



**ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ**  
HELLENIC REPUBLIC



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Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης**  
Hellenic Authority  
for Higher Education

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

**Agricultural Development**  
**Institution: Democritus University of Thrace**  
**Date: 18 December 2021**

Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the  
Undergraduate Study Programme (Integrated Master) of  
**Agricultural Development of the Democritus University of Thrace**  
for the purposes of granting accreditation

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## **PART A: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE REVIEW**

### **I. The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel**

The Panel responsible for the Accreditation Review of the Undergraduate Study Programme (Integrated Master) of **Agricultural Development** of the **Democritus University of Thrace** comprised the following four (5) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

1. **Prof. George Vellidis** (Chair)  
University of Georgia, United States of America
  
2. **Dr Dimitris Diakosavvas**  
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, France
  
3. **Mr Dimitrios Sotiriadis**  
Member of the Geotechnical Chamber of Greece, Greece
  
4. **Prof. Ioannis Tzanetakis**  
University of Arkansas, United States of America
  
5. **Prof Christos Xiloyannis**  
University of Basilicata, Italy

## II. Review Procedure and Documentation

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the **Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE)**, implemented an online accreditation review of the **undergraduate study programme** of the Department of **Agricultural Development (AD Department)** of the **Democritus University of Thrace (DUTH)**. Meetings and briefings were conducted efficiently and productively using Zoom®. An online accreditation can never replace on-site visits as the lack of face-to-face communications and physical presence at the premises of the Department did not allow the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel (EEAP) comprised of Dr. George Vellidis (Chair), Dr. Dimitris Diakosavvas, Mr. Dimitrios Sotiriadis, Dr. Ioannis Tzanetakis, and Dr. Cristos Xiloyannis to establish a full understanding of the departmental infrastructure and evaluate the academic environment.

Before the online meetings, the EEAP received the review timeframe with Zoom links, the AD Department Accreditation Proposal, the External Evaluation Report of January 2014 and other relevant material. EEAP members discussed strategy and items to be considered during the review and the Chair allocated tasks for each Panel member. Additional documentation and presentations were requested by EEAP and provided promptly by the departmental staff during and after the completion of the online meetings.

The review was initiated in the afternoon of Monday, Dec 14<sup>th</sup> 2021 with the inaugural meeting between EEAP and the vice-Rector and president of the **Quality Assurance Unit (QAU/MODIP)** of DUTH Professor Zoe Gavriilidou and the AD Department Head Professor Christos Chatzissavvidis. Professor Gavriilidou gave a comprehensive presentation of the academic profile of DUTH. Professor Chatzissavvidis presented the profile of the AD Department, its **quality assurance policies (QAP)**, and information related to the undergraduate programme including curriculum structure and learning outcomes.

Meetings continued with four (4) members of the **Internal Evaluation Group (IEG/OMEA)** and two (2) members of MODIP. After a comprehensive presentation on **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** a variety of issues were discussed, focusing on the compliance of the undergraduate programme to the accreditation standards, curriculum revisions, student progression and assignments. OMEA members expressed their support and commitment to the QAP to further promote the academics and outputs of the undergraduate programme including the role of the academic advisor, student internships, thesis, student and **teaching/research personnel (faculty)** mobility, flexibility and modernization of the curriculum, secretarial and research support, student accommodations (housing, health and otherwise) and other infrastructure items.

Meetings continued with ten (10) members of the teaching staff. EEAP and the teaching staff thoroughly discussed the undergraduate programme; including curriculum, internship, infrastructure, connectivity between teaching and research activities, teaching workload, projects and research activities and student questionnaire evaluations. At the end of the day and during debriefing, EEAP discussed their impressions of the three meetings and identified the need for supplemental material which was requested from Professors Gavriilidou and Chatzissavvidis.

The first meeting of Dec. 15<sup>th</sup> started with ten (10) students, representing all five (5) years of undergraduate programme. EEAP and the group discussed issues related to their studies, facilities and student life. The group was very satisfied with their education and pointed to the great relationship they have with the faculty, the help they receive from their academic advisors, the strengths of the curriculum and the excellent support from the secretariat. One student indicated his/her preference for material to be physically available in the library. The EEAP was later informed by the campus librarian that all titles within the Hellenic university system were available to students via inter-library loan. The day continued with a video virtual tour of the departmental facilities. Ten (10) administrative & teaching staff members participated in the questions and answers session focusing on the departmental infrastructure.

The meeting with ten (10) programme graduates was very informative. EEAP expressed its satisfaction that many individuals have secured positions in agribusiness or have even formed their own companies; leading to rewarding careers. The graduates' views of AD Department were positive; especially when it comes to their relationships with faculty and the overall, in-depth and quality knowledge they received during their studies.

Ten (10) representatives of local agribusinesses and representatives of local and regional governments participated in the following meeting. Discussions focused on their contacts and links to AD, and their experiences with graduates and DEP. The discussion was lively and the meeting extended an hour longer than planned. All participating stakeholders were satisfied with the quality of graduates produced by the AD Department and many had hired graduates or had provided opportunities for internships. The stakeholders pointed out the strength of the undergraduate programme which allows individuals to expand to new areas of knowledge. Additional supplemental material which was requested from Professor Chatzissavvidis and promptly provided before the beginning of the final day of meetings.

Meetings concluded in the afternoon of Dec. 16<sup>th</sup> with EEAP presenting a summary of its findings to OMEA and MODIP. EEAP acknowledged the collaborative spirit of all participating parties and the openness in the feedback received. OMEA/MODIP members thanked EEAP for the review process, indicating that they are available for any further questions if those arise during the preparation of the report.

During this meeting, a discussion revolved around which academic departments and undergraduate programmes at other Greek universities could be considered the closest peers of the AD Department and of the department's undergraduate programme. This is an important point because comparisons should be made between closely aligned departments and programmes. Currently, the AD Department's undergraduate programme is compared to the Department of Agricultural Economics and Development of the Agricultural University of Athens. The faculty of the Department felt that both the structure of the department and the structure of the undergraduate programme mostly closely matched that of the School of Agriculture of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

During the evening debriefing, EEAP continued working on key findings of the review.

The EEAP acknowledges the spirit of cooperation shown by the AD Department; their willingness to collaborate and support the AD Department QAP and the quality standards of the Department. The virtual accreditation review process was sufficient and efficient. All individuals who participated in writing this report had the opportunity to voice their views.

From the end of December 16<sup>th</sup> to December 20<sup>th</sup>, EEAP worked both independently and as a team on their assigned tasks on the Accreditation Report. EEAP team meetings were conducted via Zoom using a link provided by the Chair.

### **III. Study Programme Profile**

DUTH was established by law in 1973. DUTH is the first regional multi-campus University in Greece and provides both undergraduate and postgraduate education. DUTH has eight (8) Faculties/Schools comprised of twenty (20) Departments, one of which is the AD Department.

The AD Department was founded in 1999 and is part of the School of Agricultural and Forestry Sciences. The Departmental mission is to “cultivate and promote the science of Agriculture with emphasis on cutting-edge technologies, advancing scientific knowledge in the area of economics and social development, and techniques and social procedures of development in the field of agriculture, especially in outlying agricultural regions”.

The number of incoming students is determined yearly by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. The total number of registered undergraduate students during the current academic year is >1200 (~800 in the first 5 year of study and >400 past that timeframe), 65 postgraduate students and 46 PhD candidates.

The programme offers an Integrated MSc degree (National and European Qualifications Framework 7) within 10 semesters (5 years), requiring a total of 300 ECTS. The curriculum is organized into General/Basic (30 courses) and Specialization (22 courses) with 40 courses (200 ECTS) being mandatory and 12 electives (60 ECTS). Integral parts of the curriculum are the Diploma Thesis (30 ECTS) and Internship (10 ECTS).

The AD Department currently has seventeen (17) full-time faculty, three (3) Laboratory Teaching Staff (EDIP), one (1) Special Technical Laboratory personnel (ETEP), five (5) temporary/contract teaching/research staff and seven (7) administrative staff. The AD Department has nineteen (19) research laboratories under the following six (6) Divisions:

- Management of Plant Production
- Crop Protection and Environment
- Management of Animal Production
- Agricultural Economics & Agribusiness Management
- Agricultural & Natural Resources Management
- Food Science and Technology

## PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

### Principle 1: Academic Unit Policy for Quality Assurance

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

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

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

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

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

### Study Programme Compliance

- The AD Department has implemented most the 2014 external evaluation recommendations. The Department provided a list of action items in response to the review and the corresponding outcomes which were incorporated in the 2018 revised programme of studies.
- The AD Department has established an appropriate OMEA and has set specific and measurable goals for the undergraduate programme based on HAHE templates.
- The MODIP of the DUTH implement quality assurance policies (QAP) paired with suitable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).



- EEAP acknowledges the commitment of OMEA towards establishment of QAP and its continuous monitoring on the yearly basis through reviews and audits.
- Although related documents are available on the AD Department’s website, it is not clear to EEAP how the QAP is communicated to students, graduates, and stakeholders.

**Panel Judgement**

<b>Principle 1: Academic Unit Policy for Quality Assurance</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>x</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

**Panel Recommendations**

- EEAP recommends that OMEA ensures QAP, annual and other relevant reports and audits are publicly and easily accessible directly on the Departmental website rather than through links to the MODIP website.
- AD Department should explore comprehensive ways and communication channels to disseminate its QAP to students, graduates, stakeholders and social partners, policymakers and governmental bodies, international students who wish to attend AD Department as well as the general public.

## Principle 2: Design and Approval of Programmes

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

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

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

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

## Study Programme Compliance

- The AD Department undergraduate programme curriculum is based on the application of modern methods of teaching, training and assessment. It is designed for students to attain learning outcomes in a friendly and creative environment. Online tools (e-Class platform etc.) facilitate and streamline learning processes.
- The AD Department responded to the 2014 external evaluation by updating the curriculum in 2018. This was done by reducing the number of required courses offered and creating some new courses (although further needs were identified). The average GPA is steady above 7 and the average number of years to graduation is 5.5-6 years, one of the better if not the best amongst the major agricultural departments in Greece.
- The curriculum is now structured in five (5) semesters with basic and agronomic courses, four (4) semesters with specialized courses, and one (1) semester dedicated to the thesis leading to an integrated Masters. The 40 mandatory courses (200 ECTS) and 12 electives (60 ECTS) are required, in addition to summer practice/internship (10 ECTS) and a thesis (30 ECTS). The workload adheres to the 30 ECTS units/semester) that combine lectures and laboratory exercises. The latter accounted for >75% of offered courses, thus providing significant hands-on experience. Learning outcomes are compatible with the National Higher Education Qualifications Framework.

- The student guide/online curriculum is well constructed. Individual syllabi contain information about learning outcomes, general abilities, course outlines, teaching methods and structure, student assessment and recommended reference sources.
- Students can evaluate courses (lectures and laboratory exercises) anonymously through electronic questionnaires. The evaluation includes major aspects of the educational process, including instructor’s competence, supervisory means, educational material, etc.
- Faculty members are accessible and available for personal communication with their students.
- The extended acquired knowledge and professional rights of graduates as Agronomists enlisting in ΓΕΩΤ.Ε.Ε (Geotechnical Chamber of Greece) lead to positive views by relevant stakeholders regarding their knowledge and skills.
- No course prerequisites exist, thus allowing students to enroll in advanced courses without the necessary background.
- Faculty link research and teaching in the undergraduate programme mainly through the research orientation of the thesis, and by using examples of their research in courses. Furthermore, state-of-the-art equipment has been purchased through competitive grants and is available for demonstration to undergraduate students.
- The research orientation of the undergraduate thesis is significant with nine (9) were published in refereed journals in the past 8 years.

### Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 2: Design and Approval of Programmes</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>x</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

<b>The External Evaluation &amp; Accreditation Panel agrees that this Programme leads to a Level 7 Qualification according to the National &amp; European Qualifications Network (Integrated Master)</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
	<b>x</b>	

### Panel Recommendations

- Consider adding courses on emerging topics to the curriculum.
- Address the issue of the lack of prerequisites, particularly for the courses that are in sequences.
- Aim to offer at least one mandatory and one elective course per Division in English to increase international student mobility and enhance the standing of the Department within an international context.
- Student teaching evaluations need incentivization. A significant obstacle is that attendance is not required in lectures. Hence, the student evaluation could be promoted by not

reporting grades until an evaluation is submitted. In case of no attendance, the student should leave the questionnaire blank and justify a reason for no attendance.

- Reinforce the impact of the undergraduate thesis. An excellent metric would be to increase by 50% the number of undergraduate theses published in peer-reviewed journals in the next 5 years.
- Research thesis graded with distinction (10,0) should be uploaded in a dedicated area on the AD Department website to serve as examples of best practices.

### **Principle 3: Student- centered Learning, Teaching and Assessment**

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

*Student-centered 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-centered 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 undergraduate programme largely corresponds to a student-centered approach in terms of learning and teaching process. The availability of three specializations (κατευθύνσεις) – Management of Plant Production, Plant Protection, and Environment; Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness Management; and Food Science and Technology – as well as the offering of several elective courses and the use of a variety of pedagogical means, enable students to pursue flexible learning paths according to their individual needs. Students are free to select whichever option appeals to them.
- The courses of the first five semesters are core and common to all students. Then, the student must select one of the three specializations offered. Each student must successfully attend sixty courses over nine semesters, including theory and laboratory sessions and a

two-month internship. The 10<sup>th</sup> semester is dedicated to the diploma thesis. The Department also offers a postgraduate Studies Programme entitled “*Sustainable Production Systems and the Environment in Agriculture*”.

- There are no prerequisite courses.
- Attendance to laboratory sessions is mandatory, but not for lectures.
- A research-oriented thesis is an integral part of the integrated Masters. Students undertake a research topic that includes hands-on experience. The thesis accounts for 10% of the ECTS towards the degree, highlighting its importance. Since 2013, nine theses were published in journal articles, indicating the student-oriented character of the programme.
- For each course a short description is provided in electronic form in a standard format. This includes the course objective, learning outcomes, lecture and lab schedule, relevant bibliographic references, means of student evaluation and office hours.
- The structure of the curriculum is, in general, comparable with that of the School of Agriculture of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Decisions on curriculum composition and implementation are made by the faculty of the Department. The curriculum is reviewed regularly to enhance its relevance and to better reflect current and emerging national and international trends.
- Lecture material and PowerPoint presentations of all courses are available through the e-class platform and students are entitled to receive one book per course.
- Assessment criteria and methods are published in advanced.
- There are no courses with exceptionally high failure rates.
- The three Specializations are unequally represented in terms of students registered (Management of Plant Production, Plant Protection and Environment: 65%; Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness Management Orientation: 10%; and Food Science and Technology Orientation: 25%).
- Student evaluations are conducted for all courses taught at the end of each semester through comprehensive online questionnaires to measure the effectiveness of teaching. The questionnaires include questions on teaching, course content and material used. The findings from these evaluations are subsequently assessed by the faculty and efforts are made by the staff to ensure the objectivity of the process and incorporate student feedback. However, participation in these questionnaires by students is low (<25%). The Department has been taking measures to increase student participation.
- The University farm is close to the Department and its size has been increased.
- Faculty are accessible and have an open-door policy to students. They play an important role in helping them with the internship/practical exercise process as well in helping students to choose a specialization.
- Students are well informed on the existence and role of the Academic Advisor. However, meeting regularly with the advisor varies significantly by student.
- Orientation sessions are offered for incoming students and for students preparing to select their specialization during the 6<sup>th</sup> semester.
- The Counselling and Psychological Support Office of DUTH is also available to all students.
- Students and graduates interviewed were very positive of the knowledge and training received and how this contributed to their professional development and careers.

- Current students and alumni interviewed commented on the right overall balance between core and elective courses. However, some pointed out the absence or insufficient attention to some modern cutting-edge courses, such as those linked with Plant Molecular Biology and the desire to have more elective courses in the Management of Plant Production.
- In the panel’s meeting with students it was evident that there is a good rapport between academic members and students, and strong mutual respect.
- The number of >v+2 students was reported to have increased over time, although the average number of years to graduation (5.95 years) remains low as compared to other major agricultural departments in Greece.
- The EEAP was not informed about any complaint by student and is not aware of any formal appeal procedure.

### Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 3: Student- centered Learning, Teaching and Assessment</b>	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	<b>x</b>
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

### Panel Recommendations

- Continue exploring the possibility of introducing pre-requisites for some courses to help students acquire the necessary knowledge before enrolling in advanced courses. The number of pre-requisites should be kept to the absolute minimum in order to serve their intended purpose.
- Continue to regularly review and update the curriculum in order to adequately address modern cutting-edge issues. For example, consider introducing an introductory course on Food Science before Specialization starts (5<sup>th</sup> semester). For the Agricultural Economics & Agribusiness Management consider introducing or increasing the importance of more topical themes (e.g. climate change, bio-economy and cyclical economy, food supply management, precision farming, digitalization), while giving less prominence to other courses (e.g. those on applied economic statistics and quantitative methods).
- Enhance communication and feedback from current and alumni students using social media platforms with an academic orientation.
- Maintain and continuously update a database on potential hosts of students for internship.
- Higher success graduation rates for active students (v+2) to further enhance the standing of the Department at national level.

#### **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**

- Students are admitted via the national Exam System. The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs determines the number of students admitted. On average, 230 students admitted each year between 2016-2020. In 2021, following changes in the Greek legislation on minimum grade of admission to universities (ελάχιστη βάση εισαγωγής) 81 students admitted.
- The Department organizes welcoming and orientation sessions for incoming students (during the 1st semester) informing them about the Department, available facilities, curriculum, research laboratories, internships, mobility (ERASMUS Programme) provision of student care (boarding, leisure), and other aspects of academic and social nature. There are also two regularly scheduled sessions during the 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> semesters, one focusing on the three specializations (κατευθύνσεις) available to students and other related to the internship.
- The Department's website provides information on the courses offered, learning outcomes, level and content of studies.
- The assessment criteria and methods used are multiple (written or oral exams, essays, laboratories, etc.) and are published in advance and included in the course outlines.
- English version of the web is very brief and does not always correspond to the Greek version.
- Student mobility is promoted by the Department, which has developed bilateral agreements with universities inside and outside the EU, mainly through the Erasmus programme. It has an Academic Coordinator of the Erasmus Programme, who provides students with relevant information, such as procedures and partner institutions and provides 12 courses in English for incoming students. The Department respects the Bologna process and transfers the credit for the courses that its students earn while studying abroad. The Department has established bilateral agreements (27) with European Universities from EU and non-EU countries (15) through the international mobility of ERASMUS+. However, the mobility of both outgoing and incoming students so far is rather low (16 outgoing and 3 incoming



students between 2015-18) which allows further room for improvement. In recent years, participation of students in mobility programmes has been impeded by the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic. Specific KPIs for mobility have been set by the Department.

- Students are obliged to do a two-months internship (practical training) during July-August in the last two years of the study (after the 8<sup>th</sup> semester). Successful completion is a prerequisite for obtaining the degree. The internship is supported financially, and the Department has developed an extensive network with various public and private entities both in the region and across the country for student placement. At the end of the internship, students must submit to the Department a certificate of completion (issued by the entity where the training occurred) together with the evaluation sheet of the institution's supervisor and an evaluation report. Most of the internships take place in the private sector and students appeared to be very positive of the overall experience gained and how this is expected to contribute to their professional development and career
- The Diploma Supplement, a document showing the qualifications gained, the learning outcomes, the content and status of the studies pursued, is provided automatically to upon graduation both in Greek and English, as is required by law.
- The ECTS system is consistently applied across the curriculum. For graduation, a total of 300 ECTS, including Diploma thesis (30 ECT) and internship (10 ECT), is required. Each semester accounts for 30 ECTS.
- Annual awards of excellence for outstanding students have been established in 2021.

### Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 4: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>x</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

### Panel Recommendations

- The EEAP welcomes the introduction of awards of excellence for outstanding performance of students and recommends that such performance to be further rewarded through scholarships to be financed by stakeholders.
- Introduce dedicated on-line services that will automatically inform the Academic Advisor for students with poor performance to facilitate the regular monitoring of academic progress of students.
- The introduction of minimum grade of admission to universities entails challenges and opportunities which merit thorough examination. The number of new entrant students should closely reflect the capacity of the Department and must be predictable in order to allow the Department to better plan and implement the curriculum.
- Student theses should be made available electronically.

- The Department should make further efforts to enhance participation of student in mobility programmes through enlargement of their ERASMUS+ network. Particular attention should be given to incoming mobilities.
- The English version of the Web site should be improved and harmonized with the Greek version.

## Principle 5: Teaching Staff

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

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

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

## Study Programme Compliance

- The AD Department has substantially responded and implemented the changes suggested in the 2014 external evaluation report.
- The number of faculty (ΔΕΠ) has been at 17 since 2019. The number of technical support staff has not changed in the past two year either. The ratio of students to instructor is 31,6 which is an improvement compared to 2014 but still too high.
- Selection of and promotion of faculty and lecturers takes place using established and transparent evaluation methods.
- All courses have dedicated pages on DUTH's "eclass" electronic teaching platform.
- Course content is evaluated and updated annually.
- There appear to be a large number of courses that are offered online.
- With the transfer of the municipality's KEFE facility to the School, more space is now available for teaching and research laboratories and this should improve the quality of experiential learning available to the students.
- Courses are evaluated by students using online, anonymous electronic surveys at the end of each academic semester. As indicated elsewhere in the report, during EEAP's interviews with current students, examples were presented of how suggestions for improvement included in the surveys were implemented by faculty during subsequent semesters.
- Faculty maintain an open-door policy and students are not hesitant to approach them with questions or requests for assistance. The students were very complimentary of the faculty for their accessibility and responsiveness. Several students commented on the "family atmosphere" that exists in the Department.
- Despite the heavy teaching load, faculty and technical support staff have access to continuing education opportunities and many of them take advantage of these opportunities. The AD Department leadership fully supports these efforts.

- To promote and support excellence in teaching, DUTH established an Excellence in Teaching Award.
- From 2017-2021, the AD Department has been involved in 80 research projects.
- There is a steady increase in the annual per capita number of articles published in refereed scientific journals by the Department's faculty over the past three years.
- Faculty frequently organized educational seminars and field days targeting farmers and other stakeholders of the region. This was identified as one of the strengths of the AD Department by several of the employers and representatives of local and regional governments with which the EEAP met.
- The majority of the faculty live within easy driving distance of the AD Department and are physically present on the campus on a daily basis.

### Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 5: Teaching Staff</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>x</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

### Panel Recommendations

- Faculty and technical support staff must be added to the current group to allow the AD Department to fulfill its teaching, research, and outreach mission.
- Faculty should engage in more international teaching and research activities and especially pursue such opportunities with the neighboring countries of Bulgaria and Turkey for which funding may be more readily available.
- The region's agribusinesses and local and regional governments should increase their efforts to financially support the research efforts of the AD Department.
- The University should establish award for excellence in research and outreach in addition to the existing award for teaching.

## 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-centered 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

### Personnel

- All the faculty of the AD Department teach in the undergraduate programme which has three specializations and includes 13 teaching laboratory spaces. Faculty are also involved in various administrative roles associated with the Department, the School, and DUTH. Available technical support staff are also involved in teaching activities during laboratory exercises.
- The faculty/student ratio is very high when considering the training needs of an agricultural graduate. The external evaluation report of 2014 stated: "... the faculty/student ratio for the department is 1 to 41 which is considered very high. It should be noted that the majority of the courses contain a laboratory section'. The current staff devote almost all their available time to ensuring that students receive a high level of training and various services, but find it difficult to cope with the many other commitments (relations with the local area, basic and applied research, their continuous updating, international relations.....). The same problem persists today as the AD Department does not have the full number of faculty (ΔΕΠ) planned for at its inception.
- As indicated elsewhere in this report, faculty dedicate a large amount of their time to teaching, creating multiple lab sections for each course to accommodate the large number of students, and to maintaining an open-door policy for students. Because the AD Department does not have its full complement of faculty, the high teaching load and administrative duties limit the time the existing faculty have to pursue extramural funding and to conduct research.

- The current number of technical support staff is absolutely insufficient to ensure the proper functioning of the laboratories, greenhouses and farm.
- More than 20 years have passed since the department was established. It has successfully established itself as an important asset to DUTH, the region, and the local economy. For the AD Department to continue to improve, we believe it is necessary for the Department to now focus on making internationalizing its research and teaching mission. In order to achieve this objective, large financial resources, facilities and well-equipped laboratories, more faculty (ΔΕΠ) with specialties in emerging fields of agricultural science and more technical support staff are required. If no action is taken in this direction, the department will remain a local reality, small and "beautiful", but without a significant international footprint.

### Infrastructure

- The available facilities meet the current needs of the AD Department in terms of training and services offered to students.
- The availability of the laboratories and the nearby farm are excellent teaching assets that are used by the faculty for training students. However, the current number of technical support staff is insufficient to guarantee optimal use of these resources – especially the farm.
- The AD Department continuously strives to improve infrastructure in terms of space, equipment and services offered to students and should be commended for this. Students indicated to the EEAP that the faculty take great pains to ensure safety during laboratory exercises. There is an online document describing laboratory safety protocols on the Department’s website but there is some confusion as to whether laboratory safety guidelines and standard operating procedures (SOPs) are available in written form for individual laboratories (pages 7-8 of the "Progress Report" OMEA TAA, 2019).

### **Panel Judgement**

<b>Principle 6: Learning Resources and Student Support</b>	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	<b>x</b>
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

The Panel Judgement is given as Substantially Compliant only because the AD Department is not fully staffed (faculty and technical support) and this limits their potential. It does not reflect on the effort put forth by the currently faculty and staff of the AD Department. The University and the Ministry of Education must do their best to mitigate this situation.

### **Panel Recommendations**

- Explore the potential of establishing a laboratory with large equipment necessary for the training of doctoral students and for high-level research in partnership with the Department

of Forestry. This should facilitate both departments' research programmes and increase the potential for international collaborations.

- The EEAP's meeting with local and regional employers and representatives of the local and regional governments showed enthusiasm and great appreciation for the AD Department's training and research activities. These collaborations mainly concern the training of students (internships), job opportunities for graduates, and occasional participation in research projects. At least two of the participants indicated that their companies had significant financial benefits from research conducted by the Department. However, it appears that these businesses that benefit from the Department's research activities have not developed a culture of financially supporting the research that benefits them. It is the EEAP's opinion that the Department should engage the businesses that have large national and international footprints in a dialogue on this topic with the goal of engaging some of these companies as research partners. Investments can be relatively small at first but the benefits may lead to more significant investment from the business sector.
- The Department should conduct a financial impact study to document to the local, regional, and national governments how the Department's teaching and research efforts have impacted the local and regional economies. Demonstrating high impact in such a high-profile frontier region should lead to more investment from the national and regional governments.
- A "young" and small department that devotes almost all its human resources to guaranteeing excellent teaching for students will not be able to compete for financial resources at European level. It is suggested that faculty join established multinational research teams to "break into" the EU funding sources. The University is encouraged to pursue developing relationships in Brussels that will facilitate better understanding of funding opportunities.

## **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**

- As indicated by the Accreditation Proposal on pp 44-45 and submitted Quality Indicators 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20), the AD Department regularly collects data on:
  - Student evaluations of individual courses and instructors
  - Services and data relating to students' careers
  - Relations with the region,
  - The scientific production of teachers
  - International exchanges
  - Availability of spaces for teaching and research activities
- For the collection of all these data, the following were involved:
  - The secretariat's computer system (classWeb-Cardisoft)
  - The university's ΜΟΔΙΠ integral computer system
  - The university's construction management information system (ResCom)
  - The computer system of the university library
  - The ΔΑΣΤΑ Computing System of DUTH
  - The University's ΜΟΔΙΠ Electronic Evaluation IT System



- ΜΟΔΙΠ Comprehensive National Quality Information System.
- All collected data are analyzed and processed by the OMEA, which, through meetings with students and faculty, administrators, entrepreneurs and farmers' associations, discusses the weak points and draws up proposals for improvement to be discussed and approved at the faculty (TAA) Assembly.
- During the interviews the EEAP conducted with the various members of the department, graduates and entrepreneurs, it emerged that there is full satisfaction with this service.

### Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 7: Information Management</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>x</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

### Panel Recommendations

- Continue the good work.

## 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

- Today, the primary means of communicating with students and other stakeholders is through electronic means such as websites and social media. The AD Department maintains a modern, attractive and informative website (<https://agro.duth.gr/>). There is also an English version of the website that is not as fully populated as the Greek version. However, it does provide the necessary information for non-Greek speakers to learn about and explore the Department and its course offerings. Examples of information available on the website are:
  - Current and past Undergraduate and graduate programmes of study and related information.
  - Curriculum vitae of the faculty.
  - Description of and documents used for self-evaluation and self-accreditation as well related documents such as the 2014 External Evaluation Report.
  - Course syllabi and course reading materials.
  - Access to online courses
  - Guidelines and requirements for both the undergraduate and graduate programmes offered by the AD Department.
  - Information about services available to students.
  - Online exit survey for graduating students.
- The AD Department maintains an active page on Facebook that is updated with new posts several times a week. This is an excellent way to communicate with the parents of potential students as well as stakeholders.
- The AD Department intends to establish a presence on Instagram, a social medium to which most young people have migrated.

### Panel Judgement

Principle 8: Public Information	
Fully compliant	<b>x</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

## Panel Recommendations

- The English version of the website requires **significant** improvement as it does not include all the materials available on the Greek version. This may be an inhibiting factor in attracting Erasmus students.
- Add a page that includes profiles of successful graduates with short videos of them describing how their degree contributed to their success. EEAP expects that many of the graduates and employers with whom it met would be happy to do this. Such a page may be an excellent tool for recruiting students from all over Greece who are interested in studying agriculture. The stories should also be promoted on social media and perhaps on local television outlets in the region.
- Add a page to the website includes a catalogue of successful outreach activities as well as announcements of upcoming activities.

## **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**

Interviews with students, alumni and stakeholders indicated that the AD Department undergraduate programme of study offers significant knowledge, skills and competencies that allows graduates of the programme to have rewarding careers. Discussion with faculty and students indicate that actions and metrics for regular monitoring, review, and revision of the programme are in place and take place regularly. Specific actions include the following:

- The AD Department conducts an annual internal evaluation of the programme of study. Based on the outcome of this evaluation, course content, teaching methods, and related items are modified and improved. In addition, the AD Department conducts surveys of graduates to assess the effectiveness of the programme in the job market.
- Most of the recommendations resulting from the 2014 external evaluation have been adopted. For example, the number of courses has been steadily reduced to 53 from 61 over the past 10 years. The AD Department programme of study currently has the fewest number of courses when compared to similar programmes in Greece. One notable exception to the adoption of the 2014 external evaluation recommendations is that the principle of prerequisite courses has not been implemented although it has been extensively discussed.
- Courses are updated to meet developments in science and societal needs. The faculty are aware of the importance of adding new courses in emerging areas such as precision agriculture but the AD Department is hampered by lack of faculty with the appropriate expertise. However, new courses have been added. One example is Biotechnology.
- The AD Department currently has approximately 800 active undergraduate students. The number of graduating students per year has been trending upwards the past five years and reached a peak of 108 during the 2018-2019 academic year. During this period, the number of incoming students increased from around 200 to 238. The mean time to graduation over

this period ranges from 5-8 to 5-9 years. Approximately 50% of students graduate in 5 years. These are satisfactory rates.

- Interviews with students and recent graduates indicate that the workload is appropriate and not excessive. Students repeatedly indicated that faculty have an open-door policy and are always available to assist students which is highly commendable.
- Anonymous online student evaluations of all courses are used to assess student satisfaction and results used to improve teaching and course content. The number of completed evaluations is a relatively small percentage of the maximum possible however students stressed to us that faculty continuously implore them to complete the evaluations as the end of the semester approaches. Students gave the EEAP examples of how suggestions for improvement made on evaluations were implemented during the next semester. In general, there is high satisfaction among the students that complete the evaluations.
- The learning environment appears to be excellent. Both current students and recent graduates emphasized this. Items of note were the faculty's open-door policy, the experiential learning opportunities provided by the laboratory sections, and the family atmosphere that exists within the AD Department and on the campus.

### Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 9: On-going Monitoring and Periodic Internal Review of Programmes</b>	
Fully compliant	<b>x</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

### Panel Recommendations

- The AD Department should continue to evaluate course content and consider consolidating sequences of course so that course addressing emerging areas such as precision agriculture can be added to the curriculum.
- Options of delivering these courses via electronic media from other institutions that offer them should be explored as an interim solution until new faculty can be hired.
- The principle of prerequisite courses should be implemented and apply to incoming students from an upcoming academic year and onwards. This approach will not disadvantage already enrolled students.
- Currently, the AD Department's undergraduate programme is compared to the Department of Agricultural Economics and Development of the Agricultural University of Athens which does not seem appropriate. The faculty of the AD Department and the EEAP agree that both the structure of the department and the structure of the undergraduate programme mostly closely match that of the School of Agriculture of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. The EEAP recommends that in the future, comparisons be made to this department.

## 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

This report is the result of the AD Department's first undergraduate programme accreditation review. The first and only external evaluation to date was conducted in January 2014. The AD Department has made significant changes to the undergraduate programme guided by the external evaluation report. Based on the documentation provided and the virtual site visit, the EEAP determined that the AD Department has to a large extent implemented the recommendations of the external evaluation report regarding the undergraduate programme. In addition, the AD Department has implemented a rigorous annual self-evaluation programme.

### Panel Judgement

Principle 10: Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programmes	
Fully compliant	<b>x</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

### Panel Recommendations

- The Department should fully implement the recommendations of the 2014 External Evaluation Report that are still relevant.
- The Department should develop a strategic plan with detailed action plans and implementation timelines providing the roadmap for future accreditations/evaluations.

## **PART C: CONCLUSIONS**

### **I. Features of Good Practice**

- The AD Department has implemented most the 2014 external evaluation recommendations.
- The AD Department has established an appropriate OMEA and has set specific and measurable goals for the undergraduate programme based on HAHE templates using continuous monitoring, reviews, and audits. Evaluation information is available on the Department's website.
- The MODIP of the DUTH implements quality assurance policies (QAP) paired with suitable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
- The undergraduate programme curriculum is based on the application of modern methods of teaching, training, and assessment. It is designed for students to attain learning outcomes in a friendly and creative environment. Online tools (e-Class platform etc.) facilitate and streamline learning processes.
- The undergraduate programme includes an integrated Masters.
- The AD Department's farm is close to the Department's building facilities and allows easy access for outdoor experiential learning.
- The student guide/online curriculum is well constructed. Individual syllabi contain information about learning outcomes, general abilities, course outlines, teaching methods and structure, student assessment and recommended reference sources.
- The AD Department ensures that incoming and existing students are well informed about all aspects of their degree requirements as well a campus life.
- Students can evaluate courses (lectures and laboratory exercises) anonymously through electronic questionnaires. The evaluation includes major aspects of the educational process, including instructor's competence, supervisory means, educational material, etc. The feedback is used to make improvements.
- Faculty members maintain an open-door policy and are easily accessible and available to students. In addition, they respond rapidly to student problems. All students interviewed by the EEAP were very complimentary of the "family atmosphere" that exists between faculty, technical support staff, and students.
- The learning environment appears to be excellent. Both current students and recent graduates emphasized this.
- Students are obliged to participate in a two-months internship (practical training) during July-August in the last two years of the programme (after the 8<sup>th</sup> semester). Successful completion is a prerequisite for obtaining the degree. The internship is supported financially, and the Department has developed an extensive network with various public and private entities both in the region and across the country for student placement. Students expressed great satisfaction in the quality of internships as well as the assistance offered by faculty to find appropriate placement.
- Annual awards of excellence for outstanding students were established in 2021.
- An annual award for excellence in teaching was established by DUTH in 2019.

- Despite the heavy teaching load, faculty and technical support staff have access to continuing education opportunities and many of them take advantage of these opportunities. The AD Department leadership fully supports these efforts.

## **II. Areas of Weakness**

- The number of faculty ( $\Delta\epsilon\pi$ ) is at 17 – four below the number planned for when the AD Department was created. The ratio of students to instructor is 31, 6 which is an improvement compared to 2014 but still too high.
- Lack of prerequisite courses was identified as a weakness by the 2014 External Evaluation report but principle of prerequisite courses has not yet been implemented.
- The faculty are aware of the importance of adding new courses in emerging areas such as precision agriculture but the AD Department is hampered by lack of faculty with the appropriate expertise. However, new courses have been added. One example is Biotechnology.
- The internationalization of the teaching, research, and outreach missions of the AD Department lags behind its peers.

## **III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions**

- Additional faculty and technical support staff are critically needed to allow the AD Department to meet its full potential in its teaching, research, and outreach mission.
- The AD Department should explore comprehensive ways and communication channels to disseminate the methods and findings of its Quality Assurance Programme to students, graduates, stakeholders and social partners, policymakers and governmental bodies, international students who wish to attend the AD Department as well as the general public.
- The principle of prerequisite courses should be implemented and apply to incoming students from an upcoming academic year and onwards. This approach will not disadvantage already enrolled students.
- The AD Department should continue to evaluate course content and consider consolidating sequences of course so that courses addressing emerging areas such as precision agriculture can be added to the curriculum. Options of delivering these courses via distance education (Zoom or similar) from other institutions that offer them should be explored as an interim solution until new faculty can be hired.
- One approach to increasing the research impact of the AD Department is to encourage and support students to publish their undergraduate thesis research in refereed scientific journals.
- The AD Department should enhance student participation in mobility programmes through enlargement of their ERASMUS+ network. Particular attention should be given to incoming mobilities.
- The region's agribusinesses and local and regional governments should increase their efforts to financially support the research efforts of the AD Department.



- The English version of the website requires improvement as it does not include all the materials available on the Greek version. This may be an inhibiting factor in attracting Erasmus students.
- DUTH should establish awards for excellence in research and outreach in addition to the existing award for teaching.
- The Department should conduct a financial impact study to document to the local, regional, and national governments how the Department’s teaching and research efforts have impacted the local and regional economies. Demonstrating high impact in such a high-profile frontier region should lead to more investment from the national and regional governments.

#### IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: **1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10**

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: **3 and 6**

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

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

Overall Judgement	
Fully compliant	<b>x</b>
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

	YES	NO
<b>The External Evaluation &amp; Accreditation Panel agrees that this Programme leads to a Level 7 Qualification according to the National &amp; European Qualifications Network (Integrated Master)</b>	<b>x</b>	

## The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

**Name and Surname**

**Signature**

1. **Prof. George Vellidis** (Chair)  
University of Georgia, United States of America
2. **Dr Dimitris Diakosavvas**  
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, France
3. **Mr Dimitrios Sotiriadis**  
Member of the Geotechnical Chamber of Greece, Greece
4. **Prof. Ioannis Tzanetakis**  
University of Arkansas, United States of America
5. **Prof Christos Xiloyannis**  
University of Basilicata, Italy