ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
HELLENIC REPUBLIC

Accreditation Report
for the Undergraduate Study Programme of:

Journalism and Mass Communications
Institution: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
Date: 17 April 2021

Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the Undergraduate Study Programme of **Journalism and Mass Communications** of the **Aristotle University of Thessaloniki** 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 of **Journalism and Mass Communications** of the **Aristotle University of Thessaloniki** comprised the following three (3) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

1. **Professor Emeritus Joseph Joseph, Chair**
   University of Cyprus, Cyprus

2. **Professor Alexander Kitroeff**
   Haverford College, USA

3. **Associate Professor Paschalis Paschali**
   University of Nicosia, Cyprus

II.   Review Procedure and Documentation

In reviewing the Undergraduate Study Programme of Journalism and Mass Communications of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (hereafter the "Programme"), the objectives of the Panel, as described in the Guidelines for the Members of External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel (EEAP), are:

- to establish whether the data provided from the various resources is consistent among one another and reflect the actual situation
- identify strengths and areas of weakness
- engage in a constructive dialogue with the Institution, leading to reflection and continuous enhancement of the study programme.

Following a well-prepared schedule provided by HAHE, the Panel held several separate interactive virtual (by electronic means) meetings and visits for two days as follows:

On April 13, 2021, the following virtual meetings took place:
- with the Vice Rector/President of MODIP and the Head of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communications
- with members of OMEA and MODIP
- with teaching staff of all ranks
- with current undergraduate students attending the Programme.

On April 14, 2021, the following virtual meetings took place:
- meeting with administrative staff and teaching staff members
- on-line tour of facilities; including classrooms, lecture halls, libraries, laboratories, offices, learning resources, equipment etc.
- meeting with graduates of the Department who have completed the Programme.
- meeting with employers, social partners and external stakeholders of the private and the public sector
- meeting with members and staff of OMEA and MODIP
- meeting with the President of MODIP and the Head of the Department, plus members and staff of OMEA and MODIP.

During the above virtual meetings, the Panel had the opportunity to meet, talk, and interact with all the participants of all meetings. The discussions were very constructive and fruitful and were conducted in a cooperative manner and attitude. During the last meeting, the Panel made an informal presentation of some initial key findings.

The internal evaluation report of the Department and other extensive material were made available to the Panel electronically well in advance through HAHE. More information and clarifications were made available during the meetings. The Department and the University worked diligently in preparing the internal evaluation report and other relevant materials, as well as in organizing and hosting the virtual meetings. All the meetings included presentations, discussions, and question and answer sessions.

It is the feeling of the Panel that the Department has performed an excellent job throughout the internal evaluation process and the objectives of the process have been met. The efficiency and

eagerness of the Department to answer questions and provide additional information and clarifications during the meetings are worth noting.

It is, also, worth pointing out that students were especially encouraged to talk freely about their overall learning experience. They welcomed the opportunity to talk to the Panel and to voice their views.

We, we wish to express our thanks and appreciation to the Department and the University administration for their cooperation, professionalism, and eagerness to provide clarifications and respond to all the questions posed by the Panel.

This Report is based on information collected and views expressed during the virtual meetings as well as on information contained in the internal evaluation report and other documents submitted before and during the virtual meetings, including presentations and clarifications.

III.   Study Programme Profile

The Department was established in 1991 with the main objective of providing theoretical and practical training and enhancing research in the fields of journalism and the mass media. The University was established in 1925 and, in some respects, it is the largest institution of higher education in the country.

The Undergraduate Programme of Journalism and Mass Communications is a four-year programme, requiring 240 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System), leading to the award a bachelor's degree. It has been repeatedly revised and improved over time.

The objectives of the Programme are comparable to those offered by other institutions around Europe. The Programme has an interdisciplinary nature and combines theory and practice within a well-defined and coherent structure. Its content is balanced and appropriately designed to meet international standards and the needs and challenges of a modern society.

The structure of the Programme and the courses offered are consistent with the Department's overall objectives, and include required and elective courses, seminars, practical training and term papers.

The Department has twenty-one faculty members (one more has been appointed and will join the Department later this year) and about the same number of active researchers and staff involved in teaching. They are all active in diverse fields such as journalism, cultural studies, political science, international relations, sociology, law, history, literature, psychology, arts, linguistics, new technologies and their applications, advertising, public relations, theory and practice of mass media.

The number of new students admitted every has increased considerably the last ten years and currently it is about 160. The total number of active students (all years of study) enrolled in the Programme is approximately 650. The number of graduates varies every year, but the average number during the last few years is close to one hundred.

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

Principle 1: Academic Unit Policy for Quality Assurance

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

> *The quality assurance policy of the academic unit is in line with the Institutional policy on quality, and is included in a published statement that is implemented by all stakeholders. It focuses on the achievement of special objectives related to the quality assurance of study programmes offered by the academic unit.*
>
> *The quality policy statement of the academic unit includes its commitment to implement a quality policy that will promote the academic profile and orientation of the programme, its purpose and field of study; it will realise the programme's strategic goals and it will determine the means and ways for attaining them; it will implement the appropriate quality procedures, aiming at the programme's continuous improvement.*
>
> *In particular, in order to carry out this policy, the academic unit commits itself to put into practice quality procedures that will demonstrate:*
>
> a) *the suitability of the structure and organization of the curriculum;*
> b) *the pursuit of learning outcomes and qualifications in accordance with the European and the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education;*
> c) *the promotion of the quality and effectiveness of teaching;*
> d) *the appropriateness of the qualifications of the teaching staff;*
> e) *the enhancement of the quality and quantity of the research output among faculty members of the academic unit;*
> f) *ways for linking teaching and research;*
> g) *the level of demand for qualifications acquired by graduates, in the labour market;*
> h) *the quality of support services such as the administrative services, the Library, and the student welfare office;*
> i) *the conduct of an annual review and an internal audit of the quality assurance system of the undergraduate programme(s) offered, as well as the collaboration of the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) with the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU).*

Study Programme Compliance

The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki offers a 4-year, 8-semester, (240 ECTS) undergraduate Programme in Journalism and Mass Communications with two concentrations; Journalism and Mass Media Communications. The curriculum comprises 26 compulsory courses, at least 16 major electives, 4 free electives and the final project. All courses are worth 5 ECTS each, except the final project which is worth 10 ECTS. The large number of elective courses clearly validates the student-centric, interdisciplinary approach to education that the Department has adopted. Furthermore, the Programme has been updated on four occasions since its founding in 1992, which demonstrates the Department's willingness as well as their flexibility and ability to make appropriate changes promoting the quality and effectiveness of teaching. The latest update

came in 2020, with the addition of new courses on the latest theoretical and research trends, such as the course "Online Society", keeping the curriculum up to date.

The Panel's meetings with students and graduates of the Programme confirmed an overall satisfaction with their studies and professors which is also evident in the appropriateness of the qualifications of the academic staff who are all commended academics and researchers with significant published work. In fact, 85% of the faculty members are actively involved in research projects, leading to significant publications in their field of expertise, and a vital external funding for their Department and University.

Students confirmed that the faculty is approachable and always available and willing to assist them with their coursework and any other academic issues they might be facing. Students also commented on the extraordinary efforts their professors have recently made in order to cope with the restrictions and difficulties that the pandemic, and subsequently the online teaching has imposed. It is not a coincidence that students, through the online evaluation questionnaires, gave the highest grade to date to their faculty this extraordinary pandemic-affected year. Furthermore, the graduates of the Programme pointed out that their professors have also been helpful in assisting them to find their first jobs and make their first important career steps. Moreover, some graduates reported that they keep in touch with their professors and share information related to their field.

With regard to the qualifications and associated abilities of the graduates, the Programme's social partners confirmed that the Programme's students and graduates are of high educational level and for this reason they are very pleased with their ongoing collaborations and the job positions they have offered them throughout the years.

In conclusion, it is important to mention that the Department has established a well-defined quality assurance policy that is appropriate for the Programme's mission and activities. The implementation of the policy is carried out successfully by two committees, OMEA and MODIP, who confirmed that they work well together as there is a mutual respect and willingness by everyone to take on responsibilities.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

None

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

After reviewing the information provided, attending the presentation of the Quality Assurance Unit, and the discussion sessions with the faculty, students, alumni and societal partners, it is the Panel's opinion that the Programme is largely successful in achieving a balance between the theoretical and practical components of the curriculum.

From our discussion with staff and students, it is evident that the design of the curriculum has undergone significant transformation and improvement since its inauguration in 1992, adopting two concentrations and a number of new courses of both practical and theoretical nature. In fact, the Programme has been updated on four occasions since its founding, with the latest reformation taking place as recent as 2020.

From the presentations and discussion with the members of the staff, it is evident that there is a lot of thought and effort going into these programme updates, with the members of the Quality Assurance Units going as far as creating student focus groups to identify possible areas that needed improvement.

The links between the Department and public engagement is evident in the presentations we had with external stakeholders. Opportunities for internships through the elective course "practical training", as well as for permanent employment, are provided through connections

with the various broadcasting, news, and communication agencies that the Department is affiliated with.

In terms of research and teaching, academic staff members are active researchers and published authors whose research is directly related to their academic discipline, thus informing and keeping their courses up to date. In fact, many of the new courses that have been introduced derive from the latest research areas of the academic staff. Moreover, faculty members reported that some of their students are actively involved in their ongoing research projects.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The Panel recommends possible addition of more elective courses of practical nature to the curriculum in order to enhance students' abilities and to strengthen their hands-on skills.

Although there has been a recent update of the Programme, the newly added courses are mostly related to the latest theoretical and research trends. As the traditional media, like newspapers and magazines are arguably in crisis, the curriculum could be enhanced with contemporary subjects like podcasting, blogging, and photo and video journalism with the use of new means and technologies such as mobile devices.

These additions could help open a whole new horizon for the graduates and facilitate putting the valuable theoretical knowledge currently on offer into contemporary practice.

Principle 3: Student- centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment

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

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

The student-centred learning and teaching process

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

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

Study Programme Compliance

The Programme is fully compliant with the principle of student-centered learning and in our meeting, the student expressed an across-the-board notable satisfaction with the ways the Programme addresses their needs. The alumni we met spoke equally highly of the support they had received as students.

Examples of the mechanisms that are in place include soliciting the view of student representatives when new courses or updating of existing courses are introduced; each course has its own webpage in order that the teaching practices and course material are easily accessed by students; certain courses are recorded and made available electronically; the Programme's

infrastructure provides for e-learning for certain courses and also enables students who need to work from home or do distance learning.

We were favourably impressed to learn the Programme has an electronic application "App" through which students can undertake functions of course registration and otherwise engage with the Programme.

In addition, the Programme's assessment criteria are made public in advance and instructors provide explanation for their grading of student performance. There is also an effective policy of soliciting student evaluations of courses and the information for the past seven years is made available to instructors. This information is closely monitored by a Programme Committee and MODIP.

The Programme has adopted a number of practices to ensure the respect and attention to the diversity of students and their needs and enabling flexible learning paths. These practices include ways to support students with learning or physical disabilities.

There is a thorough formal procedure in place for student appeals, that includes the possibility of forming a committee; a special academic assessment committee; providing a student advocate. There is the position of advisor on studies held by a faculty member with knowledge of the relevant regulations and the Programme's relevant Erasmus committee to deals with any issues concerning foreign students.

In conclusion, it is also worth pointing out that the support the Department has been providing to students during the pandemic is reflective of its overall commitment to student-centered learning.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

None.

Principle 4: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification

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

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

Procedures concerning the award and recognition of higher education degrees, the duration of studies, rules ensuring students progression, terms and conditions for student mobility should be based on the institutional study regulations. Appropriate recognition procedures rely on institutional practice for recognition of credits among various European academic departments and Institutions, in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.
Graduation represents the culmination of the students' study period. Students need to receive documentation explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed (Diploma Supplement).

Study Programme Compliance

The admission standards for the Department are determined by the Ministry of Education and Religion as is the case for all public institutions of higher education in the country. The standards are measured by the points (moria) students achieve in the annual national entrance exams, with each department being assigned a specific number which reflects the overall standing and student demand for that particular department. The Department seems to be a top one among all departments of communications, journalism and media in the country. The faculty expressed justifiable pride in the status of their Department which is well-earned and entirely justified.

The Department has in place a series of good practices outlining, explaining and publicizing all required stages of the progression towards the undergraduate degree with all dates, requirements and relevant functions communicated to students clearly and well in advance. These include the procedures involving the award and recognition of higher education degrees as well as all relevant issues.

The ECTS is applied across the curriculum and student progress is monitored through periodic evaluations. Appropriate data is submitted to MODIP and is also made available to the faculty.

The Department provides opportunities for internships and practical training. This is done in collaboration with social partners and employers. During their meeting with the Panel, the students and graduates expressed great appreciation for the support they receive from members of the Department, especially for the opportunities to develop job-specific skills.

The Panel had the opportunity to meet with representatives of employers and social partners -- external stakeholders from the private and the public sector – who spoke extremely highly about their experiences with students from the Department. Their very positive comments completed the picture of a Department that actively and effectively provides support to its students.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

None.

Principle 5: Teaching Staff

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

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

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

Study Programme Compliance

The academic staff of the Department consists of 21 members of all ranks (one more has been appointed and will join the Department later this year). Their expertise, international background, high qualifications, and enthusiasm offer strengths for classroom teaching and research. They follow widely used pedagogical practices and instructional methods that meet international standards. There is enthusiasm and requisite skills in utilizing new technologies, both in the classroom and in interaction among faculty and students. The faculty should be commended for the firm commitment, concentrated effort, and enthusiasm in maintaining high-quality teaching despite the obstacles and difficulties created by shrinking resources and other external factors for which the Department cannot be blamed.

It should be pointed out that there is a collaborative climate in the Department built on, and reflecting, mutual respect and collegial spirit, not only among faculty members, but also between students and teaching staff. The Panel had the opportunity to interact with students and received the impression that they think very highly of their teachers. All of them talked with respect and enthusiasm about their professors, the departmental culture, and the learning environment. They confirmed that their teachers are committed, accessible, understanding, and ready to provide support and guidance. The encouragement and advising provided by faculty members are evident and highly appreciated by the students.

There are clear, transparent and fair processes for the recruitment of qualified staff, but there is a problem in that in recent years new positions are extremely rare. Again, the real issue are external limitations, shrinking resources and other factors which have to do with the State and

its priorities in allocating resources. Increasing the number of faculty will definitely help for further improvement of teaching, research and contribution to the society.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

There is a need to address the general systemic problem of inadequately funded public university system. Addressing this issue will also help address problems and challenges which universities and departments are facing, such as attracting and retaining more faculty of international calibre.

Faculty members should intensify their efforts and enhance their high-quality research output, especially by publishing in high impact international peer-reviewed journals and international publishing houses.

In order to further enhance the quantity and quality of research output, special attention should be paid, and policies and measures should be adopted, in providing further support for junior faculty members. This might be an issue for the University to consider.

The excellent collegial atmosphere in the Department and accessibility of faculty by the students should be maintained and further enhanced, as it is instrumental in sharing experiences and getting feedback. This is already a big asset for the Department and goes hand in hand with the commendable sensitivity and efforts in monitoring and improving performance of both faculty and students.

The Department and the University should provide further encouragement and support to faculty members to intensify their efforts for attracting external funding, especially through international and European projects.

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

Overall, the Department has very good facilities which are in good shape. The lecture rooms are well designed and kept in good condition.

In addition to the auditoriums and lecture rooms, the Department runs six well-equipped labs which are sufficient for delivering the practical component of the Programme. The labs are managed by dedicated qualified full-time personnel who are present in the labs for most of their opening hours. In addition to the full-time staff, post graduate students are also present, and while working on their personal projects, they also act as assistants and mentors to the undergraduate students, helping them to familiarize themselves with the equipment in the labs.

Students can reserve space in the labs after class hours and are also allowed to borrow equipment for their coursework through the dedicated personnel, who are also responsible for training them on how to use it.

Although the equipment is relatively modern, upgrading it and keeping it up to date is always a challenge due to lack of adequate funding.

Adequate administrative services are offered to the students for the duration of their studies, but the Secretariat seems to need more office space. Students have the option to register, select their classes and monitor their progress online.

Student mobility is well organized. Plenty of students take advantage of the ERAMUS+ opportunities to widen their knowledge and expose themselves to new ideas. The Department

is reassuring that there are many agreements in place, increasing the choice of places to visit and topics to study.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

Although the Department seems to have adequate labs and equipment to cover the teaching and learning needs of the students, it could also explore offering contemporary courses where students can make use of their own personal equipment, such as their mobile phones, to fulfil, to some extent, the practical component of the course. Such courses could, for example, include podcasting, blogging, and/or photo and video journalism with the use of new means and technologies such as mobile devices. This could also be proven helpful at times such as now, during the pandemic, when facilities are out of reach.

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

The Department's information management operates within the broader system of the University's information gathering and disseminating system. The primary data it deals with is information about the students, teaching staff, the structure, and contents of the curriculum. The relevant Departmental committees gather all the necessary data and provided to the University's central services. This Panel was provided with an extensive and detailed set of quantitative and qualitative data about the Programme, which proves the ability of the Department and the University in information management.

It is also noted that the Department electronically records student views on each course they take and upon their graduation.

Overall, the Department appears to be fully conversant with electronic methods of information management and employs them extensively and efficiently.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

None.

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 main vehicle of the Department to convey information about its manifold activities is a very-well-structured and content-full web page. It provides all the necessary information and orientation in detail to students, postgraduate students all its members and outsiders.

The Department's webpage is regularly updated, and it is there where students are able to look up information about the curriculum and the various services that are available to them.

There is an emphasis on providing as much information as possible in a functional and usable way whilst also taking into account the need for the webpage to appear modern in terms of graphic design. The pull-down menus give it an updated feel compared to websites of other academic Departments, as does the short video introducing the Department on the home page. A number of photographs nicely complement the appearance of the webpage.

The Panel was favourably impressed by the Programme's employment of Facebook and other social media to maintain contact with students during the pandemic.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

Given the Department's focus on journalism communication, the webpage could also be used to showcase its own creativity and the student projects. Because the Programme has received very positive feedback about its employment of Facebook and other social media during the pandemic it should consider maintaining those forms of communication with students in the post-pandemic era.

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

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

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

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

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

Study Programme Compliance

The Department and the University have in place an internal quality assurance system which provides for regular monitoring, review and revision of the Programme. It looks that both MODIP and OMEA are efficient and do a very good job.

The findings of the self-assessment are properly recorded and documented, but there is room for improving sharing, discussing and utilizing them, especially by preparing an action plan taking into consideration the learning environment and all parties involved.

The sensitivity of the Department and the ongoing debate on issues of monitoring and improvement confirm that high quality research and teaching are firm and clear objectives embedded in the Programme.

The Programme has been reviewed and revised repeatedly over time in order to ensure that it is up to date and in line with the latest research.

Revisions of the Programme take into account the changing needs of the society and the expectations of students who provide evaluations of courses, faculty and the overall learning environment. The revisions are also aimed at harmonizing its objectives and content with international standards and practices.

In general, the on-going monitoring and upgrading of the Programme reflects a dynamic and open Department with enthusiastic and forward-looking faculty.

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 Departmental quality assurance committee could have a more structured procedure (such as scheduled meetings) and timeframes to assure that ongoing monitoring and periodic reviews are sustained and enhanced.
- Along the same lines, and in general terms, there is some room for improvement in handling and utilizing information, statistics and figures pertaining to the Programme.
- The outcomes of self-assessment, monitoring and periodic internal reviews should lead to the preparation of implementable action plans.

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 current accreditation review is the second external review of the Programme, following the first one of 2014 which led to a substantial update of the Programme.

The first review was positive with some constructive recommendations, which for the most part have been implemented, demonstrating the Department's commitment to the spirit and the processes of quality assurance.

Based on the information gathered during the online presentations and discussions, it appears that the faculty, administrative staff and students are aware of the importance of the internal and external review process and its contribution to the improvement of the Programme and the Department. As they pointed out during the meetings, it helps them become better by enabling them to identify any problematic areas and to find suitable solutions.

All stakeholders of the Programme, including the current undergraduate students and alumni, were actively engaged in the current review. During the meetings, the staff members demonstrated that they are fully aware of the importance of external review and the positive effects that can result from it. Students and graduates confirmed that they are satisfied with their university experience and praised the efforts of the Department, and its faculty members and staff. Indeed, both faculty and staff seem to be passionate about their work, displaying a great team spirit.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

None.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I.   Features of Good Practice

- The Programme reflects the inherent interdisciplinarity of the field, as well the variety of media forms that exist today and enables students to engage with a range of media types.
- The structure of the Programme and the courses offered are consistent with the Department's overall objectives; they combine theory and practice, and include required and elective courses, seminars, practical training, term papers and a final project.
- The faculty of the Department are keenly aware of the need of the curriculum to anticipate the ever-changing landscape of media by adapting existing courses or including new ones, especially in the case of new communications technologies.
- The expertise, international background, high qualifications, and enthusiasm of the faculty offer strengths for classroom teaching and research.
- The teaching staff follow widely used pedagogical practices and instructional methods that meet international standards.
- The faculty, administrative staff and students are aware of the importance of the internal and external review processes and their contribution to the improvement of the Programme and the Department.
- The on-going monitoring and upgrading of the Programme reflect an academically dynamic, open and forward-looking Department.
- Overall, this is a top Programme in a relatively young Department in one of the oldest and largest institutions of higher learning in the country and the Panel's judgement is that it is fully compliant with the standards for quality accreditation of undergraduate programmes.

II.   Areas of Weakness

Some of the difficulties the Programme is facing stem from the general systemic problem of bureaucracy -- mostly stemming from national regulations -- and an inadequately funded public university system. Addressing this issue will, for example, address the issue of hiring more qualified personnel to run specialized labs, provide technical support, update equipment and make it accessible to students. There is also room for intensifying efforts in attracting external funding, especially through international and European projects. In that respect, the Department and the University can provide support and incentives, and encourage faculty members to intensify their efforts in applying and securing such projects.

III.   Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

- As the traditional media, like newspapers and magazines are in crisis, the curriculum could be enhanced with contemporary subjects like podcasting, blogging, and photo and video journalism with the use of new means and technologies such as mobile devices.
- More qualified personnel are needed to run specialized labs and make equipment more accessible and available to students.
- Faculty members could intensify their efforts to publish in high impact factor, peer-reviewed international journals and publishing houses.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: **1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, and 10.**

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: **6 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	**X**
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname   **Signature**

1. **Professor Emeritus Joseph Joseph, Chair**
   University of Cyprus, Cyprus

2. **Professor Alexander Kitroeff**
   Haverford College, USA

3. **Associate Professor Paschalis Paschali**
   University of Nicosia, Cyprus