



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
HELLENIC REPUBLIC



Εθνική Αρχή
Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης
Hellenic Authority
for Higher Education

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

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

**Forestry and Management of the Environment
and Natural Resources**

**Democritus University of Thrace
Date: 16 October 2021**

Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the Undergraduate Study Programme (Integrated Master) **Forestry and Management of the Environment and Natural Resources of the Democritus University of Thrace** for the purposes of granting accreditation

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part A: Background and Context of the Review	4
I. The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel.....	4
II. Review Procedure and Documentation	5
III. Study Programme Profile	8
Part B: Compliance with the Principles	10
Principle 1: Academic Unit Policy for Quality Assurance.....	10
Principle 2: Design and Approval of Programmes	13
Principle 3: Student- centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment.....	16
Principle 4: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification	20
Principle 5: Teaching Staff	22
Principle 6: Learning Resources and Student Support	24
Principle 7: Information Management	26
Principle 8: Public Information	28
Principle 9: On-going Monitoring and Periodic Internal Review of Programmes	30
Principle 9: On-going Monitoring and Periodic Internal Review of Programmes	31
Principle 10: Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programmes.....	32
Part C: Conclusions	34
I Features of Good Practice	34
II Areas of Weakness	34
III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions	34
IV. Summary & Overall Assessment	37

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 **Forestry and Management of the Environment and Natural Resources** of the **Democritus University of Thrace** comprised the following five (5) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

1. Professor Constantin Vamvakas (Chair)

University of Ghent, Ghent Belgium

2. Professor Tala Awada

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln Nebraska, United States

3. Professor Stavros Avramidis

University of British Columbia, Vancouver British Columbia, Canada

4. Dr. Demetrios Gatziolis

USDA Forest Service, Portland Oregon, United States

5. Mr. Georgios Pappasopoulos

Representative of the Geotechnical Chamber of Greece, Greece

II. REVIEW PROCEDURE AND DOCUMENTATION

In response to measures designed to limit the spread of the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, the Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE) decided to implement the accreditation review process of the undergraduate study programme of the Forestry and Management of the Environment and Natural Resources (FMENR) of the Democritus University of Thrace (DUTH) via teleconferencing. Scheduled briefings and meetings were conducted efficiently and within the allocated time frame using the Zoom platform without technical difficulties. Replacing on-site visits with virtual meetings was a challenge for all participating parties. The lack of face-to-face contact and physical presence of the panel members at the FMNR premises inhibited an in-depth evaluation of the departmental infrastructure.

On Friday, 17 September 2021, a two-hour orientation meeting was held with the HAHE's Director-General Dr. Besta via Zoom. The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel (EEAP) Constantin Vamvakas and George Paparousopoulos joined the meeting. Tala Awada, Stavros Avramidis, and Demetrios Gatziolis were unable to attend. Dr. Besta presented the Quality Assurance standards for Quality Accreditation of Undergraduate Programmes and Accreditation Guidelines addressed attendee questions and conveyed to the EEAP the final teleconferencing timetable. The Chair of EEAP acted as the host for all debriefing and private meetings among the EEAP members. Before the 'virtual' engagement, the EEAP received the Proposal for Accreditation of the Department of Animal Science, the External Evaluation Report of 2011, and other relevant material. The EEAP discussed strategy and the Chair assigned tasks to each panel member. Upon request of the EEAP, additional supporting documentation and recordings of presentations were provided promptly by DASA staff after the teleconferences.

The accreditation review commenced on Monday, October 11, 2021, at 19:00 Athens time. A private meeting was held by the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel (EEAP) members to discuss the proposal submitted by the Department, assign action items, and consolidate discussion points for the e-visit.

On Tuesday, 12th of October, 2021 a teleconference was held with Prof. Zoe Gavriilidou, Vice Rector of Academic Affairs and Student Welfare, who additionally acts as President of the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU/MODIP) of DUTH, and Professor Georgios Tsantopoulos, Head of the Department. Prof. Tsantopoulos provided a comprehensive presentation of the Undergraduate Programme (UP) that included the history, the academic profile and the current status of the Department, as well as its strengths and possible areas of concern. Prof. Tsantopoulos elaborated on the departmental profile, its policies on quality assurance and other issues of the programme. References focused on the curriculum's suitability and structure, laboratory equipment, Department infrastructures and their overall utilization, and the pursuit of learning outcomes and qualifications, in agreement with the European and the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education.

The teleconference meetings continued with five members of the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG/OMEA) and three members of the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU/MODIP) including the President and two members of MODIP staff. Specifically, Prof. Zoe Gavriilidou represented the QAU, and Mrs. Styliani Gkavaki and Sofia Marsidou acted as secretariat support. A variety of issues were discussed, focusing mainly on the Undergraduate Programme's compliance with

quality accreditation standards, curriculum revisions, the students' progression, assignments, Theses, exam papers and examination material. The IEG/OMEA expressed their support for and commitment on implementing a comprehensive quality policy that will promote the academic profile and a more focused programme orientation. Thereafter, the EEAP members had a private debriefing teleconference to further discuss their personal impressions and prepare for the second day of the on-line review.

The teleconference continued on Wednesday, 13th of October, 2021 with 10 faculty members who elaborated on their professional development opportunities in the Department, mobility opportunities and experiences, workload, and student evaluations. Other important topics discussed were their competence and adequacy in support of positive learning outcomes, the strategies used to promote synergies and bridge teaching and research processes, as well as their involvement in applied research. To this end, faculty were asked to briefly present their projects and research activities and define how these are related to the programme. Finally, the panel pondered on potential weaknesses with the faculty presenting their views.

After this meeting, the EEAP met with a group of 10 students of various membership across years of study and learned about their satisfaction levels from their experience with Department functions and institution facilities. The students commented on their input in the quality assurance procedure. Finally, priority issues were highlighted concerning students' life and welfare.

The teleconference continued with an online tour in classrooms, lecture halls, libraries, laboratories, and other facilities of the Department attended by ten members of the administrative & teaching staff who shared their experience with facility utilization, including the laboratories, library, students' accommodations and other features (e.g. reading room, computer room). The attendants were asked to evaluate the existing facilities and learning resources to ascertain that the learning materials, the equipment and all the facilities are adequate to successfully meet the goals of the programme.

During the closing teleconference of the third day, the EEAP held a private debriefing meeting, to reflect on the impressions of the teleconferences and make the necessary preparations for the fourth day of the online review.

On the fourth day, the teleconference meetings involved ten alumni graduates of the Department who shared their experience of studying at the Department and their ensuing career paths. All alumni present currently hold important positions in Greece and abroad, showcasing diverse post-graduate career opportunities available to them.

In the next teleconference meeting hosted ten key stakeholders from the private and the public sector, including social partners and employers. The EEAP discussed their contacts, links to the Department, and their experiences with graduates and Departmental staff.

Thereafter, the EEAP members had a private debriefing teleconference to further discuss their personal impressions and prepare for the next stages of the on-line review. The meetings continued with a teleconference with OMEA and MODIP representatives that entailed clarifications to preliminary impressions and findings.

The fourth day of the review ended with a joint teleconference meeting with the Vice-Rector/President of MODIP, the Head of the Department, OMEA and MODIP representatives and staff. During this meeting, the EEAP proceeded with an informal presentation of key findings.

The EEAP members had the opportunity to experience the vivid spirit of cooperation shown by the staff and their devotion and strong support to the University's Quality Assurance policy at all levels and commitment to enhance the Department's quality standards. The EEAP members are confident that the process of accreditation review via teleconference was objective, sufficient, efficient and transparent, as all attendees had the opportunity to voice their views.

On Friday, 15 and Saturday, 16 of October, the EEAP members worked as a team on their assigned tasks regarding the Accreditation Report. The teamwork was accomplished via teleconferencing organized by the Chair.

III. STUDY PROGRAMME PROFILE

The Department of Forestry and Management of the Environment and Natural Resources of the School of Agricultural and Forestry Sciences of the Democritus University of Thrace located in Orestiada started its operation in 1999 with the admittance and enrollment of the first students. In the current academic year, it enrolled 22 new students admitted through the national examination process and 3 student who had previously suspended their studies.

Article 1 of P.D. 203/90, defines the charter of the Department as the cultivation and promotion of Forest Science, as well as of Environmental Science, with special emphasis on the management of natural resources and training of scientists to enable and support the study, research, understanding and application of modern methods for the development, improvement, protection and management of forests, woodlands and of the natural environment.

Forestry is largely based on the principles of Physics, Mathematics, Botany, Zoology, Mineralogy, Meteorology and Chemistry. Nevertheless, it also includes aspects of theoretical science such as Economics and applied sciences such as Topography. As a multi-discipline field, Forestry studies require collaboration among scientists with different specialties, including engineers, chemists and biologists.

The mission of the Department is to contribute to the development of Forest Science, the enhancement of management and utilization of Greek forests and, in general, of the natural resources, as well as to the protection of the natural environment, through training, research, publications and active participation of its teaching staff and graduates.

The number of incoming students is determined yearly by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. The total number of registered undergraduate students for the academic year 2021-2022 is 918. Since its inception, the Department has graduated 664 students, another 407 with Master's degrees, and 36 with doctoral degrees.

The programme now offers an Integrated MSc degree (National and European Qualifications Framework 7) after successful completion of 10 semesters (5 years), requiring a minimum of 300 ECTS. Integral part of the Curriculum is the Diploma Thesis (30 ECTS). Based on the data received, the curriculum comprises 60 courses of which 51 courses are mandatory and the remaining 9 are electives chosen among a suite of 47 courses.

Today, DUTH comprises twenty (20) faculty members, two (2) Laboratory Teaching Staff, two (2) Special Technical Laboratory personnel, one (1) special educational staff and five (5) Administrative Staff.

The Department has the following five (5) Sectors or Specialties, each with its own set of Laboratories:

1. Sector of Ecology, Environmental Protection and Woodland Production
 - i. Laboratory of Silviculture
 - ii. Laboratory of Forest Genetics & Improvement of Forest Species
 - iii. Laboratory of Forest Botany

- iv. Laboratory of Forest Protection
- v. Laboratory of Forest Soil Science
- 2. Sector of Rangeland and Game Management
 - i. Laboratory of Range Science
 - ii. Laboratory of Game Management and Freshwater Fisheries
- 3. Sector of Management and Development of Natural Resources
 - i. Laboratory of Forest Biometry
 - ii. Laboratory of Forest Management
 - iii. Laboratory of Forest and Environmental Policy, Education and Communication
 - iv. Laboratory of Forest Economics and Entrepreneurship
 - v. Laboratory of Forest Informatics
 - vi. Laboratory of Forest Remote Sensing and Geospatial Analysis
- 4. Sector of Forest and Hydrology
 - i. Laboratory of High-Elevation Hydrology and Risk Management
 - ii. Laboratory of Engineering Sciences and Topography
- 5. Sector of Forest Products Harvesting and Technology
 - I. Laboratory of Forest Technology
 - II. Laboratory of Wood Technology and Bioenergy

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

PRINCIPLE 1: ACADEMIC UNIT POLICY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

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

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

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

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

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

Study Programme Compliance

The Department has established a quality assurance policy, which is fully compliant with this principle. The study program has gone through extensive reorganization based on the recommendations of the external evaluation in 2011. The outcome of this process is a study programme that has become more relevant to modern forestry principles, provides more scientific depth, a greater experiential learning experience, and allows the students to spend more educational time on the topics covered. The current program is deemed appropriate and of the quality expected at the national and international levels.

The Department has set goals, and these are monitored and measured by set parameters and key performance indicators, which are suitably publicized to the broader stakeholders. A vital component of the programme is the linkage it offers between education and research. It gives the students an excellent chance to create a strong bond with the many opportunities they may pursue after graduation. Furthermore, the students and future graduates acquire experience(s) to help them find jobs and a smooth transition into the private sector.

The Department is fully compliant with the European and the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education regarding learning outcomes and qualifications. It has taken valuable initiatives in terms of the quality and effectiveness of the teaching/learning process.

The academic staff is highly qualified, enthusiastic, and motivated. Research output is adequate, especially considering the location of the Department and its distance from other relative units within the DUTH system. The students overwhelmingly stated that the teaching staff are thoroughly qualified and knowledgeable on their expertise and provide substantial and unwavering support to them.

The quality of the support services is excellent despite the difficulties and limitations inherent to the Department's size and location. This was made apparent to the EEAP also from the superb support throughout the accreditation process.

In general, the Department demonstrated through the proposal of academic accreditation of the undergraduate programme, through the presentations made by the groups, and through the content available on their website that it has a vigorous process in place that allows fine-tuning as needed to ensure that it meets the set quality goals.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- Maintain monitoring and scrutinizing the studies program and consider updating courses to follow the international forest science and conservation changes.
- Keep in close contact with the alumni, stakeholders, and social partners. Implement regular meetings (biannual) where the studies programme is scrutinized.

- Develop evident mechanisms with assessable results for implementing transformations to better student outcomes.
- Department alumni are eager to support the programme. The Department should continue utilizing and further expand this tendency.
- Modern trends in forestry such as decarbonization, big data analytics, entrepreneurship, conservation, climate change, land use, urban forestry, etc., should be monitored more closely and considered in future programme updates.

The Accreditation Panel is very impressed by the thoroughness and effectiveness of the procedures and processes to ensure quality assurance. It can only recommend that they continue and evolve per the standards specified by HAHE/MODIP/OMEA.

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 Department offers a 5-year programme of undergraduate studies that includes five concentrations as listed in the official studies guide. The current undergraduate programme is in effect since the academic year 1999-2000. After the recent programme revitalization, the total courses taken over five years are down to sixty. The total ECTS units from courses is 270 plus an extra 30 which are credited toward the diploma thesis for a total of 300 required for the degree. In a nutshell, the program's objective is to prepare graduates with foundational and specialized knowledge in the management, technical infrastructure design, and utilization of the natural resources within a forest ecosystem as a function of human impacts and natural variations.

Overall, there is an active participation of students in the pedagogical process through laboratory and hands-on exercises in almost all courses that provides valuable lessons to be used in the workplace. Summertime practicums in the forest and public or private organizations and enterprises add to the total experience. The workload under the old curriculum was very high, but after the changes in 2021, it seems quite in line with the equivalent workload in other European universities. Lastly, and beyond courses, the faculty makes a genuine effort to offer

some research exposure to interested students by participating in running research projects and their required diploma thesis.

In response to modern climate change-related socio-economic challenges compounded by the rapid technological developments, it is commendable that the Department has proactively undertaken the revitalization and modernization of the programme. The Department has also demonstrated that there is in place a robust process to adjust/update its programme as needed with significant assistance from DUTH central administration.

Panel Judgement

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

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

Panel Recommendations

- Forestry is an ever-evolving field, and although the updated programme currently comprises numerous courses, there is some constraint to flexibility. That may limit the ability to introduce new courses in the future. The Department should always be alert to such limitations and be open to considering the possible reduction/expansion, merging or even elimination of some courses to make room for introducing some new ones.
- The curriculum should continue involving hands-on assignments in courses, as appropriate, and possibly expand the students' exposure to situations outside the classrooms and labs. Courses should be checked for any overlaps and logical sequencing.
- Establishing an External Advisory Board as a consultative body to the Department would benefit the programme. Such a Board could comprise members from industry, Geotechnical Chamber of Greece (GEOTE), local public authorities, other stakeholders, and academics from international universities who would advise the Department regarding issues such as re-evaluation of the Strategic Plan with emphasis on education

and research, emerging areas of priority to incorporate in the curriculum, and marketability and the continuous improvement of its graduates.

- Ensure that ECTS is rigorously applied consistently and transparently across the curriculum so that student mobility to and from SMME with its European counterparts is more effortless. That will improve the international recognition and employability of graduates.
- Develop a systematic mechanism for getting input from stakeholders and graduates. Establish an Alumni Association, possibly through social media like Facebook.
- The Department should pursue more extensive participation in the ERASMUS+ and other programmes by offering sufficient support and encouragement to the students.
- Creating and organizing summer jobs for the students is a win-win situation for all parties involved, including potential employers. Furthermore, voluntary-based short lab terms must be planned to bring students closer to solving real-life problems and allowing them to accumulate more hands-on experience.

PRINCIPLE 3: STUDENT- CENTRED LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT

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

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

The student-centred learning and teaching process

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

In addition :

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

Study Programme Compliance

Students receive a well-rounded education, centered around their preferred domain of study and are offered a suite of electives to broaden their educational experience. Domain classes usually have a laboratory/field experience associated with them, which is important for experiential learning.

The faculty to student ratio is a high $\sim 1/32$, despite this, faculty are committed to the success and professional development of their students. They provide research opportunities in labs (volunteering mostly, although there are few paid internships), and facilitate experiential learning.

The method of class/course delivery has been evolving fast, COVID-19 has sped innovation and transformed how courses can be/are delivered. Since 2011, the main method of delivery has focused on in person classes, with class materials and lectures (depending on the course) posted online. Students receive reading materials and books for free, and they have the option to access course materials in electronic format through the e-class platform.

Since 2019, there has been an effort to find innovative ways to deliver class and laboratory materials, through virtual and/or small group classes, a pandemic induced necessity. The investment in virtual class delivery opens new opportunities for the university to partner with national and even international institutions and offer elective and obligatory, regular and short courses. This has the potential to increase efficiency, widen the choice for students, increase the breadth of student exposure, and tackle the high student to faculty ratio problem. It will also allow faculty to dedicate more time to their research and the acquisition of external funds in support of their programmes while providing innovative experiential learning to the students.

Programme and class expectations, as well as the many specializations that students can participate in can be found online on the department website.

Depending on the class, students are either evaluated at the end or throughout the term. Additionally, some classes focus on team projects and critical thinking skills while others are focused on the delivery of materials to students. Overall, there is a balance in the way information and education is delivered. Average grade of students has fallen since 2011, and it is unclear whether this is due to students' efforts/quality, grading policy, or a combination thereof.

The field trips, field experience, and the integrated Masters programme offer the students the ability to focus and research topics of their interest and increase their competitive advantage in the job market.

Class evaluation occurs at the end of the course when students are asked to complete a questionnaire focused on the content of the class, method of delivery, and faculty competence. Participating students seem to be satisfied with the rigor and the programme of studies. 91% of the students stated that they are very satisfied or satisfied with the programme. 82% of students indicated that they are very satisfied or satisfied with the faculty. It was clear to the EEAP that students have high respect for faculty and recognize their dedication. Faculty compassion, open door policy, and mentoring have been key to their success.

Graduates from the programme were generally very satisfied by the programme, and commented on the personal relationship and faculty efforts to deliver relevant courses that led to their successful career path. Feedback from students emphasized the importance of engaging public stakeholders, private and NGOs sectors to help guide and envision the future directions of the programme.

There is an office dedicated to supporting students, respond to their concerns, and provide mental health support.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The Department of Forestry and Management of the Environment and Natural Resources of the Democritus University of Thrace has made significant improvements to their programme of study in the last 10 years, including decreasing the number of ECTS, revising their classes, redistributing their ECST, and modernizing it. They have also improved their services to students. Faculty’s compassion, open door policy and one-on-one mentoring have been key to students success. We would like to acknowledge the progress and dedication of the faculty to the success of the programme and we recommend that they continue their mission to inspire, educate and train a diverse and inclusive next generation workforce. We also urge the Department to stay on top of current and emerging issues in the areas of forestry and natural resources management related to climate change, resilience and data science, and ensure that students have adequate education and knowledge for the future.
- The Department continues to make improvements to address the graduation rate. We encourage them to continue with their efforts to improve on this. A drop in the required ECTS has taken place since last accreditation. We recommend that the Department redistributes the 300 ECTS mandated by pertinent legislation among fewer courses, thereby enhancing focused, in-depth learning while eliminating redundancies and maintaining the student work load. This will not only help with graduation rates, but also address the high student to faculty ratio.
- Faculty have been successful in delivering online classes. The investment in virtual class delivery opens new opportunities for the university to engage with other universities in Greece and beyond to offer elective and non-elective courses and short courses to students. This will help increase efficiency, widen the choice for students, and tackle the high student to faculty ratio problem. It will also allow faculty to dedicate more time for their research and acquisition of external funding to support their programmes and provide students with innovative experiential learning.

- Stakeholders and alumni are eager to provide feedback and contribute to the program. The Department can seriously engage with their stakeholders through an advisory board and structured and non-structured activities to keep the curriculum relevant, provide professional development activities to students and increase the competitive advantage of their graduates.

PRINCIPLE 4: STUDENT ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION

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

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

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

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

Study Programme Compliance

The new departmental website is very well organized, and offers the students an overview of the program, specializations, step-by-step instructions on admissions, expectations for graduation, learning outcomes, and information about the facilities. The web portal can be improved with regards to faculty and staff profiles (there are some inconsistencies in the way information is presented related to the CVs and other scholarly materials), and also highlight students and alumni successes. Additionally, improvements can be made to engage with their alumni and local stakeholders. Professional development activities are key for student success, the webpage can serve as a conduit for those.

Once on campus, the Department offers incoming students orientation sessions that include information on the Department, faculty, staff, curriculum, expectations, and overview of the facilities, resources and services available to students.

Many admitted students did not list the Department as their first choice, so welcoming and engaging with the incoming students are critical, and the Department seems to do a great job on this.

Students are assigned mentors and faculty advisors upon arrival. All faculty members are involved in the process and students are more or less distributed equally amongst the faculty.

Students learn about the ECTS system upon arrival. The expectations for graduation are outlined on the website and are also emphasized by students' advisors and in the classrooms.

Practical training, and voluntary and paid internships are available to students. All students need to participate in the practical training and, if interested, can also gain additional experience by working directly in laboratories. The Department works with students to align and implement these activities. Although students were generally aware of these activities, they indicated that

they would like more information and opportunities to engage with stakeholders in the private sectors, with NGOs and with faculty research.

International experience is encouraged by the Department, a number of students have taken advantage of the ERASMUS program, and few have participated in programs offered by EU institutions, however the latter was mostly at the graduate level. Cost and time prohibit most student from international engagements.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The EEAP acknowledges the hard work of the small number of faculty to create an inclusive environment for the students. Faculty and staff dedication to the success of the program was demonstrated throughout the review and was confirmed by the alumni and stakeholders.
- It is critical that the faculty identify innovative ways to reduce their teaching load and dedicate time to student engagement and research. The EEAP recommends that the Department engages better with their stakeholders, solicits alumni and stakeholder feedback, increases the offering of internships and experiential learning opportunities and strengthens their professional development program. Creating a stakeholders advisory committee that engages with the Department, staff and students is recommended. At the same time, and through alumni and stakeholders' feedback, t
- Increase research experience through projects/grants/contracts, improve laboratories facilities and expose students to the new technologies. This is critical moving forward for the long-term success and relevance of the programme.
- Recognize and reward faculty and student successes and create press releases on the websites.

PRINCIPLE 5: TEACHING STAFF

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

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

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

Study Programme Compliance

The Department does not have the autonomy to create and fill faculty positions. The Department is obligated to comply with University and Ministry of Education regulations. One faculty position has been recently filled, bringing the total of individuals on tenure track number to 20.

Given the teaching needs of the Department and the already strained resources, faculty sabbatical and professional development activities do not seem to be a realistic priority for the faculty. This is an area that needs to be addressed since it directly impacts not only the performance of faculty but also the quality of the Programme in the future.

Current students, alumni and members of the private and public sectors expressed satisfaction with the Programme and faculty. They have all raised concerns about the mean age of the faculty, upcoming retirements and lack of sophisticated instrumentation for research. Students would like to receive more hands-on and experiential learning and be better prepared to enter the job market, or continue with their education.

Faculty teach more than 10 hours on average per week. Moreover, faculty provide in person advising to students and the several have additional administrative duties. EEAP is concerned about the burn-out of faculty and sustainability of the Programme in lieu of additional resources.

The faculty research output is satisfactory (average of 2-3 publications per faculty per year) provided the funds available or obtained for research (~€4.15 M between 2011-2021). The EEAP believes that with re-envisioning of the undergraduate programme, new hires, investments in laboratory facilities, and promotion of professional activities, faculty in the unit will be better positioned to lead and participate in the development of competitive EU/Greece/private sector funded projects.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- Be transparent and communicate the expectations from faculty with regards to performance, promotion and tenure requirements, and have this information posted online.
- It is clear that the Department needs additional laboratory resources to ensure the future success of their faculty and maintain a quality programme.
- Encourage and support the professional development activities of faculty, staff and students. This includes but not limited to international professional meetings, seminars, and full or mini-sabbaticals.
- Support and facilitate project/grant training activities for faculty.
- Strengthen the research seminar program, invite national and international scholars/leaders from the private and public sectors/NGOs and involve students at all levels and from all programmes.
- Strengthen the student exchange and study abroad programmes.
- Partner with other Greek and international universities on the delivery of online virtual courses to increase efficiency, improve faculty productivity, and broaden student experiences.

PRINCIPLE 6: LEARNING RESOURCES AND STUDENT SUPPORT

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

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

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

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

Study Programme Compliance

- The review was performed virtually, a suboptimal condition, and the Department shared videos, virtual tours, PowerPoint presentations and described the resources via Zoom. The departmental website offers additional information on resources and services available to faculty and accessible by students.
- There have been significant upgrades to the teaching space in the past 10 years, with updated and new classroom spaces, computer labs, and improvements to the laboratories. Also, the Department has access to field facilities for research and training purposes. Many of these resources seem new and in great condition.
- From the virtual tours and discussions with faculty and students, it was clear that the Department lacks some key instrumentation that will allow it to conduct state-of-the-art research and deliver exceptional training to students. Faculty and students have been innovative and have taken advantages of services provided by partner universities and collaborators. However, for the sustainability of the programme, it is critical that their laboratory facilities be up to the national and international standards.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- Despite notable upgrades in building infrastructure and conditions since the last evaluation 10 years ago, the Department still lacks adequate space for laboratories housing modern equipment. Forestry is an applied science and requires laboratory space compatible with contemporary practices, expectations and demands
- The Department has vacancies in both faculty and support personnel positions. Were vacancies to be filled, a need the evaluation committee deems long overdue, there would be no physical space to host the new personnel
- Considering the present building layout, the Department urgently needs a new wing for laboratories and office space.

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 **are** 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 analyzing information and planning follow-up activities.

Study Programme Compliance

Pursuant to its obligation for continuous evaluation of its student body composition and learning progression, established teaching methods, rates and time range of post-graduate employability and diversity in career paths, the Department collects relevant data regularly. The information is collected by informal and structured means. The former mostly pertains to verbal exchanges between current students or graduates and faculty members. More comprehensive information is collected via annual staff and anonymous student satisfaction surveys. Until 2017, these surveys were communicated in analog form (in paper) and the rate of participation by active students had remained consistently higher than 50%, with only minor annual fluctuations. The introduction of digital questionnaires induced an abrupt, albeit brief, reduction in participation but the rates continue to recover thanks primarily to diligent efforts by faculty members. The questionnaires are aligned with templates created by the Democritus University Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP), yet the Department has the option to modify or include additional questions. The questionnaires are distributed using tools and systems developed and made available by the University. The information collected is both quantitative and qualitative, the latter commonly in text format. Although often challenging to integrate into statistical metrics, text comments are often illuminating and valuable.

Quantitative data are analyzed by University statisticians and annual summaries are conveyed to the Department in tabular format or charts, graphs, and figures. Comparisons between annual metrics support the assessment of trends. The Department evaluates the information content of the surveys once a year and considers it towards appropriate modifications or enhancements to its procedures and functions where deemed necessary. The information is used to set or update performance benchmarks.

The Department analyzes data on student progression and academic performance, the distribution of students across its five specialization areas (sectors) and classes. It compiles reports on building condition, adequacy, and available hardware infrastructure, plurality and number of research projects, funding secured from national and international sources, publication records by faculty and students, as well as the extent of social services offered. Those reports are circulated within the Department and the University in tabular or graphical formats.

The data suggests that the majority of the students are satisfied by the programme and the options and resources that are available to them. Interviewed graduates insist that the knowledge base supported by the Department and the Programme was instrumental to the career paths each of them pursued.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- In collaboration with the University’s Quality Assurance Unit, the Department should consider a more meticulous assessment of the information content embedded into performance evaluation questionnaires and to those solicited to graduates and perhaps stakeholders. While simple metrics, the current practice, often suffice in determining broad trends and status, they may fail to identify more esoteric/implicit dynamics that can then be exploited or addressed. Multivariate analysis could be a superior alternative.
- Efforts to secure higher questionnaire return rates should continue. Despite substantial improvement in the last few years, current rates are somewhat lacking compared to those observed internationally.
- Circulated or published reports should be furnished with uncertainty descriptors and detail the composition of the sample they are based on.

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

Key information regarding the Department's structure and academic programme is available online in both Greek and English versions. A sample of the digital content explicates the mode of attendance, the criteria used for academic assessment, prerequisites, obligations, and opportunities expected by or offered to the students, the degrees awarded, and the Curriculum Vitae of faculty members.

The Department web portal is comprehensive and serves as extension medium. It supports the information needs of prospective and current students as well as graduates, stakeholders, and the public, local, regional, or national. It includes the internal evaluation reports for the 2014 – 2019 period and the external evaluation report of 2011.

Course outlines are published online right after any update or modification. A study guide conveys the charter of the academic programme. The portal hosts announcements by the Department's Secretariat. The Department utilizes a digital platform for expeditious circulation of announcements to the students. The platform is the backbone of classes delivered online. It does not require licensing or specialized software.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The timing of web portal content updates is often challenging to determine. Including the date of the latest edit for each page would eliminate such ambiguities.
- Faculty Curriculum Vitae should be standardized and aligned to European formats.
- Continue and potentially diversify the Department's presence in social media.
- Ensure that results for the departmental information via search engines (e.g., Google), are returned in the same order regardless of whether the search request is initiated within or outside Greece.
- The main page of the website should support local searches by keywords. The search option is currently not active.

PRINCIPLE 9: ON-GOING MONITORING AND PERIODIC INTERNAL REVIEW OF PROGRAMMES

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

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

The above comprise the evaluation of:

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

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

Study Programme Compliance

The Department is conducting self-assessment procedures annually. Those are based in part to feedback received in the student questionnaires circulated twice a year, at the end of each semester. The internal assessment outcomes are recorded, compiled, and conveyed to the Quality Assurance Unit of the University. The findings are also shared within the Department. This self-evaluation process started in a pilot basis by a few faculty members and was gradually enhanced prior to becoming a University requirement. These annual internal assessments are an integral part of Departmental functions and correspond to the student-oriented learning principle adopted early on.

The outcomes are given careful consideration and have induced novel activities such as the establishment of tutorial services by faculty or senior students to other students in need. Action items implemented in response to self-evaluation efforts include the adjustment of course credits assigned to each class proportionally to its workload, the modernization of the library, the introduction of new classes related to climate change and other emerging disciplines, and the inclusion of private sector establishments as valid venues for pre-graduation practical training. Transparency in decisions and rational emerging from the internal evaluations are appreciated by the majority of students and contribute a healthy environment of trust and respect towards the Department. Testimonies by stakeholders and graduates document that this policy has enhanced the public image of the Department.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

Owing to logistical, financial, or other limitations, inevitably not all recommendations emerging from ongoing monitoring and periodic internal review of programmes and policies could be adopted. That is a fact for any institution. It is therefore somewhat surprising that there is no communication regarding such recommendations. Perhaps this can be remedied in the future.

PRINCIPLE 10: REGULAR EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES

PROGRAMMES SHOULD REGULARLY UNDERGO EVALUATION BY COMMITTEES OF EXTERNAL EXPERTS SET BY HAHE, AIMING AT ACCREDITATION. THE TERM OF VALIDITY OF THE ACCREDITATION IS DETERMINED BY HAHE.

HAHE is responsible for administrating the programme accreditation process which is realised as an external evaluation procedure, and implemented by a committee of independent experts. HAHE grants accreditation of programmes, with a specific term of validity, following to which revision is required. The accreditation of the quality of the programmes acts as a means of verification of the compliance of the programme with the template's requirements, and as a catalyst for improvement, while opening new perspectives towards the international standing of the awarded degrees.

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

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

Study Programme Compliance

The Programme has last been evaluated by HAHE in 2011. The majority of the recommendations made by the external evaluation committee have been implemented, although some of them only very recently. There have been no other external evaluations.

The Department staff and leadership acknowledged and appreciated the importance of the external review and invested in its utility. They managed to expand the facility footprint with additional buildings, a well-equipped library, and free living quarters for many students. They secured a University forest, a key component for student practical training, along with co-located lodging. They reduced the number of courses by merging several of them and reshuffled the course credits proportionally to work loads. They introduced courses in emerging topics. They rechartered the Programme with tangible short-, medium-, and long-term objectives. All these activities reflect recommendations by the external evaluation committee. More than 3/4^{ths} of the total number of recommendations made in 2011 have been implemented, a worthy achievement.

The Department and its undergraduate programme are forced to operate on a dichotomy. They must include a very large number of diverse courses because those are critical for the professional accreditation of the graduates. That is unprecedented at least to developed countries of northern and western Europe or North America where it takes at least half a dozen university departments to meet the range of professional titles equivalent to the job descriptions affiliated with the diploma of the Department in question. Such a heavy coursework load ultimately could impinge upon the balance between theoretical and practical training, and, one would think, immediate employability. Or employment with decent wages. However, the verdict on the severity of the dichotomy is unclear. Using trustworthy survey results from

graduates it contacted, the Department claims that a large percentage of them, close to 50%, has found employment in an occupation relevant to their studies within a year from graduation. That is an enviable statistic. Yet the number of individuals that actually participated in the survey is a small percentage of all the graduates over the last 10-15 years and hence the metric may not be representative. An objective assessment is further complicated by the economic crisis of the past decade and the onset of the pandemic lately. Plus, many graduates claim that the broad theoretical foundation they obtained by the programme was the real reason they found a job quickly, implying that often the diploma weighs more than tangible skills. What would amount as an oddity in most countries could very well be an undeniable niche in Greece.

The Department's faculty and a number of graduates maintain that the lack of sufficient practical training is ameliorated by the experience obtained while writing the graduation Thesis. The same engagement is reported as building expertise in scientific writing, reading of international literature, and instilling elements of professionalism. Requirements for participation in training activities in the University forest and elsewhere after the completion of the sixth semester further enhance practical experiences.

It has been acknowledged that although students are encouraged to consult and include into their assignments and term papers information from updated international literature, real exposure to such literature is actually limited to final third of the programme and the writing of the Thesis. Hence efforts should be made to enforce this engagement much earlier.

Regardless of any skepticism related to the optimality of an academic programme with so much course load by a Department aspiring to offer competitive, 21st century knowledge, there is little doubt that in its present form, or the one before its recent modifications, has graduated many accomplished researchers and practitioners with careers ranging from notable to remarkable. This shall continue to be the case in the future.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

Constantly evaluate options and opportunities to consolidate a few more courses and/or offer them as electives, perhaps biannually.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I FEATURES OF GOOD PRACTICE

- The Department has seriously considered the proposed recommendations made by the 2011 External Evaluation Committee and followed up with specific roadmap and action implementations.
- The Department has modified the study programme to promote interdisciplinary appeal and comprehensiveness.
- The design and revisions of the undergraduate study programme are based on comparisons with internationally renowned institutions operating in the same field.
- The Department has demonstrated excellence in and supportive relationships among students, academic and administrative staff.
- The Department premises provide an ideal, well-maintained working environment.
- The Department sustains an extensive network of public and private sector stakeholders.
- The Department website is well-structured, up-to-date and user friendly. It provides the necessary information for the academic unit and the study programme.
- The Accreditation Panel is impressed by the thoroughness and effectiveness of the procedures and processes adopted by the Department and directed towards quality assurance. It can only recommend that they continue their mission and evolve along the standards specified by HAHE/MODIP/OMEA.]

II AREAS OF WEAKNESS

- Relatively low student attendance in theoretical courses.
- Limited Specialised Teaching (EDIP) and Specialised Technical (ETEP) staff.
- The main page of the website should support local searches by keywords. At the time of the evaluation, the search option has not been active.
- Owing to logistical, financial, or other limitations, inevitably not all recommendations emerging from ongoing monitoring and periodic internal review of programmes and policies could be adopted. It is therefore somewhat surprising that there is no communication regarding limitations.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS

Addressed to Department

- Maintain monitoring and scrutiny of the academic programme while considering
 - Novelties and trends in forest science, conservation, decarbonization, big data analytics, entrepreneurship, climate change, land use and urban forestry,
 - Consolidation of courses where possible,
 - Updates to assignments of ECTSs proportional to class scope and workload and to the timing of course offering in the semester system. Assess the impact of such changes to

- student mobility to and from SMME and with its European counterparts, their international recognition and employability.
 - expansion of e-class platform utilization,
 - enhancements in fieldwork opportunities and laboratory training, and
 - invitations to external/guest lecturers on specialized scientific subjects.
- Maintain close contact with alumni, stakeholders (in private and public sectors), social partners, the industry, and professional organizations such as the Geotechnical Chamber of Greece (GEOTE). Implement regular, biannual meetings and request feedback on the current academic programme and educational activities. Inform them on how the feedback has been utilized. Establish an External Advisory Board to act as an informal entity consulting the Department on its trajectory. Establish an Alumni Association, possibly through social media like Facebook.
- Further increase students' international mobility. Pursue more extensive participation in the ERASMUS+ and other programmes. Explore opportunities for securing sufficient support and resources to the students. Encourage funding and co-funding of practical training from the private with the provision for financial compensation to student participants. Create and organize summer jobs for the students and continue to encourage voluntary participation in laboratory work and projects.
- Further increase the number of publications in peer-reviewed journals. Reinforce participation in and initiate research/education projects on climate change impacts, adaptation and mitigation. Strive for higher participation and returns rates to evaluation questionnaires by students and faculty.
- Examine the content of the Department web portal systematically rather than periodically. Include in each page the timing of updates. Faculty Curriculum Vitae should be standardized and aligned to European formats. Continue and potentially diversify presence in social media.
- Pursue any possible avenue to secure more funding for research expenditures through projects/grants/contracts. Provide to faculty sufficient time for self-development. It should further enhance laboratories and familiarize students to the new technologies. This is critical strategy and a determinant of long term success and relevance of the programme.
- Recognize, reward, and publicize faculty and students successes.

Addressed to DUTH

- Urgently budget and approve additional resources for Specialised Technical Staff (ETEP).
- The University's Quality Assurance Unit should consider a more meticulous and in-depth assessment of the information content embedded into performance evaluation questionnaires. Ensure that the analysis is multivariate and conducted by a knowledgeable professionals. Reports returned to the Department and circulated in websites should include uncertainty descriptors and detail the composition of the sample they are based on.

Addressed to the State Authorities

Urgently:

- Reduce the number of incoming students to reasonable levels aligned with objective assessment of relevant needs and adapt the admission requirements to the Department's undergraduate study programme.
- Increase funding for additional fieldwork and fill faculty position vacancies.
- Budget and approve additional resources of Specialised Technical Staff (ETEP).
- Coordinate curricula of the five Greek Universities offering diplomas in forestry and similar fields to avoid overlaps.

IV. SUMMARY & OVERALL ASSESSMENT

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: **1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, and 10.**

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: **5 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	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

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

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname

Signature

1. Professor Constantin Vamvakas (Chair)

University of Ghent, Ghent Belgium

2. Professor Tala Awada

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln Nebraska, United States

3. Professor Stavros Avramidis

University of British Columbia, Vancouver British Columbia, Canada

4. Dr. Demetrios Gatzliolis

USDA Forest Service, Portland Oregon, United States

5. Mr. Georgios Paparousopoulos

Representative of the Geotechnical Chamber of Greece, Greece