



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
HELLENIC REPUBLIC



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Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of:

Social Theology & the Study of Religion

Institution: National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Date: 30 April 2023



Επιχειρησιακό Πρόγραμμα
Ανάπτυξη Ανθρώπινου Δυναμικού,
Εκπαίδευση και Διά Βίου Μάθηση
Με τη συγχρηματοδότηση της Ελλάδας και της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης



Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the Undergraduate Study Programme of **Social Theology and the Study of Religion** of the **National and Kapodistrian University of Athens** for the purposes of granting accreditation.

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PART A: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE REVIEW

I. The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

The Panel responsible for the Accreditation Review of the Undergraduate Study Programme of Social Theology and Study of Religion of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens comprised the following five (5) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

- 1. Prof. Predrag Dragutinović (Chair)**
University of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia

- 2. Prof. Ion Croitoru**
Valahia University of Târgoviște, Târgoviște, Romania

- 3. Prof. Jack Khalil**
University of Balamand, Tripoli, Lebanon

- 4. Dr. Georgios Halkias**
The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

- 5. Mrs. Apostolia Kefala**
Student, Department of Theology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki, Greece

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

The External Evaluation and Accreditation Panel (EEAP) received the documents for review provided by the Department of Theology of the NKUA. These were accessible via HAHE cloud link sent to the members by email on 15 March 2023. Two of the EEAP members (Predrag Dragutinović and Ion Croitoru) participated onsite in the review, whereas three members (Ms. Apostolia Kefala, Mr. Georgios Halkias and Rev. Jack Khalil) participated remotely. The HAHE provided all members with the following documents submitted by the Department in 2020: a) the Department's Proposal for Accreditation, b) the 31. 1. 2020 Internal Evaluation Report (of MODIP), c) the Study Handbook (Study Programme and the description of courses offered in the year 2019/2020), d) the HAHE Guidelines, and e) other relevant information about the Department. During the onsite visit, the EEAP consulted the Department's website and received additional documentation (e.g., the presentation of the Head of the Department as well as other digital material).

The review took place from 23 to 29 April 2023. The EEAP members first convened on 24 April for a briefing about their tasks and mission. On 25 April they visited the Department of Social Theology and Study of Religion located at the campus of the NKUA, where the assessment procedure took place on two consecutive days, namely on 25 April (from 9:30 to 15:15) and 26 April (from 9:30 to 15:15). The review included various meetings with MODIP members, teaching and administrative staff, students, graduates, and stakeholders. The EEAP also had a chance to visit classrooms, offices, laboratories, the library, as well as the museum of the Faculty of Theology. The EEAP had the first meeting with the Vice-Rector Dimitrios Karadimas and the Head of the Department Prof. Kyrillos Katerelos). Afterwards they met the OMEA members (Mr. Vasileios Fanaras, Mr. Athanasios Antonopoulos, Mr. Nikolaos Denaxas) and MODIP representatives (Mr. Konstantinos Bourletidis and Mr. Theodoros Hadjitheodorou), teaching staff members, undergraduate students, graduates/alumni of the Study Programme, and external stakeholders from the public and private sectors.

It was a great honour to receive the visit of the Rector of the NKUA, Mr. Meletios-Athanasios Dimopoulos who expressed his appreciation of the Department and made very positive and supportive statements about it. During every working day, the EEAP members held a debriefing session to share impressions and reflect on their findings. During the concluding session on 26 April, the EEAP presented their impressions, observations, and preliminary findings to MODIP and OMEA members, who had a chance to respond. In the following days, the EEAP convened to discuss and finalize the Accreditation Report. The EEAP would like to emphasize the diligent work carried out by the HAHE, the University and the Department in preparing the material for accreditation. The EEAP members have the conviction that all meetings with the authorities of the University and the representatives of the Department were held in a spirit of honesty, collaboration, and collegiality.

III. Study Programme Profile

The Faculty of Theology, one of the first four Faculties of the University of Athens founded in 1837, was initially named “Theological Faculty of the Othonian University”. In 1862, it was renamed “Theological Faculty of the National University”, in 1911 “Theological Faculty of the Kapodistrian University”, and since 1932 “Theological Faculty of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens”. It first opened and operated in the neoclassical building of the private residence of the architect Stamatios Kleanthis, which was the first building of the University of Athens. In 1941, it moved to the main building on Panepistimiou Street and in 1976 to the University Campus, Ano Ilisia.

The Faculty of Theology was a single unified body until 1974, when a Pastoral Department was first established by state decree specifically for the training of clergy. One year later, however, it was abolished, followed by the establishment of the Department of Priestly Formation, which was also closed in 1977. In the same year, the Pastoral Department was re-established with a four-year study programme and the purpose to train clergy, monks, and laymen to staff positions of ecclesiastical ministry. Finally, two Departments were established at the Faculty of Theology, the Department of Theology, and the Department of Pastoral Theology. In 1994 the Department of Pastoral Studies was renamed the “Department of Social Theology”, without changing its orientation. Until 2018 it was called the Department of Social Theology and then from the academic year 2019, it was renamed the “Department of Social Theology and Study of Religion”. This change was made because in Greece there are communities with different religious beliefs and cultural backgrounds and there was a need to make a clear academic distinction from the Department of Theology. In addition to its undergraduate courses, the department offers postgraduate and doctoral programmes, as well as a framework for postdoctoral research. The three divisions of the Department of Social Theology and Study of Religion are: 1) Canon Law and Byzantine Theology since the 9th century - Biblical Studies and Mediterranean Cultural Life, 2) Christian Worship, Education and Pastoral Care, and 3) Division of Religious Studies, Philosophy and Sociology. The Department of Social Theology and Study of Religion has five laboratories which are used for research and educational purposes to meet the needs of the students and teaching staff.

The Department of Social Theology and Study of Religion offers a study programme which covers the fields of classical theological education and religious studies. The students are trained to work as scholars and researchers, although a graduate of the Department can work, for example, in different sectors in the ecclesiastical ministry, in the field of journalism, management in different organizations like commercial firms, and in the public domain as administrative staff. The graduates may also work as teachers in the public and private schools. Therefore, the graduates of the Department can make a constructive contribution in creating networks between theology and religion, Church and society, either by serving as clergy with considerable knowledge of theology and religious studies or as professionals in education and in the wider social sphere.

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

Principle 1: Academic Unit Policy for Quality Assurance

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

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

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

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

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

Study Programme Compliance

At the National Kapodistrian University of Athens there is an Internal Quality Assurance System, covering the entire range of the various functions and activities of the Institution. Its constant development and implementation fall under the responsibility of the relevant Quality Assurance Unit (QAU or MODIP). The Department follows a Policy for Quality Assurance of its Study Programme, teaching and research. MODIP's instructions are in line with the requirements of HAHE and the European standards for Higher Education.

The Internal Evaluation Committee (OMEA) collaborates both with MODIP and HAHE in different respects. It coordinates the work of internal evaluations and is variously assisted by the Council of the Department, its divisions, and the committee responsible for the study programme. OMEA is responsible for coordinating the efforts of the Department for the composition of internal assessment reports submitted to MODIP. The latter collects findings and proceeds to make recommendations and suggestions for improvement. These are presented and discussed in the regular Department’s council meetings.

EEAP deemed that the Department is working with commitment toward its continuous improvement. The Study Programme underwent a serious phase of transformation in 2019, since the new name of the Department brought new challenges regarding the Study Programme which was approved in year 2020.

An important distinction for the Faculty of Theology of the NKUA was its inclusion in the results of the QS (Quacquarelli Symonds) published on 22 March 2023. According to the results of the ranking in the individual thematic field “Theology and Religious Studies”, the Faculty of Theology appeared for the first time in the history of rankings among the 140 best study programmes in the above area worldwide. This is a particularly important achievement, as the Department of Theology and that of Social Theology and Study of Religion that comprise the Faculty of Theology show remarkable improvement in their international academic reputation, their research performance, and the trust and support from society at large.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

None.

Principle 2: Design and Approval of Programmes

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

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

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

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

Study Programme Compliance

The Department of Social Theology and Study of Religion designed an adequate study programme to investigate the evolution and various aspects of religious experiences, together with their history and tenets. Its programme supports students in a student-centred way and aids them to develop their critical thinking for the purpose of developing the skills that will render them useful in the cultivation of a cultural model that respects humanity and the world at large. At the same time, students benefit by learning to engage in dialogue and coming to appreciate what differs from their own beliefs. Although the EEAP noticed that the study programme places emphasis on the historical course and teachings of Christianity, the panel members clearly saw that at least 50% of the courses focus on different manifestations of the phenomenon of religion, which achieves a fair balance between subjects of theology and religious studies.

To obtain a BA degree, students follow a well-designed study programme that spreads over eight (8) semesters (i.e., 4 years of studies) with a workload equivalent to 240 ECTS for a total of fifty-one (51) courses: thirty-two (32) mandatory, eleven (11) mandatory electives, and eight (8) free electives. Descriptions of the courses offered each semester are published online on the

website of the Department. The examinations of the first semester are conducted in January, and in the second semester in June, while the make-up examination period takes place in September. The way examinations are carried out varies between written and oral, but it also includes research papers and presentations. Students participate actively in these academic methods of assessment. In addition, the Department maintains five (5) laboratories:

1- Laboratory for digital research and study of manuscripts;

2- Laboratory of Canon Law;

3- Laboratory for pedagogical research and applications, instrumental education, and production of educational material;

4- Laboratory of Religious Studies;

5- Laboratory of ethics and bioethics of religions;

By offering a variety of courses and seminars and work laboratories, the Department fulfils the highest standards for scholarly work and research. Furthermore, an interdisciplinary approach is adopted to tackle with an impressive openness the interface between the religious phenomenon and social contemporary issues and challenges, such as ecology, bioethics, and many more.

Students are well trained to conduct research in research centers, to work in the Church, in public and private schools, or to occupy other posts in society that value a wider base of knowledge and critical thought, elements which characterize the successful graduates of the Department of Social Theology and Study of Religion. This became clear after meeting with external stakeholders, social partners, and external co-workers, and receiving their positive recommendations.

The students' progress is regularly monitored at different stages of the study programme. Many students do not sit for exams on a regular basis because of their need to work in parallel with their studies. After interviewing students, graduates, and stakeholders, the committee received assurance that the programme generally fulfils its mission.

Regarding the relevant regulatory framework, there are two administrative boards for the internal control of the quality of the programme, namely OMEA and MODIP. The EEAP held meetings with members of OMEA and MODIP, and the evaluations received from both seemed satisfactory.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The component focusing on the Study of Religion has made a promising start and the EEAP recommends that they continue their good work by incorporating more courses specific to the study of the world's major religious traditions.

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 are the focus of the undergraduate program and are systematically encouraged to become active participants in the learning process. Students are also encouraged to take initiatives to enhance their process of learning. Interviews with students have shown that they are considered as active partners during their academic careers. This contributes to the formation of bonds between students and teachers which are deepened further when students are encouraged to participate as partners in the academic life of the Department. A student - centered approach and a general climate of mutual respect is notable as well as the high quality of teaching available to students.

An example of the Department's flexibility and openness is the large number of optional and semi-optional courses which allow students to design to a large extent their own curriculum in a way that suits their academic interests and their professional goals. Apart from individual choices when selecting courses, teamwork is highly encouraged. Cooperation, mutual understanding, and working towards a common purpose in the development of a project is the outcome of teamwork.

The Department members serve as Student Advisors on a rotating basis. Every Advisor provides students with information concerning course requirements, the schedule, registration, and the length of their studies. In cases where a dispute arises in relation to the fairness and accuracy of the examinations, a special examination committee may be formed in accordance with the Department's regulations.

The Department follows a system of course evaluation conducted by students by means of digital questionnaires. The process is carried out anonymously. The questionnaire is almost entirely based on the standard questionnaire designed by the HAHE, with some necessary adaptations.

The faculty place a lot of effort into conducting seminars to address the current demands of society. Instructors tailor their pedagogical material to the needs and levels of individual students by fostering practical exercises to complement the theoretical side of their courses. With regard to e-learning and e-classroom, an overall good condition was noticed by the EEAP, including some ways to encourage students to benefit from Erasmus Exchange Programmes and other academic opportunities abroad.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

In addition to the questionnaires administered to graduating students, the Department might consider formulating a survey administered to alumni a few years after their graduation. This questionnaire could yield valuable and insightful results, given the time elapsed since graduation allowing for a distant and more mature perspective on the whole curriculum.

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

Admission of students to the Department is based on examinations conducted across the Greek state. Students gain entrance in the programme by following examination procedures specific to the Greek educational system or based on qualifying examinations. Regarding the first form of examinations, it is noted that the Department of Social Theology and Study of Religion ranks first in the preferences of new students the past two years, in comparison with other theology departments in Greece.

The Department's Undergraduate Programme comprises a wide variety of courses, most of which are compulsory, some compulsory-elective, and others completely optional. The percentage of courses representing the two major academic orientations, social theology and the study of religion, is roughly equal. Since 2015, students are also given the opportunity to acquire pedagogical teaching competence.

The Department has a system in place for welcoming new students that facilitates their familiarization with the Department's curriculum. The information about the study programme and the organization of the Department is easily accessible through the Department's website (see Student Handbook). Alongside welcoming orientation sessions, incoming students are assigned to student advisors who aid them in their academic studies. Regarding student affairs, the teaching staff of the Department as well as its secretariat deals with students' issues efficiently and to a large degree electronically. The department has several electronic service bases and facilities available to students (η-ΤΑΞΗ, ΕΥΔΟΞΟΣ, OPENCOURSES, ΚΑΛΛΙΠΟΣ, ΨΗΦΙΑΚΟ ΑΡΧΕΙΟ – with only the first service existing in 2013, when the last external evaluation took place).

The connection between students and teaching staff is very satisfactory, and the students are supported by various means. The Department has access to both scholarships offered by the

University and its own scholarships through donations left to the Department by outstanding former professors.

The Department encourages the participation of teachers and student through international programmes. This enhances its attractiveness and effectiveness and attests to its strong outreach policies. The Department also places emphasis on the practical skills and internship experience of its students in view of their future professional careers and the absorption of its graduates in the wider labour market.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

Student international mobility (in the context of Erasmus or other bilateral university agreements) should be continued and strengthened, despite various limitations imposed, for example, by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, deficits in foreign language skills, economic reasons and so forth.

The Department ought to launch a student survey to investigate the reasons of a high percentage of inactive students and students who do not meet the requirements for graduation.

Principle 5: Teaching Staff

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

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

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

Study Programme Compliance

Teaching staff is recruited according to the procedures set up by the Ministry of Education. A high number of candidates indicated that there is trust in the process, but it not the task of the AP committee to assess the transparency of the recruitment and promotion process especially if group teacher interviews are conducted. HAHE may seriously consider in future Departmental evaluations to ensure that there is no conflict of interest between EEAP panel members and the Department (i.e., past graduates of the Department) and that teachers are interviewed individually to allow freedom of expression without the constrains of pressure in a group setting. Policies to attract qualified academic staff are not different from those in other Greek Universities, but it is not clear whether departmental incentives are offered to attract internationally qualified teaching staff especially as it pertains to the Department's new academic orientation towards Religious Studies. It may be a strain on existing teaching staff to adjust their teaching and research to match the Religious Studies component of the curriculum.

Most members of the teaching staff are research-active and properly qualified. They are eager to strengthen the link between research, knowledge exchange, and teaching. Since research and teaching skills are considered for the promotion of staff, the importance of teaching and research seems to be recognized, and there is a fair balance between male and female faculty.

The teaching workload of the teaching staff is like that of their colleagues both nationally and internationally and does not impede their engagement in research activities. It may be the case that the faculty's research activities may be affected by the Department's ongoing contributions to the ecclesiastical body and the local society which can be a time-consuming task. Knowledge-exchange among stakeholders is an area where the Department excels. The Department is very active in organizing conferences and seminar talks by inviting scholars from Greece and abroad.

The AP acknowledges that the number of conferences and seminar talks organized by the Department is impressive by international standards.

The Department actively supports and encourages the professional development of its academic staff in several ways, such as: (a) through their integration into research labs; (b) the resources provided by the well-equipped library of the University; (c) mobility within the framework of Erasmus exchanges; (d) sabbatical leaves spent in and bonds created with academic institutions world-wide.; (e) constantly evaluating their performance as teachers by the questionnaires that students must fill out during the final weeks of a course taught. The use of new technology in classroom is satisfactory and innovation of teaching methods is encouraged. The Department prides itself in the use of new technologies and theology and there are notable initiatives towards that direction. The members of the teaching staff are regularly evaluated by their students, however the percentage of students filling the questionnaires is below expected levels.

Although the Department endeavours to develop a comprehensive research strategy and increase the quality and quantity of the research output within the academic unit, its research profile should be further enhanced. The Department ought to set clear goals on how to increase the number of publications in refereed journals which according the 2020 census amounts to half of the publications.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

Based on the current course offerings and expertise of the teaching faculty, a broader orientation beyond a theological approach to the study of religion could be more inclusive of the range and type of courses offered by Religious Studies departments benchmarked according to existing programs internationally.

Several teaching staff have so far obtained impressive publications, but the general impression is that more international publications should be secured in the future.

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 Dean and the Department's members and staff guided the EEAP members in a tour of the Department's facilities: the building, its lecture halls, conference rooms, the library, the live streaming multi-media rooms, five laboratories, the Chapel of the Faculty, the Museum of the Faculty of Theology, the open-air theatre, the students' resting areas, and selected offices of the Department's members. The whole building complex is now completely free of any graffiti and posters – contrary to the deplorable condition of other buildings of the NCUA. The facilities are user friendly for people with special needs.

The EEAP observed that the Department has invested substantial funds to renovate the infrastructure of the building and the facilities of the faculty. The Department is well-equipped and offers digital learning tools to facilitate student-centred learning and assure that students have an overall enjoyable and effective learning experience. The Department regularly plans academic activities, such as conferences, trips, cultural events, and many other events. All these resources and activities are well advertised and communicated to all students through various means, electronic and otherwise.

The secretariat is open to the public and students daily. Online support is available, and the overall work is processed mostly electronically. The library is in good condition and equipped with many computers and adequate facilities for teaching and research. The library has ca. 120.000 volumes, and a wide range of digital resources is available to students and teaching staff. Had the Department better financial resources, it could make additional acquisitions every

year. The electronic catalogue of the library is very helpful. Students and the Department's members expressed their satisfaction from the resources offered.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

None.

Principle 7: Information Management

INSTITUTIONS BEAR FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR COLLECTING, ANALYSING AND USING INFORMATION, AIMED AT THE EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT OF UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES OF STUDY AND RELATED ACTIVITIES, IN AN INTEGRATED, EFFECTIVE AND EASILY ACCESSIBLE WAY.

Institutions are expected to establish and operate an information system for the management and monitoring of data concerning students, teaching staff, course structure and organisation, teaching and provision of services to students as well as to the academic community.

Reliable data is essential for accurate information and for decision making, as well as for identifying areas of smooth operation and areas for improvement. Effective procedures for collecting and analysing information on study programmes and other activities feed data into the internal system of quality assurance.

The information gathered depends, to some extent, on the type and mission of the Institution. The following are of interest:

- *key performance indicators*
- *student population profile*
- *student progression, success and drop-out rates*
- *student satisfaction with their programme(s)*
- *availability of learning resources and student support*
- *career paths of graduates*

A number of methods may be used for collecting information. It is important that students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.

Study Programme Compliance

The Department makes full use of the information management tools developed by the University to support the operation of the Faculties/Schools and the implementation of the Internal Quality Assurance System. Utilizing these tools and systems, the Department reliably monitors the data of students and the teaching staff, its administrative structure, and organization of courses, but also caters to opportunities for students towards the labour market. The information collected is then used to continuously improve the overall operation of the Department. From this point of view, the Department takes into serious consideration the multinational and multi-religious structure of contemporary Greek society.

Data of the teaching and research staff is stored in a physical archive kept at the library. The same data is uploaded on the MODIP Quality Management System, the staff's pages available on the Department's website. The Department is a pioneer in its effort to promote and disseminate its research work, with a series of publishing initiatives available free of charge to students (publication of conference proceedings, workshops etc.) and multimedia productions (with its own YouTube channel "SocTheol Prime"), which not only enhance the overall digital and physical presence of the Department, but also constitute reference for similar initiatives of other University Departments. It is notably that the Department has two international journals,

namely, the annual and online journal Theophany, from 2019, and the journal Salt: Crossroads of Religion and Culture, available since 2022.

Data concerning the Undergraduate Programme is uploaded on the Department's website, the MODIP Quality Management System and the e-Study Guide, the e-learning platform, the classroom schedule e-management, the e-Secretariat, and the reports of the online assessment of students.

All information collected from the physical archive and the electronic systems mentioned above is used to compile reports and determine quality indicators on staff and students, as well as the educational, research, and operational processes of the Department, enabling their long-term monitoring and evaluation, with the aim of improving the quality of courses and research work, as well as the curriculum.

The Department hosts foreign students from Europe, Africa and Latin America (89 students) with scholarships offered by the Orthodox Church of Greece and the Ministry of external affairs.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

None.

Principle 8: Public Information

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD PUBLISH INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR TEACHING AND ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES WHICH IS CLEAR, ACCURATE, OBJECTIVE, UP-TO-DATE AND READILY ACCESSIBLE.

Information on Institution's activities is useful for prospective and current students, graduates, other stakeholders and the public.

Therefore, institutions and their academic units provide information about their activities, including the programmes they offer, the intended learning outcomes, the qualifications awarded, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to their students, as well as graduate employment information.

Study Programme Compliance

Information on the Department's activities is useful for prospective and current students, graduates, stakeholders, and the public. The Department provides current information on its activities, including the academic programmes it offers, intended learning outcomes, certificates awarded, teaching faculty, learning and assessment procedures used, the pass rates and learning opportunities available to students, as well as employment information for its graduates. It publishes information, which is accurate and easily accessible. The panel members are pleased to report that the Department's platform is well-connected with the University's website that is available in both languages, English and Greek. It also includes for the most part CVs of current teaching staff. Notable is the presence of the Department on the LinkedIn platform, which aids a more intensive connection with other social media and the professional world and provides accurate information for a broader audience featuring links with other academic programmes through webinars and a variety of workshops offered in the Departmental website.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The EEAP recommends that the Department standardizes the CVs and research output of all current teaching staff.

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 of Social Theology and Study of Religion has an internal quality assurance system for monitoring, reviewing and revising its Study Programme. The OMEA, in collaboration with MODIP, is responsible for reviewing the Department's performance and presenting them for discussion in staff meetings. Based on these results, modifications are made to improve the teaching quality and research activities of the Department.

According to the information submitted by MODIP, the Department adheres consistently and vigorously to the guidelines that mandate the regular self-assessment of its study programme and its overall operation. Its internal assessment team (OMEA) is constituted with representatives from all professorial rankings and is responsible for collecting relevant data in collaboration with the quality assurance unit (MODIP) of the University. These committees are involved in processing the data and consider steps aimed at improving its teaching, research, and administrative operations. The collaboration between the OMEA and the MODIP seems to be collegial and fruitful based on the assessment reports from 2016-2021 reviewed by the EEAP panel.

All genuine efforts are made by the Department so that the undergraduate curriculum is adjusted according to the changing needs of Greek society and the demands for specific training in the workplace. This is reflected in terms of the content and types of courses offered. The current programme features innovative courses that enrich the curriculum, cultivate professional skills, and create possibilities for interdisciplinary collaboration. The criteria that have led to such revisions reflect a dynamic and developing relationship between, on the one hand, current trends in scholarship and, on the other, the acknowledgement of the practical needs of the students.

The student's workload is comparable to similar Programmes internationally. It is hard to assess the students' annual progression and degree completion given the very low percentage of students completing the evaluations of their teachers and courses. The learning environment provided by the Department is conducive for learning and the teachers have shown genuine enthusiasm for their research and teaching activities.

Concerning the employability of its graduates, the Department should be praised for conducting its own survey-based research (focus groups) in 2022 to assess the employment of its graduates based on the skills they acquired during their studies at the Department vis-a-vis the demands of the workplace. The results have shown that a high percentage of the graduates were satisfied to a high degree with the critical thinking skills they acquired during their study as well as with their ability to relate to other disciplines. 73,4% displayed high satisfaction of the curriculum. The survey confirms the findings of the EEAP mentioned in the present report for the need, as expressed also by the students, to learn in depth about religious traditions other than Christianity. Although the students voiced their concern that the current curriculum did not adequately equip them with practical skills that they could apply to the workforce, only 25% of the graduates surveyed were unemployed, with a high ratio of 53,2% being fully employed.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- Continue to monitor closely with focus-groups the employability, needs and satisfaction rate of its graduates by utilizing various means including maintaining an active alumni association for conducting surveys and fostering ties with the academic community.
- Expand the current teaching curriculum to cover in depth other religious traditions.
- Provide students with more practical skills that they can apply in the workplace.

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 first external evaluation of the Department in 2013 led to making appropriate changes towards improving identified areas of weakness. It seems that the suggestions and recommendations made by the Evaluation Committee in 2013 have been taken seriously by the Department resulting in subsequent changes. The most important change occurred in the year 2020 with the renaming of the Department to "Department of Social Theology and Study of Religion". Following this new line of teaching and research the Department renewed and reformulated its study programme. Methods of digital teaching and learning were adopted as well as the wide use of electronic means of communication. The consistent efforts made by the Department to improve notable areas of weakness must be fully acknowledged.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

None.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

- Willingness and enthusiasm of the academic staff to shape its Study Programme to address contemporary culture and concerns of modern society.
- Good infrastructure in terms of teaching classes, offices, and laboratories.
- Teaching staff committed to actively participate in international academic events.
- Intensive and regular communication with students encouraging them to active engagement in the affairs of the Department.
- Collaboration of the Department with institutions of the Orthodox Church, social stakeholders, research centers, and organizations of social care.
- Readiness of the Department to apply recommendations given by external evaluation panels.
- Awareness that the Department's relatively new academic orientation is under development.

II. Areas of Weakness

- Several teaching staff not sufficiently qualified to teach subjects related to the study of other religious traditions.
- Lack of a clear academic profile concerning the direction of its current study programme.
- A notable problem in the progression and completion of studies by its current registered students.
- A low number of students taking advantage of Erasmus mobility programmes.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

- Develop its study programme in the direction of other religious traditions in accordance with expertise of its teaching staff.
- Improve the academic coherence of its undergraduate curriculum.
- Hire qualified teaching staff according to a set of clear programme goals and learning outcomes.
- Encourage and train students to benefit from Erasmus Exchange programme.
- Substantially increase the participation rate of students in course evaluations.
- Increase the faculty's rate of publications in peer-reviewed journals according to international benchmarking standards.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: **1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10.**

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: **5.**

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

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

Overall Judgement	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname

Signature

- 1. Prof. Predrag Dragutinović (Chair)**
University of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia

- 2. Prof. Ion Croitoru**
Valahia University of Târgoviște, Târgoviște, Romania

- 3. Prof. Jack Khalil**
University of Balamand, Tripoli, Lebanon

- 4. Dr. Georgios Halkias**
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