MODIP) declarations, followed by Associate Prof. S. Kaloudis (Department Head) oral presentations, the Department will soon welcome one more faculty member, thus its academic staff will increase to ten in the next few

days. The faculty is assisted by temporary hires of additional lecturers/instructors. These appointees also have a doctoral degree.

The permanent Faculty members cover more than 80% of the educational work. They are formally obliged to teach 8-10 hours per week in each semester and spent 20-24 hours per week for preparation and close advisement of students. A constantly increased participation of the staff is mentioned regarding educational cooperation programs (2, 2, 3, 6) and research projects (2, 2, 8, 8) for the years 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022, respectively. Furthermore, their mobility is highlighted, e.g., in international organizations/bodies, as Visiting Research Associates and in Scientific Committees (MSc/PhD Theses evaluation) in universities abroad, for the period 2021-2023. Faculty members support research activities with the supervision of PhD candidates (2, 5, 6) starting in 2020-21, 2021-22, and 2022-23 academic years, respectively. Considering the expected increase in teaching staff, including three new faculty members covering educational and research needs in the following years, a participation in alternative professional development activities, e.g., mobility within research projects and collaboration with relevant laboratories in Greece or abroad, may become a challenge for the older and new Faculty members, as well.

The Department organizes and follows clear, transparent, and fair procedures for selecting the appropriate staff and provides conditions of employment concerning the importance of teaching and research, as determined by relevant laws and regulations.

The Department consists of 9 full-time Faculty members, of which 2 are Full Professors, 1 Associate Professors, 5 Assistant Professors and 1 Lecturer of Applied Sciences. The faculty is actively involved in teaching and research. Based on the Scopus citation index from 2008 to 2023, the total number of published scientific articles is 156, with more than 4,090 citations (March 2023). Moreover, the Faculty members were involved in book chapters, teaching notes, and conference papers; however, some of the new Faculty members have a notable research activity with a plethora of scientific publications and citations, while others have a lower record.

Faculty members are leaders in their specializations and the Department will continue to provide invaluable services.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- Acceleration in the new recruitment of permanent Faculty members and scientific staff.
- Support high quality publications to promote the status of the Department and facilitate access to substantial research grants.

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

Institutions should have adequate funding to meet the needs for the operation of the academic unit and the new study programme as well as the means to cover all their teaching and learning needs. They should -on the one hand- provide satisfactory infrastructure and services for learning and student support and -on the other hand- facilitate direct access to them by establishing internal rules to this end (e.g., lecture rooms, laboratories, libraries, networks, boarding, career and social policy services, etc.).

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

Relevant documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The EEAP used the following sources: videos uploaded in the Department's websites and Students/Teachers/ Staff Meetings.

The EEAP noted the good quality of an adequate number of facilities dedicated to supporting the study programme and its students. Teaching equipment in the classrooms and laboratories is of good variety and satisfactory quality. Auxiliary facilities (i.e., IT Systems and learning platforms, academic publishing houses' databases, etc.) are also available and accessible to students upon need. Library may support students in bibliographic search via the AUA. EEAP noticed that students are well informed of the different support services available and confidently expressed that they have good access to them.

More specifically students are given, via the e-class platform of the Department, handouts and additional reading material to further assist them during their learning period. It was confirmed in the interview with the students that they embrace the e-class platform and the effort and material put on by their teachers. While this does not mean that in person class attendance is replaced by online access, it is a step in the right direction with student-centred learning in mind, allowing the students to implement the mode of learning that suits them best.

For the most part, the facilities of the Department have been proven adequate to facilitate the teaching process and although improvements certainly could be made, that is not always up to the Department's sole decision given the limited national funding.

The Department comprises of one two-floor building, providing facilities (elevator) for physically disabled people. Apart from 2 multipurpose halls with 100- and 110-persons capacity, and 11 lecture rooms with a capacity of approx. 25 persons each, the campus hosts the library of the Department, four statutory laboratories, teaching staff offices and the secretariat, a feature that favours concentration and communication between students and their teachers daily. A 120 places restaurant is available to the students.

During the virtual tour executed via video and power-point presentation by the Department Head, as well as via the discussions with faculty, teaching staff, and students, it was revealed that laboratories satisfactorily cover the learning needs.

All lecture rooms and laboratories are equipped with Internet and audio-visual facilities.

The EEAP observed lack of published emergency response procedures/training and emergency drill for the Department buildings. Nevertheless, required hazardous materials and gases are all kept at a safe location separately and Fire Service is situated at a close distance.

The Department and the University institutionally provide counselling/advocating, complaint and objection management services to students, whether newcomers or in an advanced year of study. To help students make progress with their studies and reduce drop-out rates from the study programmes, teachers adopted the "open-door" approach.

A meeting was arranged with the administrative and laboratory staff. In line with the sentiments of the teaching staff, interviewed students expressed their satisfaction with the efficiency of the Secretariat in robust terms.

II. Analysis

Overall, the existing facilities (physical and virtual) are adequate for the size of the undergraduate programme. Furthermore, the academic staff, with their personal commitment

to continuous improvement, has been able to develop a sense of 'belonging' that makes the Department more appealing to future students and, thus, increasing its overall appeal.

The students appear to be familiar with the services provided by the Department, due to the efforts that the Department makes during the start of the 1st semester so as to guide them through the seeming maze of university life.

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 programme 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 faculty and staff and students in view of enhancing career prospects, possibilities of internship placements, etc.

III. Conclusions

Concluding, the Department has made steps to support its students and, more importantly, make all services available and well-known.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- Develop and disseminate safety and emergency procedures.
- Create common areas where students could study and work on group projects.
- Extend the current working hours of the existing facilities to better accommodate student needs.
- As the goals that the Institution has set indicate, it must continue to enhance the mobility, attract foreign students, strengthen the research work, and research potential.
- 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: Collection, Analysis and Use of Information for the Organisation and Operation of New Undergraduate Programmes

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

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

Relevant documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The departmental statistics rely on information management systems involved in the gathering, analysing, and utilizing data and information relative to the Undergraduate Programme of Study, including:

- The University MODIP system, and,
- The Departmental information management system

The above-described information network is utilized to serve the academic and administrative needs of the Department as well as to be used for Programme Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement, for which the Departmental Unit for Quality Assurance (OMEA) and the University Unit for Quality Assurance (MODIP) are responsible. OMEA, the internal evaluation group, analyses the student data and uses this information to improve the performance of students and all teaching personnel. OMEA gathers and inputs data and information in the departmental information system on an ongoing basis for a variety of categories relevant to the Programme of Study, such as:

- The instructional and research activities of the faculty members
- The departmental teaching support facilities

- Data on course/instructor evaluations by the students
- Student profiles
- Student academic progress
- Information from stakeholders, based on discussions with Faculty and the Department Head.
- Statistical data and indicators for funding
- Statistical data on the scientific work (published scientific work, excellence, etc.)
- Statistical data on the students' mobility

II. Analysis

Easy access to the departmental system is provided to the faculty, students, and staff, all of whom are involved in the submission of data, which eventually is quantified in the form of key performance indicators (KPIs) that can be easily interpreted and used for measurement and assessment purposes. The procedures used to collect and analyse the relevant data are being implemented as appropriate. These are analysed regularly, and they feed into the University's system. The analysis of information/data and the drawing of conclusions is done in accordance with the requirements of the monitoring information system (OPESP) of Hellenic Authority of Higher Institutions (HAHE).

Students are presented with the opportunity to evaluate the faculty and support personnel via anonymous surveys. Nevertheless, the EEAP found that student participation in course evaluations is relatively low, approx. 26% for registered students (mean value of the last three operational academic years) with a noticeable increasing trend.

Employability and career paths of graduates are not monitored systematically because currently only 21 graduates exist from the current Undergraduate Study Programme of the new Department. The Department should be complimented for maintaining good collaborations with some of its alumni that include joint research projects, field applications, or policy consultations, and some of these interactions positively, albeit informally, affect educational activities and programme in general. This is a complex but important task, and a systematic approach should be implemented for the collection and treatment of relevant data (e.g., Alumni Association) for subsequent use in the guidance of programme graduates.

III. Conclusions

The Department has been using the University systems to collect and analyse the relevant processes. Given the length of time that this has been in place, the evidence of its effectiveness is relatively limited. However, from the evidence the EEAP had, the approach to collect, analyse, and use Information is effectively implemented.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- Encourage students to complete surveys for all semester classes, if possible.
- The good practices pertaining to students and instructors and affecting information management in the educational process should be extended to the programme's alumni through an Alumni Association and be used to track their employment realities and prospects, with a feedback loop for the benefit of current students.

Principle 9: Public Information Concerning the New Undergraduate Programmes

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

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

Relevant documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

All essential information regarding the Department, undergraduate studies, files, announcements, activities, conferences/symposia, research and contact information is available in separate tabs in Greek and easily accessible on the websites the Department maintains. As already stated in Principle 5, the Department supports three different websites, providing adequate information, which are as follows: (a) <https://w1.aua.gr/dasologia/τηρήμα/>, a dedicated Agricultural University mini-website (b) <https://dasologia.gr> and (c) <http://karp.aua.gr>. EEAP noticed that the latter two websites are only in Greek version while the first website possesses an English version which lags behind in some critical sections. For instance, the Department's overview should be urgently presented in English <https://w1.aua.gr/dasologia/en/department/>

In a separate section, information about the teaching faculty members and staff with their contact details, a brief description of research interests, their CV and the current courses each staff member teaches is available.

There is a dedicated segment on the Department website's front page for the promotion of the new study programme, aiming to promote its attractiveness, according to:

- An explanatory video by the administration entitled "Presentation of the Department" describes the Undergraduate Programme, the infrastructure of the Department, and the life in Karpenissi briefly: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDniQIKlxkU>

- Video with the curation of the state television channel (ET3) entitled: "Analytical presentation of Department of Forestry and Natural Environmental Management in Karpenissi– of Agricultural University of Athens" (narration in Greek): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wuDULL7GLFs>

Also available is the programme of studies, the current year's study guide, which is downloadable, information on registration for the course with a link to the electronic registration webpage, a brief description of the assistance offered by academic advisors together with a form that can be filled in and submitted, among other useful documents. Connection with the following services is easily made through relevant links from the front page of the website(s), facilitating the students' needs with direct access to:

- Virtual Private Network (VPN)
- e-classes
- Evdoxos portal (distribution management of scientific publications and books)
- e-secretariat
- academic webmail
- Erasmus Exchange Programme
- Academic ID
- Student care
- Counselling and psychological support for students
- Accessibility issues
- Library and information centre
- Student advocate support

No information exists on the few graduates of the new Department since its maturity lies in the fourth (4th) year of the study programme, a current deficiency that will surely be rectified in 2024.

II. Analysis

The website includes the basic information required. However, there is little evidence of a concerted effort to promote the Department's activities and articulate how it differentiates itself from other similar Greek Departments. There is therefore space for significant development of this aspect of the Department's operation which will support its outreach activities and the building of reputation in Greece and beyond.

III. Conclusions

The above comments notwithstanding, the EEAP believes that in most areas that the Department has provided on its website exists the information which is needed for the

purposes of this accreditation. There is sufficient information for existing and prospective students to understand the value of their degree and the activity of their department. The one area where this is not the case, is the provision of all the information in English. This limits its internationalization efforts, which are part of its strategic vision and a requirement of this process.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The Department’s website is fragmented across three different websites creating problems in understanding and making sure if the information is sufficiently up to date. In this regard, it is advisable to further develop and maintain a single website in two languages (Greek and English).
- The Department should establish a strong presence on popular social media, i.e., Facebook, Instagram, etc.
- Website could establish networking with the graduates of the Department.
- The website could deliver relevant information with environmental, social, and economic responsibility contributions addressing local stakeholders and the general public since sustainability is one of the main parameters of the Department studies and at the same time a crucial thematic on the top of the European Green Deal agenda.
- A link to Google Scholar/ResearchGate profile could be developed for all faculty members.

Principle 10: Periodic Internal Review of the New Study Programmes

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

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

Relevant documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

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

The EEAP found the following processes practicing by the University and the Department:

- Monitoring of the undergraduate programme is closely related to data resulting from the Internal Evaluation of the Department; the procedure has been assigned to the OMEA.
- Information is acquired by OMEA, while MODIP of the Agricultural University of Athens processes all data.
- The course and research evaluation procedure by Faculty members takes place electronically with questionnaires once per academic year.
- The Curriculum Committee gathers proposals regarding alteration of courses and recommends appropriate revisions to Faculty assembly.
- The last recorded internal evaluation report was in 2022.

The EEAP is not aware of any internal evaluation reports prior to 2022. As a result, there is no evidence of a specific procedure followed by the Department for the re-evaluation, redefinition and updating of the curriculum. Such a lack of information may be the result of transition from the former TEI to new Department.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The Department should conduct annual internal evaluations according to the HAHE guidelines and publish them appropriately.
- The Department should consider the re-evaluation, redefinition and updating of the curriculum as needed following HAHE guidelines.

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

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

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

Relevant documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

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

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

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

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

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

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The EEAP has no recommendations for Principle 11.

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

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

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

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

Relevant documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

The Department of Forestry and Natural Environment Management was established by Law 4589, Gazette 13/29-1-2019 after the previous TEI was eliminated and Faculty, staff, etc. transferred to new Department of Forestry and Natural Environment Management of the Agricultural University of Athens. The programme has a newly developed curriculum and a five-year strategic plan with specific goals. The Department has developed a thorough plan for the educational support of the previous TEI students till their graduation.

The teaching and academic research staff (DEP) includes nine (9) tenured Faculty members, three (3) special technical laboratory personnel (ETEP) and one (1) administrative staff member. One more DEP members is expected to join the Department in 2023. The EEAP considers that all members have the required education and skills to meet the teaching and research requirements of the new Department. The programme is supported by the regular

budget for Greek Universities, the National Development and Investment Programme, National Strategic Reference Frameworks, and several research grants.

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

The undergraduate programme has a newly developed curriculum; it is well adequate to analyse and face the challenges in the geographical area where is situated. There are excellent relations between the students and the Department's staff and there is an excellent infrastructure for education and research purposes.

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

The former TEI programme is supported by the Department till all TEI students have completed their study programme and graduate, according to relative legislation expected to be by 2026. The Department has developed a detailed plan supporting the former TEI students in either graduations as technologists or completing the 5-year program of the new Department.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- Continue even more the competitive structure in research and teaching.
- Collect and analyse information on student participation and course evaluation, as well as in student progress from semester to semester.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

- The Department of Forestry and Natural Environment Management of the Agricultural University of Athens fully complies with the feasibility of operations based on its orientation and the study programme and adheres to the standards of quality assurance and continuous improvement.
- The location is situated in a unique, ideal setting for the subject matter.
- The Department offers a wide range of classes that meet today's societal needs.
- Well-equipped laboratories, some of them unique at a national level.
- The faculty creates a very friendly environment for the students.
- The Department aims at high quality publications in order to promote the status of the faculty and facilitate access to substantial research grants.
- The incorporation of the former TEI to the Agricultural University of Athens has opened excellent opportunities for the enhancement and recognition of the Department.

II. Areas of Weakness

- The number of offered post-graduate programmes is currently very limited.
- The students should be more actively encouraged by the faculty to participate in the course/instructor evaluation process.
- Significant lack of maintenance, support personnel, and resources.
- Shortage of qualified personnel (e.g., librarian, secretariat, etc.).
- Limited safety measures and non-functional automatic fire extinguishers.
- The student evaluations should be considered formally by the "Undergraduate Programme or Study Committee" at the end of each semester. The conclusions and decisions made by the committee should be communicated to the students so that they are aware of the results of the process and can appreciate its significance for improving the programme delivery.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

- Critical stakeholders (alumni, companies, professional organizations) should actively participate in the continuous assessment, and possible improvement of the curriculum as well as new research directions meeting local and national workforce and society needs. This participation should be done in a formal and systematic way with clearly defined objectives, and with feedback solicited in a rigorous way.
- The students' (through ERASMUS+) and teaching staff's mobility should be encouraged as well as be able to attract foreign students through these programmes.
- Improve safety measures in the Department infrastructure.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

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

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: **3, 7, 8, 9, and 10.**

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

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

Overall Judgement	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname

Signature

1. **Professor Constantin Vamvakas (Chair)**
f. Academic Counsellor, University of Ghent, Belgium

2. **Professor Emeritus Spyros Pavlostathis**
Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, GA, USA

3. **Dr. Evangelia Daskalaku**
Member of the Geotechnical Chamber of Greece

4. **Ms Aphrodite Lioliou**
Student, Department of Agriculture, International Hellenic University, Thessaloniki, Greece