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Τ.Ε.Ι. ΚΑΒΑΛΑΣ	ΣΧΟΛΗ ή ΥΠΗΡΕΣΙΑ ΠΟΥ ΔΙΑΒΙΒΑΖΕΤΑΙ
Αριθ. Πρωτ.: 1256	Δασοπονία
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ΠΡΟΣ:

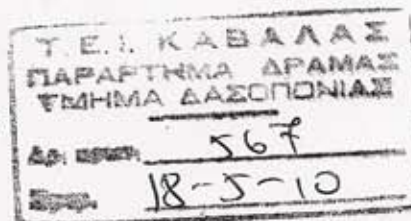
Την Προϊσταμένη
του Τμήματος Δασοπονίας
& Διαχείρισης Περιβάλλοντος
του ΤΕΙ Καβάλας/Παρ-μα Δράμας
Επ. Καθηγήτρια κ. Β. Καζάνα

ΚΟΙΝ.:

Πρόεδρο της ΜΟΔΙΠ
του ΤΕΙ Καβάλας
Καθηγητή κ. Δημήτριο Μπαντέκα

Θέμα: Κοινοποίηση Έκθεσης Εξωτερικής Αξιολόγησης

Αξιότιμη κυρία Προϊσταμένη



Σας κοινοποιούμε συνημμένο κείμενο του «Σχεδίου» της Έκθεσης Εξωτερικής Αξιολόγησης του Τμήματος Δασοπονίας & Διαχείρισης Περιβάλλοντος του Ιδρύματός σας, το οποίο μας παρέδωσε η Επιτροπή Εξωτερικής Αξιολόγησης, προτού αναχωρήσει από την Ελλάδα.

Σύμφωνα με το Ν. 3374/2005, άρθρο 9, παρ. 2, το Τμήμα μπορεί να υποβάλει τις παρατηρήσεις του μέσω της Α.Δ.Ι.Π. μέσα σε προθεσμία δεκαπέντε ημερών από την κοινοποίηση του σχεδίου σε αυτό. Αν δεν υποβληθούν παρατηρήσεις εντός της ανωτέρω προθεσμίας, το Σχέδιο της Έκθεσης θεωρείται ότι έχει γίνει αποδεκτό από το Τμήμα.

Σας παρακαλούμε για την έγκαιρη ανταπόκρισή σας.
Με ευχαριστίες για τη συνεργασία σας.

Με τιμή,



(υπογραφή)*

Με εντολή Προέδρου
Καθηγητής Κλεομένης Οικονόμου
Μέλος της Αρχής

*Η υπογραφή έχει τεθεί στο πρωτότυπο που παραμένει στο αρχείο του φορέα.

Συνημμένη:

1. Σχέδιο της Έκθεσης Εξωτερικής Αξιολόγησης του Τμήματος Δασοπονίας και Διαχείρισης Περιβάλλοντος του ΤΕΙ Καβάλας/Παρ-μα Δράμας

Λεωφ. Συγγρού 44, 11742 Αθήνα
Τηλ.: +30 210 9200365, Fax: +30 210 9200365
Email: adipsecretariat@adip.gr
Ιστοτόπος: <http://www.adip.gr>

44 Syngrou Ave., 11742 Athens, GREECE
Tel.: +30 210 9200365, Fax: +30 210 9200365
Email: adipsecretariat@adip.gr
Website: <http://www.adip.gr>

Αρχείο
9
αξιολόγησης



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
Α.ΔΙ.Π.
ΑΡΧΗ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ
ΑΝΩΤΑΤΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ

HELLENIC REPUBLIC
H.Q.A.A.
HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY
FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY & NATURAL ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT

TECHNOLOGICAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE OF KAVALA –
DRAMA BRANCH

Version 1.0

April 2010

External Evaluation Committee

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the Department of Forestry & Natural Environment Management of the Technological Educational Institute of Kavala – Drama Branch consisted of the following five (5) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by the HQAA in accordance with Law 3374/2005 :

1. Professor STAVROS AVRAMIDIS (President)

University of British Columbia, Canada

2. Dr. ALEXANDROS ARABATZIS

European Commission

3. Dr. AIKATERINI DOUNAVI

Forest Research Institute of Baden-Wuerttemberg, Germany

4. Professor GEORGIA DRAKAKAKI

University of California, USA

5. Professor CONSTANTINOS KADIS

Frederick University, Cyprus

Introduction

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) visited the Department between April 12-14, 2010. The group arrived in the late afternoon of the 12th and was met by the Vice-President of TEI Kavala and a faculty member of Drama branch. After transportation to the hotel, the EEC met for dinner with the TEI President and two of the Vice-Presidents including the Internal Evaluation Committee members (IEC) for briefing over dinner. The work dinner was conducted in an atmosphere of cordiality, hospitality and professionalism and after a brief introduction of the Institute's objectives and operational overview, in thereafter casual discussion many issues regarding the TEI and the evaluation process were clarified.

On the 13th, the EEC was taken to the TEI Branch of Drama located about 35 km north of the City of Kavala. Upon arrival, the team was greeted by the Department's Head (Assoc. Prof. Vassiliki Kazana) who gave us a brief description of the operational protocols and structure. Furthermore, the EEC established the agenda for the day's visit. Thereafter, the EEC met with the Director of the Department, Prof. Nikolaos Avtzi, who after some welcoming comments also discussed some of the pressing and important issues surrounding the Department's structure and operation.

The EEC decided to put the facilities visit at the top of the agenda list so that the evaluators might have a round view of the infrastructure that would help not only with the understanding of the lab and teaching facilities level, but also assist in formulating more probing questions to the faculty members regarding their pedagogical and research activities. The EEC also visited teaching facilities during class time thus allowing for a limited first-hand experience with the teaching methods used in the labs/classes. The tour included the building surrounding area and the greenhouse where some experiments are carried over. Last, but not least, the team visited the small, but highly impressive Museum of Natural History located inside the building. This provides an overview of the local fauna and flora with real size models, stuffed animals and various other models related to biology and geology including an impressive collection of fossilized woods. The museum has become the magnet and center of natural history education of the local elementary and high schools and there is a continuous stream of pupil visitors. As a footnote, the EEC must not forget to point out the superb condition of the building where every effort is made by staff and students to keep it clean and pleasant.

Upon completion of the tour, the EEC had the opportunity to review a number of supplementary documents provided by the Department including a CD-ROM, booklets and books regarding forest and environmental resources, various statistical data, samples of publications, descriptions of research grants, documents pertaining to the curriculum and the Academic/Development Plan (ADP) for 2008-2012 produced by the faculty members. We also examined the webpage and noted the absence of an English version (although the English version is included in the printed version of the Studies Guide). All documents provided were in Greek.

Subsequently, the committee had a long meeting with Internal Review Committee members involved in the Department's internal evaluation. The meeting was conducted in a very collegiate and professional ambiance. It started with the EEC Coordinator's introduction pertaining to the purpose and objectives of the evaluation exercise and the issues that the committee needs to probe. Thereafter, the Director gave an overview of the Department's

scholarly activities and the discussion begun. The committee members asked specific clarification questions relating to the internal evaluation and many others related to issues not fully covered by the report. All attendees participated in the discussion. Overall, the committee left that part of the visit with a significant amount of data and clarifications that provided a more complete and spherical image of the Department.

Next step, the EEC met with a group of undergraduate students since the Department does not have a graduate program yet. The meeting took place in the absence of faculty or staff members. After a brief introduction of our backgrounds and the EEC's objectives, the students introduced themselves and discussed issues related to the curriculum, training and employment opportunities after graduation. The students mentioned that they had not seen the internal evaluation. The meeting was open and frank. Students discussed specific problems related to their curriculum and sequence of studies plus their anxiety about limited work opportunities upon graduation. The committee sympathizes with the employment uncertainty, lack of class availability up to 8pm and conflicts in the timetable. However, it is also noted that there is a significant irrelevance between the student educational aspirations and the scope of the program in the Department. Specifically, after an EEC member asked the students if they would ever recommend this program to others or if they had the opportunity to do this again, they all emphatically replied negatively. This is a strong indication of one of the fundamental culprits of the system, namely, where young people study a discipline of no interest to them for the sake of acquiring just a degree. This unfortunately is augmented by the low level of student preparation that are mostly streamed into the TEI system. This is a political and educational concern that must be urgently addressed by the State in a creative and firm way.

After a brief lunch break, the EEC had the opportunity to meet with all Department faculty members and discuss all issues relevant to the curriculum, teaching, research and operations. This discussion part was very informative since the committee had the opportunity to listen to all levels of faculty present in the room.

The second day, the EEC also met with two other important groups, namely, the non-permanent teaching staff (three persons) and the administration support staff (three persons). The former group discussed issues pertaining mostly to their hiring and job security. Specifically, suggestions were made regarding longer term contracts. The latter group described daily operations of the Secretariat and the EEC must commend the efforts the staff makes to support student and faculty activities. It is nice to see that an electronic system for students to obtain forms and carry out registration related activities through the intranet system is already in place, albeit, an internet-type one would have been preferable as was also indicated by the students.

In conclusion, the EEC members would like to congratulate the Department faculty and staff for producing a very detailed self evaluation and a professional document that helped us to better and deeper understand the issues pertaining to the particular curriculum. Faculty and staff are very proud of the program and the facilities, are overwhelmed by the desire for improvement and truly feel that this evaluation will help them to become a better group of teachers and researchers.

A. Curriculum and Teaching

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

A1. Curriculum

The Department is part of the School of Agricultural Technology of the Technological Educational Institute (TEI) of Kavala at Drama. The Department offers a single undergraduate program. The planning of a postgraduate program is under consideration.

The mission statement of the Department is: *"The Department of Forestry and Natural Environment Management aims at offering Forestry and Natural Environment works education at the highest level of applied scientific knowledge, while promoting modern forest technological skills."* In summary, the goals and the objectives of the curriculum are to provide the highest level of education reflecting the needs of future employers in both private and public sectors. The curriculum covers the applied aspects of biological, technical and socioeconomic sciences towards sustainable management and conservation of natural resources. The current coursework has a limited global perspective concerning the awareness of students about environmental conservation and the current practices in life and social sciences.

The curriculum is designed to meet the current environmental needs of society with emphasis on forestry aspects. According to the IRC, public stakeholders were important in designing the criteria of job professional designation and these were taken into account in the curriculum development. The curriculum is revised every two years in an effort to follow the current scientific developments and society demands.

The duration of the basic studies is eight semesters including six months of practicum (practical placement). The curriculum includes 40 courses of which 34 are compulsory and 6 are electives. A graduating thesis is compulsory. This is a one-stream curriculum and does not allow specialization in areas of high demand. This could be improved by offering more electives within and between the TEI system. For example, a graduate who would like to be employed in the area forest fire suppression should be given the opportunity in the curriculum to take specialized courses in this area. Although, the program is rather extensive and covers various aspects of forestry, there is not enough flexibility due to a limited number of elective courses. Although the Department is willing to bring in curriculum modifications and follow new scientific trends, the EEC understands that current institutional rules prohibit it. We would greatly support changes to allow such modifications.

The EEC found no formal process to track the professional development and the careers of graduates in order to get feedback pertaining to the value of the curriculum to their professional success. A proper system must be setup in order to systematically track the alumni professional progress.

The curriculum is considered to be reasonable and corresponding to the overall scope and objective of the Department. According to the IRC the curriculum is implemented effectively.

A major hurdle is the perpetual continuation of the student ability to take repeated examinations of one or many failed courses far and beyond the years of studies resulting in a confusing and incoherent sequence of attendance.

The EEC noted that there is a distinct divergence between theory and practice courses. Specifically, it was surprising to observe that laboratory courses are autonomous and independent from the respective theoretical ones. As a result, students can attend and pass laboratory courses without having the required theoretical knowledge base. This arrangement is contrary to established international practices and should be rectified.

Another weak point in the process is the fact that laboratory course attendance is mandatory while that of the theory ones is not. As a result, participation rates are significantly lower at the theoretical courses with disappointing overall success rates (the percentage of passing students out of all registered equals to 22%). Moreover, the mandatory nature of laboratory courses and closer involvement of the student in the course's learning process is reflected by the staggering student success rates (80% out of those who have shown up in the exams as opposed to the 48% of the theoretical courses). The EEC strongly suggests merging of the two, with the adjustment of credit units in the curriculum. This will free a lot of credit hours that could be used for additional courses.

Several courses require the background of others and it would be advisable to extend the existing structured sequence of prerequisites in the curriculum. Such "chain"-type relationship will help in better and easier comprehension and assimilation of the material by the students. This recommendation should be taken with great consideration regarding the workload and length of student studies and therefore, the "chaining" of courses should not be applied universally.

Another institutional impediment is that first time TEI students enroll either in September or February the year after. As a result the current curriculum allows the offering of the first semester courses have to be repeated in the second. The EEC strongly suggests enrolment in the program only in September. This will normalize curriculum flow and reduce resources waste.

Although the coursework covers several aspects of forestry it could be enriched with additional core and advanced level courses and more field training. A mandatory course entitled "Introduction to Forestry" is highly recommended to be included in the first semester. This course would provide an overview of the forest science and familiarize the students with the technical, socioeconomic and biological requirements of it. Other examples include biology, chemistry, biotechnology, biodiversity conservation, and sustainability as parts of a modern forestry curriculum.

The absence of field training during the summer from the Department's curriculum is a weakness identified by all, i.e., faculty, students and the EEC. This is surprising considering the applied nature of the subject matter. It is suggested that two 2-week training periods after the 4th and 6th semester, respectively, covering the whole spectrum of field applications should be introduced in order to provide the students with the essential elements of forestry practice.

The educational level of students accepted in the Department is very low both in basic knowledge and foreign languages. The absence of any threshold in the national entry examination system will further lower the level of enrolled students. Institutional changes should direct students with appropriate background to enroll in this undergraduate program. Potential students with a non-science background should not be permitted to register in this

program.

The coursework does not promote critical thinking and problem solving. Teamwork is not emphasized either, leading to studies that simply rely on material memorization. This is unfortunate and detrimental, given the character of the discipline's applied nature. Although a course entitled "Seminar" is offered to increase critical thinking and bring to the students current scientific developments, the course faces funding limitations. Student intellectual development will benefit by an additional course in the 1st or 2nd semester aiming towards critical thinking and improvement of presentation skills.

Overall the EEC was impressed by the sincere effort from the Department's members to develop a comprehensive undergraduate program that meets the needs of modern forestry. However, it is realized that institutional constraints result in limited flexibility to form an independent competitive program.

A2. Teaching

In general, detailed course outlines including learning targets and expected results are presented to the students.

According to the internal evaluation report, 2/3 of the theoretical courses are carried out through lectures with the support of electronic means (power point presentations) and follow up discussions to ensure better understanding of the concepts involved.

With regard to the practical/laboratory courses, the main teaching methods focus on applications of the theory and project assignments that are completed at home. Moreover, efforts are made to promote teamwork especially when in the field.

In the EEC's view, teaching methods should be enriched so that participation in the learning process is encouraged and enhanced. In this respect, the introduction of quizzes, mid-term exams, assignment of projects and presentations having clearly defined weight in the final mark could contribute to this end.

The total number of permanent and temporary faculty members is 13 and 33, respectively. Considering the total number of registered students (863) the teaching staff/student ratio is 1/19 which, at first sight, is satisfactory even though in practice this number is better, given the disappointingly low participation rates.

The availability of teachers to respond and support students in need is considered satisfactory as it is stated in the internal evaluation report and confirmed by the students themselves.

Means and resources available are the Department's strong point and the EEC was pleased to witness it. Most of the laboratories are well equipped to adequately support course implementation. The problem raised by all stakeholders, is the absence of technical assistants in the laboratories. The EEC considers that this problem should be addressed in a more holistic approach through the introduction of the "teaching/research assistants" model. Specifically, the EEC feels that teaching and research needs would be more meaningfully addressed by hiring university/TEI graduates who would assist in both teaching and research activities-under the supervision of a permanent faculty member- while carrying out their post-graduate studies. In this way, the benefit would be two-fold. On one hand, laboratories would be staffed with paid personnel interested in maintaining them as well as making full use of the infrastructure for post-graduate studies. On the other hand, these assistants would replace (partially) the numerous temporary teaching staff that focuses exclusively on teaching and not contributing to the rest of the Department's activities. In the EEC's point of view, the proposed model offers a much better and efficient "value for money" than the existing anachronistic practice.

The IT infrastructure of the Department is considered to be modern and sufficient to cover its needs. The practice employed by some courses in using IT in the teaching process (electronic presentations and teaching material available online, course announcements and

specific project assignments) is to be commented and serve as a model to the rest of the courses. Provided that the server is accessible and operating, all faculty members should develop their own respective course sites within the Department's portal. Within each course site, the teacher would be responsible for introducing and updating the teaching material as well as providing links to relevant subject matters on the web. This would help in familiarizing students with international developments and improving their linguistic skills. With regard to the availability of specialized educational software and hardware, the EEC observes that it is unbalanced among the different laboratories of the Department. This is an issue that should be carefully addressed in future planning in order to ensure minimum acceptable standards throughout all laboratories.

Examinations are mandatory for all courses. In 70% of the courses only final examinations are arranged, a fairly large rate that may be linked to the very low student participation rates in the theoretical courses. As it is acknowledged by the internal evaluation report, this is an issue which deserves closer consideration possibly through the introduction of intermediate exams and other more innovative examination methods as already mentioned (i.e., group presentations).

In 80% of the courses, students depend on course notes prepared by the respective faculty members. Recently, two textbooks per course are also offered to the students. Even though this is an improvement over the past, we consider that this practice is still anachronistic and needs to be substantially improved to be in line with international standards. The EEC was told that the updating of the course material is carried out frequently. However, the EEC found no evidence of procedures that secure a systematic updating and validating of the course material, especially taking into consideration that 2/3 of the teaching staff is temporary on 9-month contracts. Such procedures should be institutionalized.

While it is claimed that students are involved in research activities within the framework of a large proportion of courses, the reality is that the link between research and teaching remains limited, since students are not exposed neither to the research work of the Department nor to recent international research developments. It must be emphasized that a major weakness is the absence of any training on research design and methodology. Few basic elements of such training are offered through the course entitled "Seminar" (7th semester). It is strongly recommended that a course dedicated to research design and methodology should be included in the curriculum and offered in one of the early semesters.

The mobility of the faculty members seems to be satisfactory and in line with the Department's rich research activities. However, the mobility of the students is practically non-existent. This is attributed to the lack of clearly defined policy on student mobility by the Department. Poor linguistic skills are also a limiting factor. However, in the EEC's point of view this should not serve as an excuse for not developing appropriate policy and means, especially at a time when student mobility is promoted and supported at both national and EU level.

Evaluation of teaching by students is carried out by collecting questionnaires on a regular basis. According to IER, students are satisfied in general with the quality of the teaching. Concerns were voiced by the students regarding the transparency and practical utility of the exercise given that the results are not announced and there is no documented follow up on the findings. Once again this is a case for systematic data collection (which is already done to

a large extent), processing and presentation of the results in order to improve teaching methods by the identification of best practices thus rendering the whole exercise a transparent one. Student concerns will also be relaxed.

B. Research

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

The Department has an internal mandate to pursue applied research regardless of the fact that this contradicts the TEI operational framework. The latter does not make research mandatory, does not provide specific goals of new knowledge creation, and thus, does not provide the funding for necessary infrastructure and research focused post-graduate programs that could provide the force for such development. On the other hand, a significant amount of emphasis is placed on research when faculty members are judged for advancement. The latter has given a strong incentive to many faculty members to pursue this issue regardless of the difficulties related to funding. This is recognized and commended by the EEC.

Faculty members are actively encouraged by the administration to pursue research and some funding is provided albeit significantly low by international standards. There is good peer-review publication record that for a couple of members is deemed equivalent to many Greek and some international university Departments of the same focus. This has been accomplished through significant effort by the individual faculty members via personal, local and international contacts. No specific and clear metrics and standards have been set on paper by the Department for assessing research, probably due to the fact that no legal framework exists on this issue.

It is noted from our discussions with the faculty members and corroborated by the IER that the Department is doing its outmost under the limited funding provided to promote and support research within faculty members. Efforts are made to promote collaborations locally and internationally, however the fruition level is not high due to the operational framework of the Department.

The EEC found that the Department has a significant amount of space that is and can be used for research purposes both as wet and dry labs and thus host more equipment and people should the proper funding and/or consolidation with other units is decided by the Ministry. Also, the committee saw that some of the labs were well equipped to carry out the teaching load, but very few had the level of equipment variety and sophistication to pursue advanced research especially in EU supported programs.

According to the IER and the documents examined during the visit, the number of publications has increased considerably in the last years. This publication list shows good collaborations with other Departments in Greece and abroad and shows an increasing trend over the last five years. About half of the journals are ISI listed and with good impact index a fact indicative of the quality of the produced knowledge. The committee would like to point out that there is an obvious high productivity discrepancy between the faculty members that needs to be addressed in the future. Furthermore, conference participation has resulted in considerable research results dissemination. This effort is applauded and highly encouraged to continue in the future since conferences are considered a very important venue not only to present work, but also to network and foster new collaborations. This participation also brings good service on conference organizing committees and journal editorial boards. The Department members show some mobility in this area, but further effort is recommended.

According to the IER, the Department has managed 15 competitive research projects of which 5 are European and the rest national. According to verbal information provided by IRC during our visit, an impressive amount of over 3.5 million euros has been awarded to the Department over the last five years as a result of its participation in competitive research programs. We expect this to result in a further increase of the publications output. The EEC considers the research success of the Department significant especially under the transition phase that the TEI went through recently and the lack of significant equipment infrastructure to attract large research projects. However, the commitment to the creation of knowledge of many of the faculty members and the commitment of the administration to support and promote such are highly commended.

Overall, 2/3 of the faculty members have been involved as primary and/or secondary investigators. Considering that research is not part of the mandate, this level of activity is significant. The lack of a post-graduate program is considered a strong inhibitor for further development in this area.

There is a positive trend towards increasing numbers of publications that are published in respectable journals and presented in conference proceedings. There is no evidence from the IER and our visit that a more applied version of the research practicalities is produced and distributed (knowledge dissemination) to the Greek potential users. Besides of the research done, it is noted that the Department's visibility is quite limited and an effort should be made in this area especially with regard to the uptake of new knowledge by the pertinent stakeholders. This issue was discussed during our visit and we received nothing but positive reaction to this idea. We feel that increasing its profile, there is potential for the Department to attract high quality students in the future.

Again, it is clear that the lack of a research focused post-graduate program is a strong inhibitor of the Department's published output. Although such a program is not the panacea, the committee considers it an important element that can assist in this end.

Based on our discussions with the faculty members and the produced ADP (2008-2012), we are concluding that the Department is highly motivated in its majority to pursue more research in both quantitative and qualitative ways. The current momentum is recognized by all that needs to be preserved and specific action ideas have been proposed by the faculty. However, without significant seed funding much of this plan is doomed to failure. The EEC believes that if the TEI are to be considered "applied universities", research should be an indispensable part of teaching. This is because it promotes the introduction of students to fresh ideas, hands-on experience in the laboratory and allows the teachers/researchers to introduce new knowledge into their courses that makes learning fun and rewarding by stimulating creative thinking and problem solving ability.

Last, but not least, the EEC strongly recommends that the Department forms a standing committee to act as the liaison with the major stakeholders in the public and private sector in order to create a database of potential applied projects. This way, the Department will be able to attract more funding with the help of the parties that will be benefited by such a joint research venture. This Department is in a very advantageous position since it is located in probably the most productive forested area of the country.

C. All Other Services

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

Based on the visit and the IER, most faculty and student support services are clustered in the same building within a very large and well designed floor space. The library is quite basic with a limited book selection and internet access to the journal databases albeit, with no permanent Librarian. Also, there is good plant operations (mechanical, electrical, plumbing) support from various TEI Departments and outside sources.

The organization, experience and number of staff is deemed adequate in the Department Office. Good service is provided and staff always makes an extra effort to serve the students and accommodate their needs. Regardless of what the EEC experienced and told, the students complained about their treatment by the office staff. The EEC maintains a reserved stance due to the sensitivity and difficulty of assessing issues without having witnessed actual servicing of the students in such a short period of time that the visit lasted.

There is good intranet access to documents and registration activities, however the committee recommends opening up the system to the internet. The concern by the central administration in Kavala about possible security threats is unfounded since most international and local universities are already offering such services for many years. Regardless of that, the committee noted a good computer infrastructure based on the funding available.

The quality of the Department's webpage is deemed good and easy to navigate. Furthermore, the postings about courses and labs that are currently implemented are well done and deserve credit. However, it is highly recommended that a detailed course outline, objectives and outcomes are also posted and updated regularly.

The EEC did not notice much in the area of specific student counselling, cultural and athletic activities. The Department should consider building up the student spirit, a difficult task unless summer field studies are implemented in the curriculum similar to the two university forestry programs already in place.

As already mentioned before, the small Museum of Natural History is very successful in its pedagogical contribution not only to TEI students, but also to the local community. Again, the EEC would like to congratulate both the past and present administration for pursuing this, but also all the faculty members which contributed to the creation of such a gem.

Overall, administration services and student support is deemed good under the circumstances. The faculty members agree on this, but there are some objections from some of the students which were duly note.

Due to the lack of a "student advisor", and team/school spirit building venues, students seem to minimize their time spent in the premises. The Department should consider new ways and activities – cultural and athletic – to attract the students and promote the school spirit.

Interaction with "practice" through specific seminars and workshops need to be thought out

and when possible, implemented.

Lastly, the spotless condition of the building and all common areas is highly applauded.

D. Strategic planning, perspectives for improvement and potential inhibiting factors

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

The committee acknowledges the fact that the Department has produced a strategic plan of action to improve all areas of concern for 2008-2012. This plan has been discussed and approved by all faculty members.

The mission of the Department is stated as to "*promote the development and dissemination of knowledge in science, technology and techniques used in Forestry and Natural Environment with the teaching and applied research and provide to the students the means that will create an excellent knowledge level that will assist their scientific and professional development and opportunities*". The plan discusses all current deficiencies of the program and proposes specific actions in order to take corrective actions and implement new ideas to make the experience of the students in the program more interesting and fruitful. The plan aims towards more active student participation, by providing a better learning environment through the application of advance pedagogical methods should the funding situation and institutional framework along with the sincere participation of the faculty members allows.

Major short-term goals according to the IER include the improvement of the curriculum with course content evaluation and updating; a better student evaluation system; active support of research and publication; active pursue of more collaboration with other educational and research centers, but also organizations and groups that are the natural employers of the Department's graduates.

Major mid-term goals according to the IER include curriculum improvements by the introduction of summer school field training to enrich student experience and bonding to natural ecosystems; encourage mobility of both faculty and students; increase research training of students; set up online access to courses outline, objectives and outcomes; attract bright young scientists in joining as faculty; improve the visibility of the Department both nationally and internationally; establish a postgraduate program; pursue more collaborations with social and cultural foundations as well as with the productive sector; support a hire of a full time librarian; and introduce fellowships to students.

The IEC suggests an internal implementation strategy to achieve these overambitious goals. Some of the strategic plans include: pursue additional resources to improve current research facilities; increase the number of research grants; create short term contracts with renowned scientists; establish fellowships for low income students; and increase outreach and extension activities. In addition, the Department seeks extra state support on formal changes both in curriculum and in teaching, as well as research and outreach.

While respecting the Department's mission, the EEC feels that new concepts and issues reflecting changes in societal perceptions with regard to environment, sustainable development, forest fires and conservation should be incorporated in the scope and the curriculum. In this way, the Department will attract the attention of potential students and, if properly implemented, will improve the graduates' competitiveness in the job market as

well as that of the Department itself. The Department will stand out in comparison to the rest of the forestry related TEI and universities addressing key and contemporary disciplines, thus being in constant touch with current trends and opening up additional funding opportunities.

The development of a post-graduate program is considered by EEC of utmost importance especially when viewed in connection to the proposed "Research/Teaching Assistant" model. Such a program could also be developed in collaboration with the other operating forestry related TEI Departments, thus taking advantage of the expertise of each Department and using resources more effectively. Such an arrangement would also increase student mobility which is currently missing. The post-graduate program will provide the essentials to facilitate and stimulate faculty research activities and interactions within and outside the Department. The identification of specific research "niches" will create funding opportunities both at national and international levels.

The EEC is of the opinion that the presence of three TEI Departments offering practically the same programs of study in combination with declining enrolment and disappointingly low job prospects for the graduates needs to be reconsidered. Specifically, it is recommended that the possibility of merging the three curricula should be seriously examined. As an alternative, the differentiation of the curricula towards specific "niches" could be considered. In any case, an in-depth study on future prospects and viability of several scenarios is necessary.

E. Conclusions:

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

In conclusion, the overall impression of the EEC is positive regarding infrastructure, human resources and current program of studies. The EEC was impressed by the positive attitude of faculty and staff regarding future prospects of the Department. The conspicuous pride of the people involved about the service they offer to the Greek people is also noted and commented.

Upon further reflection and in-depth discussion among the EEC members, specific important observations were brought about and hopefully, helpful recommendations were produced and listed below.

1. The single stream curriculum does not allow specialization in areas of high demand. This could be improved by offering more electives.
2. There is not enough flexibility in the curriculum regarding the ratio between compulsory and elective courses. We greatly support changes to allow curriculum modifications and follow new scientific trends.
3. Several courses require others as a background and it would be advisable to extend the existing structured sequence of prerequisites in the curriculum. Such "chain"-type relationships will help in better and easier comprehension of the material by the students.
4. A major obstacle is the perpetual continuation of student ability to take repeated examinations of one or many failed courses, far and beyond the years of studies. This results in a confusing and incoherent sequence of attendance and should be considered within the framework of future planning of the Department.
5. The EEC observed that laboratory courses are autonomous and independent from the respective theoretical ones. As a result, students can attend and pass laboratory courses without having the required theoretical knowledge base. The EEC suggests merging of the two, with the adjustment of credit units in the curriculum. This will free a lot of credit hours and that could be used for additional courses.
6. First time TEI students enroll either in September or February the year after. As a result, first semester courses are repeated in the second. EEC strongly suggests entrance to the undergraduate program only in September. This will normalize curriculum flow and reduce resources waste.
7. The EEC recommends that the curriculum could be enriched with additional core and advanced level courses and more field training.
8. The educational level of students accepted in the Department is very low both in basic science knowledge and foreign languages. Potential students with a non-science background should not be permitted to register in this program.
9. The absence of technical assistants in the laboratories creates multiple problems that could be addressed in a more holistic approach through the introduction of the

"teaching/research assistants" model, which is described in this report.

10. The utilization of IT that was noted for some of the courses should serve as a model for the rest. Within the Department's portal, all faculty members should develop their own respective course sites that will include updated teaching material and links to relevant subject matters.
11. The EEC observed that the availability of specialized educational software and hardware is unbalanced among the different laboratories. This is an issue that should be carefully addressed in future planning in order to ensure minimum acceptable standards throughout all laboratories.
12. Regarding student evaluations, only final examinations are arranged in most of the courses. This is an issue which deserves closer consideration possibly through the introduction of intermediate exams and other more innovative examination methods.
13. The EEC found no evidence of procedures that secure a systematic updating of the course material. Such procedures should be put in place.
14. Evaluation of faculty teaching by students should become more transparent and an effective follow-up mechanism should be in place.
15. Although the number of publications has increased considerably in the last years, there is an obvious high productivity discrepancy between the faculty members that needs to be addressed in the future.
16. There is no evidence that a more applied version of the research outcomes is produced and distributed (knowledge dissemination) to the Greek potential users. The Department's visibility is quite limited and an effort should be made with regard to the uptake of new knowledge by the pertinent stakeholders. The EEC strongly recommends that the Department forms a standing committee to act as a liaison with the major stakeholders in the public and private sector.
17. The EEC found no formal process in place to track the professional development and the careers of its graduates in order to get feed-back pertaining to the value of the curriculum to their professional career. A proper system must be set-up in order to systematically track the career progress of the alumni.
18. There is good intranet access to documents and registration activities, however the EEC strongly recommends opening up the system to the internet.
19. While respecting the department's mission, new concepts and issues reflecting changes in societal perceptions with regard to environment, sustainable development, forest fires, conservation should be incorporated in the scope and the curriculum.
20. The development of a post-graduate programme is considered of utmost importance especially when viewed in connection to the proposed "Research/Teaching Assistant" model.

21. The EEC is of the opinion that the presence of three TEI departments offering practically the same programmes of study in combination with declining enrolment and disappointingly low job prospects for the graduates needs to be reconsidered. Specifically, it is recommended that the possibility of merging the three curricula should be seriously considered. As an alternative, the differentiation of the curricula towards specific "niches" could be examined. In any case, an in-depth study on future prospects and viability of several scenarios is necessary.

The Members of the Committee

Name and Surname	Signature
1. Stavros Avramidis (Coordinator)	
2. Alexandros Arabatzis	
3. Aikaterini Dounavi	
4. Georgia Drakakaki	
5. Constantinos Kadis	