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HELLENIC REPUBLIC
H . Q . A .
HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE AND
ACCREDITATION AGENCY

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

INTERNATIONAL HELLENIC UNIVERSITY

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1. EXTERNAL EVALUATION COMMITTEE

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the University/Technological Education Institution named International Hellenic University comprised the following four (4) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry kept by the HQA in accordance with Law 3374/2005 and the Law 4009/2011:

1. Professor Diamantis Panagiotopoulos (Chairman)
University of Heidelberg
2. Professor Evangelos Dedousis
American University of Dubai
3. Professor Vally Koubi
ETH Zürich and University of Bern
4. Professor Michael Tsianikas
Flinders University of Adelaide

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 The External Evaluation Procedure

The visit of the EEC in the IHU campus at Thessaloniki took place between 14 and 16 December 2015 following a tight but well organized schedule. On the first day of its visit (14 December), the EEC members were first briefed by the HQA representative, Prof. Vasileios Tsiantos, and subsequently met with the Rector, Prof. Kostas Grammenos, the Vice-Rector, Prof. Nikolaos Mousiopoulos, members of the self-evaluation team, the Deans and Chairmen of the three Schools and the Internal Evaluation representatives. The first day also included a guided tour to the campus, where the EEC could see all facilities including the offices of the teaching and administrative staff, classrooms, laboratories and the library. On the second day (15 December), the EEC met with representatives of the students and the academic staff, the chief administration, external IHU partners (representatives from industry, society and local authorities), and former graduate students. In the late afternoon, an additional meeting was arranged with the IHU academic associates. Despite the fact that the latter were invited at short notice, the EEC was impressed to see that all of them were present in the meeting. Finally, on the third day, the EEC presented an oral report summarizing the preliminary results of its visit to the Rector, Vice-Rector, the School Deans and other IHU members. It is worth noting that during its visit at IHU, the EEC was given access to all additional material it requested, including study programmes, the curricula vitae of all teachers, several study guides and brochures, the annual budget, and documents relevant to the IHU administrative structure. All these documents were handed to the EEC on paper and/or in digital format. The reception of the EEC by the IHU members was excellent, and all staff and students were particularly cooperative and willing to support the evaluation procedure providing any material requested and answering any question posed by the EEC.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&2.1):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	x
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating (optional):

The visit of the EEC was very well organised and received.

2.2 The Self-Evaluation Procedure

The self-evaluation report was very informative and comprehensive but slightly outdated, since it was composed already in 2014. However, the IHU members provided all relevant updated information. In some parts, the report – which was written on a template that requires repeating information – was rather redundant. In future, this should be avoided for the sake of a more concise presentation. As already mentioned, during their visit the EEC members were provided with additional digital and printed sources related to the IHU's activities in research and teaching as well as to the university's administrative structure and operations.

There can be no doubt that the objectives of the internal evaluation procedure have been fully met by IHU. This was thoroughly organized and implemented within the framework of the University's internal system of Quality Assurance. All relevant groups (faculty, administrators, students) were actively involved and a substantial amount of pertinent information, including minutes of meetings, administrative records, student handbooks and evaluation questionnaires have been examined.

The positive aspects of the self-evaluation procedure were clearly evident to the EEC. The academic and administrative staff were engaged into a fruitful discussion revolving around the profile and goals of their institution as well as its major strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, they regarded this self-evaluation as an opportunity for demonstrating the high potential of IHU. However, this extremely time-consuming task became even more difficult by changes in the template of the internal evaluation report which were initiated by the HQA at a rather late stage. It is therefore advisable that the HQA informs the universities in a timely manner, enabling thus these institutions to appropriately react to any conceptual changes in the evaluation procedure. This is crucial especially in matters related to the academic development strategy which require a lengthy process of decision-making in several committees.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&2.2):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	x
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

3. PROFILE OF THE INSTITUTION UNDER EVALUATION

3.1 Institutional Governance, Leadership & Strategy

3.1.1 Vision, mission and goals of the Institution

The mission of IHU focuses on education, research and internationalization aiming at a) providing excellent education and research in English that meet the needs of the international community; b) enhancing understanding of the major economic, socio-political and technological issues of modern societies through teaching and research of the highest academic standard; and c) creating an international and diverse student and faculty community and thus fostering greater understanding between nations and cultures.

The IHU has set the following priorities regarding

- Education: a) to provide high quality education by ensuring excellent teaching and administrative support for students at all levels; b) to produce graduates highly competitive in the labour market; c) to achieve high satisfaction rates of students from their programmes and their overall learning experience at the institution; d) to increase the number of students; and e) to lower the ratio teacher/student;
- Research: a) to support and promote research, with emphasis on interdisciplinary research and cooperation; b) to enhance the impact of the institution and its visibility; c) to increase the number of permanent academic staff of the institution; and d) to seek external funds for research;
- Internationalization: a) to increase the number of foreign students; b) to enhance research and educational partnerships with foreign institutions; and c) to increase the mobility of students and academic staff of the institution

The IHU intends to achieve its goals by

- a) attracting and employing distinguished academics from Greek universities as well as prominent expatriates and foreign academics;
- b) adopting and implementing best teaching and research practices of leading foreign universities;
- c) continuously adjusting the postgraduate programmes and increasing inter-university partnerships;

- d) implementing and improving the quality assurance in research, education and overall in each function of the institution;
- e) facilitating the collaboration of its academic staff with external partners from industry, government and wider society;
- f) attracting excellent students from Greece and abroad, in particular from the Balkans, Turkey and the Middle East;
- g) strengthening its international orientation via the ERASMUS exchange programme, participation in international conferences and European networks, and the introduction of common programmes («joint degrees») with foreign institutions;
- h) establishing the School of Lifelong Learning; and
- i) granting fellowships to students and research awards to its academic staff.

The IHU monitors the achievement of its goals via the internal quality assurance system developed by the university's Quality Assurance Unit. Procedures include, for instance, the following: a) annual and periodic internal evaluation of the university's schools and programmes, and academic accreditation of the programmes in the context of the principles, guidelines and instructions of the Quality Assurance Agency; b) annual assessment of the administrative and academic staff; c) effective, active and systematic collection of feedback from students via the "course evaluation forms" and the "exit questionnaires", and prompt response to any problems or areas for improvement highlighted by them; d) the monitoring of the university graduates' career path by the Careers Office and the Liaison Office to assess the attractiveness of the university graduates in the labour market; and d) a fully computerized Quality Assurance System.

Since its establishment in 2008, and despite the complex and restrictive legal context of the Greek Higher Education system and the austere economic conditions in Greece, the University has grown and adjusted to meet current challenges and to improve itself. Examples include the continuous renewal of its programmes, the development of new ones with interdisciplinary character, and the Quality Assurance System. In addition, the University seeks to play a significant role in the business and industrial sectors of the city and the region more broadly. The Careers Office has been instrumental in building a networking system of business and academia, which benefits the students, academic staff, business and society in general.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.1.1):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	x
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating (optional):

IHU has created a “model” institution for research and teaching unique to Greece. Its vision, mission and goals are clearly stated, remarkable and quite realistic. The university pioneers a new model of post-graduate education of high-quality and cutting-edge teaching and research in the scientific fields it offers, based on an extremely low number of internal faculty and an extremely high number of distinguished visiting professors from Greek and foreign institutions. Despite this unbalanced proportion, which results from the freeze of hiring in the public sector, it seems that the model of education, the IHU has introduced works very well. However, the question remains whether this system is viable on the long-term.

3.1.2 Organizational Development Strategy

The IHU administration has responded well to the changing needs of the students and staff, implementing the appropriate technological changes and facilitating the execution of all essential processes. Within the existing national institutional framework, the university has defined its principles of operation and development as well as its goals, and has introduced a system of regulations that govern the operations of the institution.

In the context of its organizational development strategy, IHU has asked the Ministry of Education and Religion for the establishment of several bodies that would contribute towards its effective operation, such as an Internal Audit Unit, a Student Advocate, and an Advisory Committee made up of academics and businessmen (note that the latter body has already been created and is operational but without the formal approval of the Ministry). In addition there exist several other working groups such as the Committee of Deans, and many more are planned (e.g., Complaints and Dispute Resolution Committee, Teaching Support Office, Special Education Councils) which will be activated once they are approved by the Ministry of Education and Religion with a Presidential Decree.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.1.2):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	x
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

3.1.3 Academic Development Strategy

IHU, in order to achieve its goal of becoming one of the leading institutions in education and research in the wider area of Southeast Europe, has recently increased the number of postgraduate programmes (PSP) it offers in its three schools from 10 to 19, and also plans to introduce several new ones in the near future. This development strategy towards more specialized programmes is clearly reflected in the case of the School of Science and Technology which – for the past five years – has offered a programme in the broader field of ICT (MSc in ICT Systems). Last year, after careful consideration and market research, two new programmes were designed and implemented. The three programmes share now a significant number of fundamental modules (e.g. Computer Networks, Foundations of Computing, Software Development Methodologies, Database Systems etc.) that cover a large part of the basis of the entire field of ICT, creating a curriculum that offers both general and specialized knowledge and is comparable to masters programmes and postgraduate degrees in many esteemed universities abroad.

The university is also determined to increase the number of its postgraduate student body and the doctoral candidates (3 so far) by offering scholarships and providing research assistant opportunities. IHU has been quite active in publicizing its programmes both in Greece and abroad. It goes without saying, that any further expansion of the student body will necessitate an increase in both the academic and administrative staff.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.1.3):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	x
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating (optional):

The existence of so many specialized programmes can be both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, specialized knowledge is greatly appreciated by the students (they become more competitive in the job market) and the market (it fills/satisfies its parochial needs), but on the other hand, too much specialization, for example in IT, may be risky since skills acquired today could become obsolete in a short period of time. An additional concern of the EEC has to do with the ability of the university to effectively perform its teaching and research goals with its very low number of permanent 'in-house' faculty members.

3.1.4 Research Strategy

The research strategy of the IHU aims at gaining international academic reputation and fostering interactions of its three Schools with foreign academic institutions, the business community and other public authorities and private entities. The IHU research objectives aim at:

- a) addressing large-scale interdisciplinary research topics;
- b) producing high quality scientific work which is subsequently published in high ranking international academic journals;
- c) shaping research projects at national and regional level;
- d) strengthening interdisciplinary research collaboration among its programmes; and
- e) creating the necessary and appropriate conditions and know-how to attract external funding and international research collaborations.

In order to increase its international academic reputation, IHU plans to gradually increase human and financial resources in high quality research until 2018. In particular, the goal is to increase the annual number of publications of the faculty members, the quality (ranking) of journals where the publications appear, and the average number of citations per publication.

Presently, IHU provides modern technological infrastructure and equipment, databases and a well stocked library. In addition the university finances selected research projects undertaken by its faculty (professors and academic associates) and participation in conferences; it also rewards its faculty for publications in high ranking international academic journals.

Overall, the university has a good record in publishing in high quality international journals. There is evidence of significant and widespread participation in international conferences and refereeing for academic journals. At the individual level, most faculty members and academic associates are research active and some command a good level of visibility in terms of citations and scholarly recognition.

The IHU has participated in a few networks of excellence and has signed several memoranda of

cooperation. The most notable networks of excellence are a) the GREEN-AgriChains, which was funded by the European Commission under the 7th Framework Programme (FP7-NoE, expired on 10.1.2013) and encompassed interdisciplinary competence and resources from academia, industry and research community; and b) TREND (Towards Real Energy Efficient Network Design), which was also funded by the European Commission under the 7th Framework Programme (FP7-NoE, expired on 10.1.2013) and involved 12 partners and 8 partner organizations, coordinated by the Politecnico di Torino. However, most these programmes have expired and no many new ones have been planned.

IHU does not presently provide any research assistance mechanisms. However, there exist plans for the establishment of such service (office) in the near future.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.1.4):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	x
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating (optional):

The IHU's emphasis on research is commendable. Following established international standards and practices, the university has developed a rational and consistent approach towards assessing published research quality. Based on a transparent procedure, the university has established a list of 4 and 3 stars journals that are typically considered to be the best publication outlets in the areas of studies the IHU offers. While there is no a perfect way of constructing such a list and some individual faculty members may disagree with the established classification, still the university is to be commended for undertaking this task and for setting high research quality standards. Overall, the EEC found consensus among the faculty regarding the existence of the list and it strongly believes that its existence could contribute to a culture of high research standards and expectations for the younger faculty.

That said, the university, in light of its goals of internationalization, should intensify its efforts towards participation in research networks of excellence in order to attract new research projects. A major goal of any research project is the generation of funding that enhances the financial resources available to the principle investigator, the school and the university for high quality research. Furthermore it seems that the personal contact of the 'in house' staff with the visiting professors from abroad has not led to any significant collaboration on research programmes, as one would expect.

3.1.5 Financial Strategy

As far as state funding is concerned, IHU is funded from the regular budget and from the Public Investment Programme (National resources and co-funded by the European Union resources through the IHU Special Account (including National Strategic Reference Framework - NSRF 2007-2013 programmes)). State funding via the regular budget as well as public investments (exclusively National resources) have been declining since 2011. Since 2010, it is legally required that the regular budget and the overall public investment programme must be balanced and since 2013 the IHU annual overall budget must have a surplus (of at least 15%). It should be noted that:

- 1) 50% of IHU's total costs (excluding the salaries of the permanent teaching and administrative staff of IHU) are covered by student fees. IHU's mid-term goal is to become self-financed by around 70%.
- 2) IHU's operating costs in the past two years were covered by the regular budget and the NSRF 2007-2013 programmes (especially Education and Lifelong Learning Operational Programme) in a ratio of 9% and 91%, respectively. Due to its unsteadiness and strong fluctuation, the extremely high percentage of the NSRF 2007-2013 programmes makes any financial strategy for the near future vulnerable. For that reason EEC would like to suggest to the State the continuation of IHU's funding through national resources as well as from operational co-funded programmes of NSRF 2014-2020.
- 3) It is commendable that IHU's budget, including both costs and revenues, is electronically monitored and furthermore that the university adheres to the European standards and regulations pertaining to the financial management even after the completion of NSRF 2007-2013 programmes.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.1.5):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	x
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

3.1.6 Building and Grounds Infrastructure Strategy

IHU's major concern is the lack of its own building infrastructure. Being the tenant and not the owner of the two buildings, the university is not even allowed to make appropriate and – in some instances – necessary modifications to buildings in order to accommodate its needs or to take other measures towards this end. Given the increasing number of educational programmes that attract a growing number of students, many of whom would welcome also an on-campus accommodation facility, IHU is about to face a critical shortage of space in the coming academic years. It should be noted that funding for acquiring own buildings is available under *ΕΣΠΑ* though all tenders have been frozen as per ministerial directive.

Allowing IHU to acquire its own building infrastructure will, in addition to solving the issue of the looming lack of space, will significantly reduce its operating expenses as rent accounts for about 80% of operating expenses and approximately 15% of the total costs.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.1.6):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	x
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating (optional):

There is a clear strategy to improve infrastructure. However, whether this strategy will materialize will depend heavily on state support, in particular financial.

3.1.7 Environmental Strategy

IHU pursues a clear and consistent environmental strategy.

- There are bins for collecting recyclable and non-recyclable material around IHU's campus. Recyclable material is collected regularly by the municipal authority for recycling.
- Photovoltaic panels installed on campus provide 27% of the electricity needs of one of the buildings (Building B).
- Sensors installed in the buildings monitor levels of humidity, temperature, and CO₂ thus helping to reduce energy consumption in addition to alerting when safety levels are

exceeded.

Furthermore, the EEC notes that, though in a still limited scale, IHU has taken steps towards reducing dependency on fossils fuel. It is also noted that the university has compiled a comprehensive report with the view to becoming an entirely green university. However, and as mentioned above, being the tenant and not the owner of the buildings, IHU is not allowed to make modifications to buildings or take other measures towards this end.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.1.7):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	x
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

3.1.8 Social Strategy

Its relatively short existence notwithstanding, IHU has established close links with several private companies and public corporations in Thessaloniki and the wider area of Northern Greece. Such links allow IHU to get accurate, first hand and immediate feedback on what the evolving needs of the market and society are and to respond accordingly. IHU has organized international conferences, seminars, presentations, and other cultural events with broad participation of all relevant stakeholders and is actively raising funds from outside sources.

During the meeting with former students, the EEC noted that IHU maintains close links with its alumni. This is crucial as, according to past and current students, word of mouth is the best means of advertising IHU and attracting new students.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.1.8):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	x
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating (optional):

The EEC notes that IHU is reaching out to various stakeholders with the view of closer integration with the community.

3.1.9 Internationalization Strategy

IHU is a vibrant outward looking institution that promotes international collaboration at different levels. Most courses are taught by visiting professors based at well-known universities in approximately 15 countries. In addition to enhancing diversity in thinking and cross-pollination of ideas, transferring expertise and knowledge, visiting professors help strengthen IHU's international visibility.

With respect to students, about 17% of whom come from outside Greece, IHU has entered into collaborative agreements with universities in several European countries. For instance, students in law programmes have the opportunity to receive scholarships that enable them to attend courses offered by institutions in Germany and Luxemburg. Furthermore, students can choose to complete their dissertation at a foreign university but the degree will be offered by IHU. There is also intention to have a unit dedicated to arranging collaborative agreements with universities in Europe.

The EEC noted comments by many students regarding the high quality of education offered at IHU. In conjunction with instruction exclusively in English, students believe that they have a competitive edge when pursuing further studies abroad.

These assets notwithstanding, the EEC believes that IHU should intensify its efforts for attracting more foreign students in the near future. One further issue that the university will also have to address viz. its internalization goal refers to the strengthening of its Erasmus programme. IHU needs to improve its performance in this exchange programme, i.e., to reduce the large deficit that exists between receiving students from abroad and sending students abroad. By making the inflows-outflows in the Erasmus programme more balanced, it would also help maintain links to a larger number of external partners.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.1.9):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	x
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

3.1.10 Student Welfare Strategy

IHU has already taken some measures for the welfare of present and prospective students. The EEC would like to highlight the fact that there are scholarships for top performing students (top 5% of the class). Furthermore, IHU has taken special care for students with disabilities by constructing ramps in the buildings for easier access.

However, there are several factors that constrain the implementation of a comprehensive student welfare strategy. The most important among them are: the location of IHU outside the city of Thessaloniki, the absence of on-campus accommodation of students, non-ownership of buildings and grounds as well as the fact that many students are working, either part-time or full-time.

Even though IHU provides substantial support for its students, the EEC believes that in light of its internationalization policy the university should intensify its efforts to expand these services. It should be noted, that IHU has already developed effective concrete plans for the improvement of the student welfare which shall be implemented in the near future. A decisive step towards this direction will be made when IHU succeeds in getting ownership of the campus infrastructure.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.1.10):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	x
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

3.2 Strategy for Study Programmes

3.2.1 Programmes of Undergraduate Studies (first cycle)

The International Hellenic University does not offer undergraduate studies.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.2.1):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

3.2.2 Programmes of Postgraduate Studies (second cycle)

IHU's distinctive feature lies in the fact that it offers exclusively programmes of postgraduate studies. The excellence of the available programmes regarding their aims and content is clearly stated in the external evaluation reports of the three Schools. The following remarks by the EEC are related to organisational matters.

The basic obligations of the students are explicitly and clearly stated in the studies guide of each of the three Schools. For instance, class and laboratory attendance is obligatory; unjustified class absences and missing deadlines for home-works and research papers entail grade penalties. Similarly, for many courses, individual or group research papers are mandatory, and students are aware that they have only two opportunities to participate in written examinations. Furthermore, course requirements and detailed course teaching methods are provided in the study guides. It is worth mentioning that on the enrolment day («Induction Day»), the university staff presents the study guides and the university regulations to the students. In addition, throughout the course of their studies, students receive information via email regarding any modifications to the study guides and the relevant regulations.

The students are fully satisfied with the teaching model, i.e. visiting professors and mentors and the quality of teaching in general. Nevertheless, there were a couple of conflicting views regarding the level of difficulty of specific courses (in particular the Faculty of Science Technology (IT)). Furthermore, a few students identified deficiencies/limitations in laboratory infrastructure, i.e. lack of equipment.

While the university claims that it seriously considered the observations and recommendations made in the External Evaluation reports of the individual academic units of the university in 2014, still it is not clear how exactly the university addressed any issues raised in the reports and whether it has taken any steps to implement them.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (& 3.2.2):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	x
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating (optional):

The university has adopted and implemented studies practices which are unique to the Greek educational system. It would be extremely valuable to the Greek higher educational system if all Greek universities emulated the IHU model.

3.2.3 Programmes of Doctoral Studies (third cycle)

The university does not presently offer a structured/organized doctoral programme. Consequently, it would be advisable that the university accommodated the additional study needs of its 4 PhD students by either offering additional (specialized) courses in its campus or helping the students to attend these courses abroad, perhaps in the institutions in which its visiting professors are located.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (& 3.2.3):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

The EEC would like to refrain from ticking any box in this category.

3.3 Profile of the Institution under evaluation - Conclusions and recommendations

- *Underline specific positive points:*

- IHU is a university with a unique organisational structure pursuing a new model of post-graduate education based on high-quality and cutting-edge teaching and research. It is the opinion of the EEC that IHU stands out among Greek universities in educational and administrative aspects.
- The university offers study programmes exclusively in English which provide its students with crucial hard and soft skills that meet the modern demands of economy and society. .
- IHU has developed a dynamic social strategy and has taken several initiatives for its better integration into social and economic networks at a local and regional level.

- *Underline specific negative points:*

- Employment of an extremely low number of internal faculty and an extremely high number of distinguished visiting professors from Greek and foreign institutions may hinder the future of the university despite the admirable dedication of the faculty and academic associates.
- Weak participation in research networks of excellence and only a few running research projects.
- IHU's internationalization goal has not been satisfactorily realized based on the low number of international students due to Greece's financial crisis.

- *Make your suggestions for further development of the positive points:*

- IHU's intense efforts to reach out to relevant stakeholders in social and economic networks should be better advertised.

- *Make your suggestions on needed steps for improvement:*

- IHU must intensify its effort for closer collaboration with the visiting professors, other institutions as well as the industry in joint research projects; it should also actively seek external funding for research projects.
- IUH must also intensify its efforts to attract more international students. A relatively large foreign student body could enhance IUH visibility and contribute towards its financial self-sufficiency.

4. INTERNAL SYSTEM OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

4.1 Quality Assurance (QA) Policy and Strategy

The institution has developed a clear policy towards Quality Assurance (QA) and actively promotes its culture. The EEC was impressed by all procedures of the internal evaluation. This constitutes one of the most evident core values of the institution and makes IHU a leading organization in the area of QA within the sector of high education in Greece and abroad. This became evident from the advanced system of internal evaluation available but also through the interviews with all stakeholders.

The system is based on a number of initiatives:

- a) The Quality Assurance Framework Unit is available to “ensure the continuous and intensive evaluation of all aspects of the university’s work” identify any problems and suggesting improvements;
- b) an extensive evaluation of teaching practices is used;
- c) an extensive evaluation of programmes and services is also available;
- d) self-evaluation practices are of a common practice;
- e) mentoring mechanisms are established in order to assist students immediately regarding any issue arising within the institution;
- f) rewarding mechanisms to recognise research achievements and excellence in publications, based on objective criteria, are established;
- g) anonymity and meritocracy are guaranteed.

During the interviews it became clear that when any concern is raised within the institution a) immediate action is taken for the problem to be solved as soon as possible and b) if the issue is more complex, the university is dealing with it at a higher level. The committee was pleased to notice that within the institution a culture of non-discrimination is evident and sexism is not tolerated.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&4.1):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	x
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

4.2 Design, approval, monitoring and evaluation of the study programmes and degrees awarded

IHU aims at excelling in certain areas of research motivated by current problems and affairs such as a globalised world, international mobility, new and challenging areas of demand in the field of national/international law, etc. Several programmes have been established based on an interactive communication with local stakeholders from society and industry, a practice which is appreciated by students and industry representatives alike. In several instances public institutions/associations have approached the university for the organisation of common projects and the results have always been excellent.

There is continuous evaluation of all teaching and research activities, and changes are introduced when needed. The following issues were raised/discussed during the evaluation:

- a) The highly specialised nature of study programmes could put at risk graduates' future careers when new challenges rise in the market. This has been extensively discussed with the IHU leadership during the evaluation process. The latter has insured the EEC that enough educational background was provided to all students that would allow them to adapt to any future challenges.
- b) The EEC was also concerned about the great number of visiting scholars to the institution and that this process could impact on the function of the university as a whole. This issue was repeatedly discussed during the evaluation procedure with the university leadership, academics, students and other stakeholders. Almost all of them were very positive about this practice in that it provides great opportunities to the faculty and the students towards achieving the internationalisation goal. Only few students expressed some concerns and suggested a better coordination between the University and visiting scholars.

The EEC noticed that although the University claims to be "international", the ratio of international students is only 17%. It is possible that this percentage is due to the current economic situation in Greece as well as Greece's negative portrayal abroad and to the fact that the University is still young and hence relatively unknown. The EEC has strongly suggested:

- a) to pursue a more dynamic publicity strategy of the University in Greece and abroad; and
- b) to foster a culture of an international institution which could be achieved through the enrolment of more international students

All guides regarding the organization of the study programmes are readily available both in printed and online forms. Learning outcomes are very clearly formulated. The ECTS is implemented. Furthermore, there is a regular evaluation of the programmes according to state and university regulations, and criteria have been set in order to safeguard consistency; and they are regularly updated. The students' direct participation in the QA systems has been already implemented.

One important future challenge for IHU might be to develop full online programmes. During the evaluation we were able to navigate through the online platform of the University. Any student can have access to a variety of information pertaining to her studies: introduction, general information, description of courses, aims and outcomes, weekly programmes, assessment etc. This is a very good start and could be easily extended to accommodate an online programme with synchronous/asynchronous learning interactions, online live tutorials/interactions, blogging, etc. IHU plans to provide blended distance learning educational services in the near future.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&4.2):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	x
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

4.3 Teaching and learning - Assessment by students

IHU has developed clear and coherent policies regarding learning paths for students. For all programmes, a guide of approx. 60-70 pages is available for all students, where detailed and clear information is included regarding the function of the University, and the aims and objectives for all programmes. Courses (content, requirements, ECTS, etc.) and regulations and policies of the institution (i.e. fees, mentoring, assessment, code of contact etc.) are clearly stated. The same applies to the information related to the active involvement of students in the QA system, the university facilities, the Careers Office, Alumni as well as the contact information. In these guides everything is clearly articulated and students are informed about learning paths, induction opportunities and support, evaluation, complaints, objections etc. All the above were confirmed by students during meetings with the EEC.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&4.3):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	x
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

4.4 Admission of students, progression and recognition of studies

Procedures regarding student admission are transparent and guarantee quality, fairness, equality of opportunity and progress of studies. The mission of the institution is to “build a student community from various backgrounds and national origin”. All this information is available through the university’s website (<http://www.ihu.edu.gr/index.php/admissions.html>) but also through announcements distributed to other universities for the attraction of prospective students. All prospective students are requested to submit an application with all required documents (degrees of previous studies, official transcripts and English certificate). It is clear that the prerequisites ensure that students are equally treated and acceptances are based solely on merit.

It is worth noting that the University was awarded the European Union’s Diploma Supplement Label (2012-15) as a recognition of its best practice. Students’ learning progression is clearly described in all guides of studies but also through students’ individual Diploma Supplement Label. Furthermore, students’ progression is constantly monitored at every stage of their studies. Student’s mobility is supported primarily through Erasmus programmes. However, and as we have mentioned above, the university should further enhance the mobility of its students.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&4.4):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	x
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

4.5 Quality Assurance as regards the teaching staff

IHU has taken a series of measures for guaranteeing an effective quality assurance as regards the teaching staff before and during employment. Recruitment of staff (both tenure positions and academic associates) is conducted following transparent and strict criteria related to their scientific excellence in teaching and research. High qualifications pertaining to knowledge, skills and potential development of the candidates are required.

The excellently implemented system of Quality Assurance monitors and analyses the staff’s research productivity and teaching performance at an annual basis and – on the basis of the acquired results – sets new targets. The course evaluation forms and the analysis of these data by the Course Office provide teachers with a regular and comprehensive feedback about their teaching

skills and methods at the end of each semester. The teaching staff also receives information regarding the average responses to each question in order to be able to compare their performance relative to that of others.

Especially for academic associates the renewal of their contract directly depends on the results of these evaluations. Visiting professors are also evaluated by students through the Course Evaluation Forms submitted each semester by the students. Based on the results of these evaluations, the General Assemblage (ΠΓΣ) of each School decides on whether or not to renew their contract for the following academic year.

IHU encourages the research activities of its academic staff mainly by emphasizing research as the main/most important criterion of their annual performance evaluation. The publication of articles in renowned peer-reviewed journals is encouraged and – as already mentioned – awarded according to the journal’s impact factor. Furthermore, the university offers financial support for the participation of its staff (including the academic associates) in conferences both within Greece and abroad. Beyond that, the academic staff can participate in the Erasmus mobility programme. Finally, the university regularly provides information regarding funding opportunities at both national and international level.

The teaching staff receives full support in teaching and evaluation through the e-learning platform (see below). This comprehensive and user-friendly system enables the online access of course materials and the submission of the course evaluation forms.

Finally, IHU’s Legal Support Unit provides an adequate framework for the investigation of disciplinary and academic misconduct of the teaching staff.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&4.5):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	x
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

4.6 Learning resources and student support

The available support services regarding the library, information systems and infrastructure are of a very high level facilitating thus excellent study conditions. The library, which is daily accessible (Mo-Fr: 9 am to 8 pm, Sa-Su: 12 am to 20 pm), has ample space for books and readers. The amount of books and printed or digital periodicals is steadily increasing; it remains though strongly depended on external funding sources. IHU has taken special care for the development of a

comprehensive IT system that offers to the students and the members of the academic staff excellent support, including the IT Service Desk, full Wi-Fi coverage at the university campus, off-campus access to online resources via VPN and a moodle-based E-Learning platform that enables the students to access and download all essential learning material (including course material), evaluate courses, submit essays, and to contact teachers.

The infrastructure for learning resources and student support is outstanding and significantly enhances the quality of teaching as well as simplifies several routine procedures. All offices, classrooms and laboratories are very well equipped and easily accessible with impressively long opening hours.

The appropriateness and effectiveness of the supporting services available to the students are monitored and evaluated via student questionnaires and direct contact between students and the academic staff. Based on this feedback, the university constantly strives to improve the supporting services. This is clearly reflected in the general satisfaction of the students who confirmed the effectiveness and the steady improvement of the learning resources, the IT-system and the university's infrastructure.

One of the main assets of IHU is the regular and direct contact between the members of the academic staff and students. The university has established a mentoring system according to which a mentor is assigned to each enrolled student for the entire period of his/her study. According to the unanimous opinion of the students, whom the EEC could meet, this system of individual support has been proven very effective.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&4.6):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	x
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

4.7 Information Systems for Recording and Analysing Data and Indicators

The university has developed a very comprehensive and effective IT system which is being constantly improved. Within the framework of this excellent digital infrastructure, there are several reliable means for collecting and evaluating information relevant to the student body, key performances and rates. The students are very closely monitored by a centralised system, which manages registration, grades, progression, success and drop-out rates. It is important to stress that

these results are taking into serious consideration in the strategic planning of the Schools and the university.

The course evaluation form– which has to be filled by the students in every course they attend – and the exit questionnaire give the institution the opportunity to monitor the quality and effectiveness of the available study programmes as well as student satisfaction. As already mentioned, the Careers Office offers excellent support to students and graduates through well-organised information and consulting services and the organisation of courses and other activities. The student satisfaction regarding the services of the Careers Office and other administrative units such as the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Unit is regularly recorded in the exit questionnaires.

The meticulously planned and implemented system of Quality Assurance will play a key role in the efforts of the university to gain international recognition and to join academic networks within and beyond the European Higher Education Area. The participation of the Quality Assurance team in seminars and conferences, and the high number of Visiting Professors gives the IHU the opportunity and possibility to exchange information about similar academic institutions and develop solutions that improve its operation in terms of research, teaching and administration.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&4.7):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	x
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

4.8 Dissemination of information to stakeholders

In the past years, IHU has been extremely active in the field of public relations management. The EEC members were impressed by the variety and excellent quality of brochures and the annual prospectus containing valuable information about the programmes offered. It is commendable that IHU has undertaken a series of additional initiatives for promoting itself, including press conferences, presentations and the participation in international exhibitions. An apparent outcome of these intense efforts can be seen in several articles that appear regularly in Greek newspapers highlighting the IHU's scientific excellence and the unique features of its study programmes. The systematic work for disseminating this information to all stakeholders is enhanced by an excellent website which provides easy online access to all information related to the university's profile, programmes and facilities.

All information regarding the IHU'S programmes is available in English; the CV's (also in English) of the teaching staff are also accessible in the IHU website.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&4.8):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	x
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

4.9 Continuous monitoring and periodic review of the study programmes

The IHU's Quality Assurance system provides an excellent framework for an annual assessment of the study programmes. During the internal self-evaluation in each School, the excellence and effectiveness of the programmes are monitored through an analysis of the course evaluation forms, exit questionnaires and the data provided by the Careers Office concerning employment rates of the graduated students. The results of the self-evaluation are considered by the university as an important parameter for the periodic review of the contents of study programmes.

The changing needs of society comprise a further determining factor for changes and improvements in the study programmes. All available programmes strive to go beyond the profile of traditional academic curricula offering the students the opportunity to acquire advanced knowledge in new and rapidly growing scientific fields. The unique features of some programmes are thus reflections of major current trends in society, economy, politics, technology, science and art.

The involvement of students in the process of monitoring and reviewing the study programmes is evident at several levels. Their opinion about strengths and weaknesses of the programmes is regularly reflected in the course evaluation forms and exit questionnaires. Moreover, through their participation in the Student-Staff Liaison Committee, which holds one meeting every term, and the self-evaluation committees, they have the opportunity to discuss problems related to the study programmes and also to suggest improvements. The mentoring system offers a further opportunity for a direct contact between students and teachers.

After intense discussions with the academic staff, the EEC is persuaded that market needs play a decisive role for the conception of some study programmes (see for example the LLM in Transnational and European Commercial Law and Alternative Dispute Resolution, MSc in Strategic Product Design, MSc in Hospitality and Tourism Management or the recent splitting of the MSc in Energy Systems in three more specific MSc).

The involvement of stakeholders from society, economy and industry in strategic decisions concerning the study programmes is not yet clearly established through an institutionalised form of active participation, due to the current Greek legislation. Nevertheless, the EEC noticed that there is

an apparent interest from both sides to engage into a more regular and intense discussion on the profiles of the available or new curricula.

It could be valuable for the IHU's reputation and international recognition of cutting-edge research beyond the narrow confines of the programmes is pursued.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&4.9):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	x
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

4.10 Periodic external evaluation

IHU plans to create a committee which will be responsible for analysing and implementing the suggestions made by the Institutional External Evaluation. As far as the three Schools are concerned, their plans in response to the comments of their own external evaluation will be monitored by their Directors and the Quality Assurance system.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&4.10):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating (optional):

The EEC refrains from ticking a box due to the pending process of external evaluation and the unavailability of information related to the content of the question posed in this section.

4.11 Internal System of Quality Assurance – Conclusions and recommendations

*Please complete the following sections regarding the **internal system of quality assurance**:*

- *Underline specific positive points:*
- Meticulously organized and implemented internal system of quality assurance based on a solid and effective IT infrastructure;
- Standardized procedures for the regular monitoring and analysing (evaluation of) the profile of the study programmes, the performance of the academic staff and student performance and rates.

- *Underline specific negative points:*
- Heavy work-load for the academic staff.

- *Make your suggestions for further development of the positive points:*

-

- *Make your suggestions on needed steps for improvement:*
- Students should be comprehensively informed at an early stage of their studies about the system of quality assurance and their own role within it.

5. OPERATION OF THE CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE INSTITUTION

5.1 Central Administration Services of the Institution

IHU employs 39 administrative staff and 23 academic staff (16 academic associates and 7 faculty members (ΔΕΠ)), which implies a heavy ratio in favour of the former. This could perhaps be explained by the nature of IHU's entrepreneurial mindset, the need to establish close links with the local market and partner organizations which could help IHU to play a significant role in the society and, most importantly, in the light of the current economic conditions, to increase the prospects for employment of its graduates.

Given the substantial number of the members of administrative staff, all central administration services are ideally equipped – though with only two (among 39) permanent positions – and provide without any exception excellent support for the teaching staff and students. The IT Services Area plays a crucial role within this well-operating system offering a variety of reliable digital solutions covering almost all administrative procedures. The Special Account for Research Funds and the Financial Services are equipped with experienced employees and operate effectively. The Careers Office is extremely active either through the regular organisation of events and seminars or through an intense individual support for students and graduates, despite the fact that it is equipped only with one person. The EEC was informed that, in the last organized Career Fair, about 20% of participating students were offered jobs in a short period of time after the event. This reflects the excellent efforts of the Careers Office to help the IHU graduates to find employment.

Furthermore the committee was impressed with the high quality multicolour brochures available to all students, similar to other leading international institutions around the globe, including information about the identity and mission of the institution, all study programmes, the quality insurance framework, library services, etc.

Administrative staff speaks English fluently and provides ample support to all students and in particular to international ones. During the session with 20 students (10 male and 10 female) all of them were highly satisfied with the level of support they receive from the administrative staff.

As already mentioned, the Library is very well designed, spacious and inspirational. It is staffed with 3 employees working under contract positions. The library's mission is to provide "high quality services for all members of the IHU academic community". The library organises training seminars regarding the use of the library and provides interlibrary loan services and a "recommend a Title Service". The long opening hours are an exemplary provision of services comparable to the best international institutions. Over the last 8 years the library has made any possible effort to enrich its stock of books and journals. However, during the meetings with student representatives it became apparent that more books and journals are needed.

All administration staff is engaging enthusiastically with all administration activities and is happy working in the institution. They are very supportive towards the students and other staff and are engaging with the wider community in a highly professional manner.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&5.1):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	x
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

5.2 Operation of the Central Administration of the Institution – Conclusions and recommendations

Please complete the following sections regarding the operation of the Institution's central administration :

- *Underline specific positive points:*
- Excellent and ideally equipped central administration.
- Comprehensive and effective IT support at all levels for staff and students.
- Systematic and intense efforts for better career opportunities for students and graduates.
- *Underline specific negative points:*
- Extremely unbalanced ratio between permanent and temporary positions: only two members of the administrative staff are permanently employed. However, it should be stressed, that – despite the continuous and intense efforts by IHU to address this problem – hiring permanent staff is determined by the Ministry.
- *Make your suggestions for further development of the positive points:*
- -
- *Make your suggestions on needed steps for improvement:*
- Given IHU potential to grow into a leading institution in the region, more permanent positions are needed.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Since its establishment, IHU has been operating with a very limited number of its own faculty while relying heavily on visiting professors, who deliver courses either on a weekly basis or over 3-4 short stays on campus per term. Visiting professors are supported by academic associates who take care of the management of courses. As new faculty positions are unlikely to be approved in the near future, IHU has little choice but to continue operating under the same model that is, as an extremely lean permanent faculty institution. In this context, IHUs present organizational culture will become even more deeply embedded in the collective mindset of the institution.

IHU is a nimble, entrepreneurial organization responding quickly to evolving conditions and changing needs of the marketplace with a mix of network and market cultures. This is evidenced by the pragmatic attitude that characterizes faculty and administrative staff alike. IHU's model of operation under its visionary leadership is full-heartedly supported by all concerned parties.

IHU's unique organizational culture, that has underlined the institution's success so far, is likely to face serious challenges as student numbers grow and if, in future, more permanent faculty members are hired. Put it simply, the challenge for IHU is how to stay a nimble, responsive and entrepreneurial university as hierarchies emerge and, inevitably, bureaucracy creeps in. Therefore, the EEC believes that IHU is about to reach the point where a crucial strategic decision needs to be made between, on the one hand, staying a small and lean institution serving market niches and becoming a bigger, and, perhaps, more traditional university on the other hand. If the former is chosen, IHU could keep on building on its core competencies. If, on the other hand, IHU decides to go for the latter, the university would need to re-invent itself.

A further challenge is whether the future leadership of IHU will come from within the ranks of its own faculty, very limited as this pool currently is, or whether outsider(s) will be put in charge. There are pros and cons for each of the two options but grooming successors is an issue that an entrepreneurial organization with unique features such as IHU needs to consider. In addition, while current job market conditions may favour maintaining the existing model of operations based on a large number of academic associates without tenure, it is unclear whether this model can be maintained should economic conditions and, in particular, the job market improve. Therefore, it is crucial that more tenure track positions must be created by the Ministry of Education and Religion. Finally, allowing IHU to acquire its own building infrastructure will, in addition to solving the issue of the looming lack of space, significantly reduce its operating expenses and guarantee the institution's rapid development in the future.

- *Underline specific positive points:*
- Unique and very effective organisational structure;

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • several specialized study programmes that are market driven; • excellent implementation of the Quality Assurance system; • extremely effective administration; 										
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Underline specific negative points:</i> • Some study programmes are rather overspecialized; • the ratio between in-house teaching staff and visiting professors is extremely unbalanced in favour of the latter. 										
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Make your suggestions for further development of the positive points:</i> • A small office in the city centre serving as both information centre and venue for several academic and social activities, would increase IHU's visibility. 										
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Make your suggestions on needed steps for improvement:</i> • IHU should intensify efforts for the recruitment of international students; • a crucial step for the IHU's future development would be to improve and expand the university campus. For this reason it is important that IHU acquires the ownership of the campus and buildings. 										
<p>6.1 Final decision of the EEC</p>										
<p>Please decide in respect to the overall Institutional evaluation:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td></td> <td>Tick</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Worthy of merit</td> <td>x</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Positive evaluation</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Partially positive evaluation</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Negative evaluation</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		Tick	Worthy of merit	x	Positive evaluation		Partially positive evaluation		Negative evaluation	
	Tick									
Worthy of merit	x									
Positive evaluation										
Partially positive evaluation										
Negative evaluation										

The Members of the Committee**INTERNATIONAL HELLENIC
UNIVERSITY**

Name and Surname

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