Accreditation Report
for the Undergraduate Study Programme of:

International and European Studies
Institution: University of Piraeus
Date: 11 July 2020

Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the Undergraduate Study Programme of **International and European Studies** of the **University of Piraeus** for the purposes of granting accreditation

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

2

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

3

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 **International and European Studies** of the **University of Piraeus** comprised the following four members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

1. **Assoc. Prof. Dimitris Tsarouhas** (Chair), Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey

2. **Dr. Panos Konandreas**, Trade Policy Plus, Geneva, Switzerland

3. **Assoc. Prof. Victor Roudometof**, University of Cyprus, Republic of Cyprus

4. **Prof. Yannis Stivachtis**, Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, Virginia, USA

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

4

II.   Review Procedure and Documentation

The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel (EEAP) conducted the activities required for the accreditation process of the undergraduate program of International and European Studies at the University of Piraeus between July 6th and July 11th 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the entire process was conducted via teleconferencing and not through the physical presence of panel members on campus.

In preparation, the EEAP reviewed the External Evaluation Report (EER) produced by the External Evaluation Committee in January 2014 and the Department's Proposal for Accreditation along with supportive documentation, provided to the EEAP by HAHE.

On July 2nd, the HAHE offered a videoconference presentation and Power Point presentation that provided the relevant information to guide the EEAP with regard to the requirements and considerations necessary for the entire process. The EEAP members met via teleconferencing prior to the visit and agreed on the division of labor among them. The process begun on July 6th through videoconferences with the University's Vice-Rector/President of the Institutional Unit of Quality Assurance (MODIP) Professor Pantelis Pantelidis and the Department's Chair Professor Aristotle Tziampiris. Next, the EEAP met with OMEA's members and MODIP's staff and afterwards with teaching staff and student representatives.

On July 7th, the EEAP begun with an on-line tour of classrooms, lecture halls, libraries laboratories, and other facilities. This was followed by a discussion with the administrative & teaching staff members about the facilities presented in the video produced for this purpose. Next, the EEAP members conducted a teleconference with teaching staff members & current students and alumni. Lastly, the EEAP members had a virtual meeting with the Vice-Rector, Department Chair, OMEA & MODIP members, during which an informal presentation of initial general findings and conclusions took place.

All meetings were conducted in a courteous and professional manner. The data provided during the presentations were detailed, comprehensive, accurate, and representative of the Department's academic performance and its self-evaluation process. Overall, the EEAP confirms that the Department has largely followed up on recommendations made by the 2014 external evaluation committee. The Department has embraced the process of continuing improvement, and is open to recommendations and suggestions, which it attempts to implement with sincerity and purpose.

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

5

III. Study Programme Profile

The undergraduate program of the Department of International and European Studies operates since 2000. The Department was evaluated by an external committee in March 2014. According to the Department's April 2019 Progress Report, the Department undertook a series of changes in accordance with the 2014 recommendations. According to the said report, 87.5% of the recommendations made have been implemented. Some of them refer to the Department at large rather than just its undergraduate programme.

Of importance for the undergraduate program in particular are: (i) the revision of the undergraduate curriculum and the introduction of a new curriculum effective from the 2016-2017 academic year; and (ii) the reduction of teaching hours from approximately 12-14 to approximately 6 hours per faculty per week.

According to the 2018-2019 departmental Guide, the new curriculum consists of coursework that amounts to a total of 240 ECTS credits, distributed over a four-year period (eight semesters). There are 24 compulsory courses (which consist of four contact hours per week) and 20 elective courses (which consist of three contact hours per week). The elective courses are organized into three thematic units: International Studies, European Studies and International Economics. The compulsory courses are worth 5 ECTS while the elective ones 6 ECTS. Upon graduation, students receive a B.A. in International and European Studies.

An internship (πρακτική άσκηση) is included in the options made available to students. Students, Faculty and stakeholders benefit from specific guidelines as to the implementation of the internship.

There do not appear to be required courses for foreign languages or computer literacy & information technologies. Incoming students are examined in English during their entrance examinations and the Department considers that they are all fluent in English. It also offers them specialized instruction in scientific terminology in English.

Based on the information provided by the Department, undergraduate enrollment is relatively stable, ranging from 186 in 2008-2009 to 165 in 2017-2018, with a peak of 199 in 2014-2015. According to the figures provided by the Department, most incoming undergraduate students enter through the nation-wide entrance examinations, with only small numbers entering the program by alternative means (transfers, special categories, etc.). Over recent years, the examination scores of incoming students have improved and the Department considers this to be a reflection of obtaining students of higher quality. Since 2014, the Department ranks first among IR Departments in the country in incoming student preferences.

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

6

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

Principle 1: Academic Unit Policy for Quality Assurance

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

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

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

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

a) the suitability of the structure and organization of the curriculum;

b) the pursuit of learning outcomes and qualifications in accordance with the European and the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education;

c) the promotion of the quality and effectiveness of teaching;

d) the appropriateness of the qualifications of the teaching staff;

e) the enhancement of the quality and quantity of the research output among faculty members of the academic unit;

f) ways for linking teaching and research;

g) the level of demand for qualifications acquired by graduates, in the labour market;

h) the quality of support services such as the administrative services, the Library, and the student welfare office;

i) the conduct of an annual review and an internal audit of the quality assurance system of the undergraduate programme(s) offered, as well as the collaboration of the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) with the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU).

Study Programme Compliance

The Department has a well-defined Quality Assurance Policy (QAP) appropriate for its mission and activities. Purpose and goals are communicated clearly to students, faculty, staff and stakeholders. The QAP includes commitment to continuous improvement through the use of qualitative and quantitative indicators pertaining to student performance, faculty performance, and the Department's national and international academic standing.

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

7

Following the 2014 evaluation carried out under the auspices of the then ADIP (Quality Assurance Authority), the Department has substantially revised the structure and organization of the curriculum in order to align it with similar programs offered in other European Universities. In particular, the revision of the undergraduate curriculum in 2016 and its implementation beginning in the 2017-18 academic year has enhanced the suitability of the program with the learning outcomes set out in the European and National Qualifications framework.

The promotion of quality and effectiveness of teaching is of outmost importance and is communicated to all staff. Faculty receive feedback from the Department Chair regarding student evaluations on a regular basis. These evaluations are also taken into consideration for Faculty promotion. Hybrid teaching methods are employed, using ICTs extensively (see *e-class* platform). Such methods are particularly significant for students when physical presence is inhibited, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Teaching staff qualifications are ensured by the application of procedures provided by law. The EEAP has determined that most faculty members not only hold minimum qualifications but in many cases exceed them. In this connection, the EEAP also noted with satisfaction the sizable volume of research output produced by the Department. The mix of established Professors and upcoming junior faculty provides for an active research environment. The establishment of ten Research Laboratories over the past few years has enhanced research output further, strengthening the Department's research-oriented culture.

Teaching is well linked to research. Following the curriculum revision, faculty members mostly teach in their areas of expertise. Additionally, the number of courses required for graduation has been reduced from 64 to 44.

In its meeting with representatives of stakeholders and alumni, the EEAP has determined that the graduates' qualifications allow them to obtain employment in both the public and private sector. It is notable that a number of alumni are employed in prestigious international organizations or private firms. The EEAP has been impressed by the high esteem and appreciation in which both stakeholders and graduates hold the Department.

The EEAP has verified that administration services, library, student welfare and counseling units offer their services in a professional and satisfactory manner.

In regular and annual meetings, the OMEA (Internal Evaluation Group), in collaboration with the University's MODIP (Quality Assurance Unit) reviews and internally audits the quality assurance system and proceeds with improvements, as necessary. OMEA goals are measurable, achievable and relevant to the study program. This is especially true in respect of teaching methods, student satisfaction, learning outcomes and research output. These goals are regularly monitored and updated, allowing for their timely implementation.

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

8

Panel Judgement

Principle 1: Institution Policy for Quality Assurance	
Fully compliant	**X**
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The EEAP is impressed by the meticulous preparation of OMEA in anticipation of our visit and report. This appears to be the result of consistent hard work going back several years. We wish to congratulate OMEA for its commitment to improving the unit's results.

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

9

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 EEAP has determined that the study program has been designed based on appropriate, relevant and suitable standards. It considers relevant factors pertaining to the Department's overall goals and strategic objectives. In particular, the study program helps students develop critical skills and enhances their employability.

Students participate in the curriculum design, albeit indirectly and without explicit input. Nevertheless, student evaluations play a role in curriculum development. The revised curriculum enhances student participation in creating their own program of studies during the 3rd and 4th year, during which all courses are elective. The curriculum is therefore rationally structured and clearly articulated, providing students with foundational knowledge over their first 4 semesters and allowing for flexibility and specialization thereafter.

The EEAP has noted that the Department cooperates extensively with external stakeholders from both the public and private sector. This is done mostly through internship positions offered to students. Stakeholders are well versed in the Department's work and their mission is generally in line with the Department. Internship is an option for all students. The Department encourages students to benefit from the internship, and many students choose to take it. In theory the

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

10

internship can take place at any time during the year, however, most students opt to make use of it over July and August to avoid conflicts with coursework. The e-platform available to Department students pertaining to the internship (*e-πρακτική*) is an extremely useful tool for students and employers, facilitating interaction and allowing for a satisfying internship experience.

The EEAP has met virtually with students from almost all years of undergraduate study. As the accreditation took place over the summer exam period, a student representing 2nd year students was not available. Students ascertained their satisfaction with the program, regardless of whether they follow the revised curriculum or the old one. The anticipated workload is in line with the ECTS system; each semester provides for 30 ECTS credits and the credits offered are justified by learning outcomes.

Teaching is well linked with research. As noted on principle 1 above, Faculty mostly teach courses in their fields of expertise.

The regulatory framework, as set out in the HAHE mandate, facilitates the application of internal official procedures to redesign the curriculum. This was demonstrated by the major curriculum revision undertaken in 2016 and introduced in the 2017-18 academic year. This framework offers Faculty the opportunity to introduce their own experiences and knowledge onto the curriculum.

The curriculum compares favorably to equivalent programs abroad. It is rich and comprehensive. It is particularly useful for students wishing to pursue a career in the country's diplomatic service. Upon entering the Department, students attend an orientation meeting about the Department and the program. They are also informed about their program of studies through a student guide distributed to them. The guide is complete, concise and appropriate. Students can consult the Department's academic advisor who offers them guidance and clarifications to their questions.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

External stakeholders are informally consulted by the Department regarding program changes. Their views, especially as regards the needs of the labor market, could potentially be taken into consideration through formal or institutionalized means.

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

11

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

With respect to teaching, the EEAP finds that the Department utilizes a student-centered approach. It has adopted and seeks to further develop a variety of flexible pedagogical methods, such as presentations, written assignments, in-class discussions and case studies. Several courses require assignments above and beyond the standard final exam.

All incoming students must attend a Library training session that helps them become familiar with available tools and resources necessary for future coursework.

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

12

A variety of teaching methods is evident, allowing for diversity in course delivery beyond the standard face-to-face instruction. These include pairing students to work together in available computer labs, simulations and case studies. The recently adopted curriculum has facilitated an even more student-centered approach. Students are now able to design the last 2 years of their program by opting for elective courses they are most interested in. Student-centeredness is further encouraged by use of *e-class*, a particularly useful interactive software tool. Through *e-class*, faculty interact with students digitally, not least by uploading course material, essay assignments and lab work. Course syllabi are available to students in advance of course commencement, as are the various course evaluation criteria. The usefulness of such digital interaction during the COVID-19 pandemic was highlighted by faculty and students alike.

Student surveys are regularly used and allow for course and faculty evaluation. This forms part of a University-wide practice institutionalized over time. The Department collects aggregated data and makes use of them. Overall, available data suggests high levels of satisfaction among students regarding course content and faculty performance. On average, the Department scores higher than the rest of the University's departments in most metrics. The Department Chairs, past and present, seek to address gaps in delivery and/or inadequate faculty performance by use of informal consultations with the faculty member(s) in question. Faculty members discuss student evaluation surveys with the Department Chair at the end of term as appropriate.

Interview data demonstrate close interaction between faculty and students, with the former acting as informal mentors offering support in course selection, attendance of conferences, workshops, and other departmental events. Faculty is very active in hosting and organizing high-profile events, mostly at University premises. Respect between faculty and students is evidenced through their joint participation in national and international academic activities. Students benefit from internships set up in partnership between the University and social partners. Social partners record a high level of satisfaction with University/Department students undertaking internships. They hold University of Piraeus students in general, and the Department's in particular, in high esteem for their soft skills and critical abilities.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The Department could strengthen the existing student advising system. The current system foresees one or more advisors for all students rotating each year. The Department should instead pair all faculty with students who will mentor them throughout their studies.

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

13

It is unclear whether and how non-academic student complaints are addressed. The Department is encouraged to clarify its approach on such issues in consultation with University authorities and the Counselling Center.

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

14

Principle 4: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification

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

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

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

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

Study Programme Compliance

The Department has drafted and approved internal rules and procedures aiming at students' smooth academic progression. This includes support for students in their transition from high school to university and from university to the labor market.

New entrants are offered necessary information at their orientation sessions, in the first week of each academic year, informing them about the content of the four-year (8 semesters) study program, the teaching staff, Laboratories, Secretariat support, opportunities for mobility in partner universities abroad (Erasmus Program) and internship opportunities both in Greece and abroad (Erasmus Placement). They are also guided on information available in the Department's (and University of Piraeus) websites of activities, including academic events (speeches, workshops and conferences), professors' office hours, etc.

The undergraduate program is coherent and functional. It responds to the specificity of the Department's subjects and the need to provide both interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary education. Following the 2016 overhaul, the undergraduate curriculum has been structured into "core courses" (during 1st and 4th semesters) and "elective courses" (during 5th to 8th semesters). A major innovation in the restructured curriculum is the substantial increase in elective courses from 12.5% to 45.5%, while the percentage of core courses decreased to 54.5%. This allows students to pursue an individualized curriculum that provides them with a degree of differentiation in their orientation, enhancing their prospects in the labor market and/or postgraduate specialization. "Skills development" courses (language courses, computer courses, seminar) that students may take do not count towards their required credit[1]. However, they are included in the Diploma Supplement as additional workload.

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[1] The Curriculum also provides specialized language courses on the EU, International Organizations, Intercultural Communication, Translation and the Media, which in combination with e-learning labs allows for the development of academic skills such as project writing, presentation skills and bibliography research.

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

15

The undergraduate curriculum does not include the option of a thesis, although students can undertake assignments within the framework of their courses. The Department offers methodology courses that familiarize students with the research process and there are opportunities for students to prepare written assignments. Also, students may participate in research in the 10 Research Laboratories of the Department (see principle 6) and e-learning workshops to develop skills such as project work, oral presentations, and appropriate use of literature (avoiding plagiarism).

The coherence and functionality of the curriculum (including avoidance of overlaps) is monitored by the relevant committee under the auspices of the Department.

Students have the opportunity to take part in student exchange activities. After completing their first study year, they can take advantage of opportunities under the Erasmus and Erasmus Plus programs to study for one or two semesters at a university abroad. An institutionalized process of matching the Department's courses with near-equivalent ones at the host university takes place, in accordance with the principles of the Lisbon Academic Qualifications Recognition Convention.

Student mobility is particularly important as it allows them to enrich their academic knowledge, develop new skills and qualifications, improve language skills and develop intercultural competences. Financial support for Erasmus Program participants is provided by the European Commission and managed by the University's Office of International and Public Relations. That Office also publishes selection criteria and, in collaboration with the Department's Erasmus Exchange Coordinator, informs students about relevant universities and departments abroad. The Coordinator evaluates applications and the results are posted at the Department's website.

The Department offers students an optional internship program. Internships last for 2 months and are considered a standard elective course. Current students and alumni interviewed by EEAP spoke with enthusiasm about their Internship experience. They all considered it an important vehicle to gain hands-on experience, thus enhancing their opportunities in the labor market. Similarly, positive sentiments were expressed by the stakeholders interviewed by the EEAP. They praised the high quality of interns, the transparency of the selection process and the benefits accrued to all concerned. This positive assessment of the internship program has been documented in the regular evaluation of the program by the interns themselves, the stakeholders and the Department.

The internship program is exclusively funded by EU sources, namely the Εταιρικό Σύμφωνο για το Πλαίσιο Ανάπτυξης (ESPA). The selection process is highly competitive. Given scarcity of resources, there is a limit on the number of students that take part. This may result in unanticipated biases in stakeholder selection. Students might opt for large successful entities and less for SMEs and start-ups, where student Internships could also be mutually beneficial. To the extent that ESPA resources limit program expansion, ways may be explored to increase funding, including accepting contributions from stakeholders. These contributions should not be used for extra student remuneration but be added to the general pool of internship resources. Discrepancies in interns' remuneration and monetary incentives in the choice of a host stakeholder could thus be avoided.

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

16

The Department may award distinctions and prizes to students, provided that relevant funding exists. Recognizing excellence, including via non-financial means, is a highly esteemed practice in many universities. The Department could consider expanding this praiseworthy practice by granting non-monetary awards to excelling students.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- To the extent that ESPA resources limit expansion of the internship program and in line with the existing legal and regulatory framework, ways may be explored for increasing internship funding, including accepting contributions from participating Stakeholders.
- The Department could consider expanding the practice of awarding distinctions and prizes to excelling students by granting non-monetary awards.

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

17

Principle 5: Teaching Staff

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

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

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

Study Programme Compliance

The Department's teaching staff is well equipped to carry out its teaching and research responsibilities. Several faculty also teach in the Diplomatic Academy and in various Military Academies. Furthermore, some faculty members act as advisors to state authorities. These interlocking positions contribute to close links between academia and policymaking.

The high number of elective courses (24 out of a total 44 courses) allows for a close connection between teaching and the faculty's research and expertise. The teaching workload is appropriate and is distributed in a way that allows for active research by faculty members. The recently adopted curriculum change reduced the teaching workload and thus increased available research time. The high availability of elective courses also allows faculty to offer cutting-edge courses on high-profile current affairs.

Opportunities for faculty professional development and financial resources to attend conferences and similar events are available. The Department has a well-established culture of facilitating sabbatical leave for faculty.

The Department has identified key research areas reflected in the establishment and function of 10 Research Laboratories. It pairs these research areas with available elective courses. The EEAP was told by faculty that Research Laboratories have enhanced research output by strengthening intra-departmental research.

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

18

Students evaluate the teaching staff through a University-wide evaluation procedure. Faculty participate in staff mobility through the Erasmus and the Erasmus Teaching Mobility Programs. Diverse teaching methods are incorporated in course syllabi and interactive learning is encouraged by use of the *e-class* platform.

Faculty recruitment is regulated by law and the Department complies with relevant legislation. New hiring is subject to financial and external constraints. In its teaching and research, junior faculty is research active and innovative. It is also assisted in its promotion efforts by more senior Professors through their cooperation in the existing Research Laboratories.

Faculty has recently improved its performance in attracting external research funding. Currently, there is a Jean Monnet Chair in the Department, while faculty members participate in several externally funded projects. Obtaining external funding is one of the Department's major strengths. Since the 2014 External Evaluation Report, research funding has grown. Data shared by the Department with the EEAP indicate a growing number of national and international peer-reviewed publications, as well as frequent participation in major international conferences and workshops.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The Department's research culture could be enhanced by setting up "brown bag" research seminars. Such seminars could be informal, attended by faculty members and PhD students and allow for frank feedback on ongoing projects.
- The Department is encouraged to use international scholarly metrics (ISI Web of Science, Scopus and similar) to obtain and operationalize valid indicators for research output. This will increase the Department's international visibility.

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

19

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

According to the information available at the Department's website, the Department is currently staffed by 24 faculty members (10 Professors, 4 Associate Professors and 10 Assistant Professors). The student to faculty ratio is 24, which is considered very good by Greek standards.

The faculty is housed in two buildings in functional and well-equipped offices. The classrooms used by the Department are suitable, safe and well equipped. Occasional conflicts in classroom space are managed by advance planning. Administrative support is provided by an adequately staffed Secretariat (administrative staff and the special technical laboratory personnel). In addition to its opening hours, the Secretariat is also accessible electronically on a 24-hour basis through the platform (https://students.unipi.gr/) by use of a personal code.

All members of the academic community at the University of Piraeus enjoy ICT access and support provided by the technical support service (helpdesk). This includes the provision of free software for educational use. All University premises are covered by Wi-Fi wireless network. With respect to teaching aids, the University installed projectors in all classrooms in 2012. Subsequently, it provided faculty members with notebooks to incentivize the use of ICT in teaching. According to the Department's 2019 academic accreditation proposal, the Department does not have Computer Labs for exclusive use. Its relevant needs are served by the inter-departmental Computer Laboratories that operate on the ground floor of the University's Central Building. They are equipped with about 80 PCs distributed in 4 rooms.

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

20

The University Library plays a key role in supporting education and research. Its opening hours have been extended from 08.00hrs to 20.00hrs on working days. Students and staff consider that the organization and operation of the Library is satisfactory. In addition to the physical setting, its digital collection is rich and is considered a valuable source of information. People with special needs can access the Library reading rooms.

For new entrants, the Department organizes an orientation event to inform incoming students of all aspects of academic and student life. Foreign students receive special support. The Department is an enthusiastic supporter of mobility programs (see Principle 4). It also has an academic advisor, with its role and responsibilities covered in the study guide. Also, the University's Career Office (Γραφείο Διασύνδεσης) provides students with information, counseling and active support in preparing and finding employment in Greece and abroad as well as in the selection of postgraduate studies.

A distinctive element in the Department with potentially important implications for teaching and research are the ten Research Laboratories, spanning a variety of political, economic, social and technological issues of concern to society. They also offer unique opportunities to talented undergraduate students to deepen their knowledge in specific fields and be involved in potentially highly rewarding projects.

Non-academic student needs are addressed by the University of Piraeus at large. Active undergraduate students are eligible for a meal plan and annual housing allowance, both subject to means testing. The University offers medical services and a counseling center at its premises. Undergraduate students that lack medical coverage are entitled to full medical and hospital care in the National Health System (ESY). There are no sporting facilities, given space scarcity in the University, but a Sports Office offers intra-university group sports. Also, organized cultural groups offer students opportunities to pursue their artistic interests.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- While this goes beyond the Department and would require a change at the University level, consideration may be given to opening the University Library on Saturdays.
- The Department can help reinforce University policy on people with special needs by requesting the institutionalization of a relevant University-wide unit.

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

21

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 analyzing information and planning follow-up activities.

Study Programme Compliance

The Department is aware of the importance of collecting, analyzing, and utilizing data. Student evaluations are the main tool in measuring the pedagogical performance of faculty. These are based on a standardized questionnaire. The cumulative results for the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic years were made available to the EEAP. Students are asked to evaluate instructors in a number of areas, including the quality of lectures, clarity of syllabi, and their availability and concern for students. The instructors' performance is ranked on a 1-5 scale (the higher the better), but there is space for written comments, which unfortunately most students ignore. The evaluation follows strict University rules regarding anonymity and personal data protection. Instructors are prohibited from being in the classroom during evaluations.

The questionnaire's collected data suggests that students mark the overall performance of their instructors highly. Students' comments (both current and alumni) support these sentiments. According to students, attendance is high during the first year of study but often declines in subsequent semesters. Sometimes, students find it difficult to balance their part-time jobs or their daily commute with steady attendance. Attendance is higher in elective courses, especially after the introduction of the new curriculum.

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

22

Based on students' responses as reported in the standardized questionnaire, the overall ranking for the laboratories, for adjunct faculty, and for several indicators related to skill acquisition have scores around 3.00+. Several are higher than the university average. Of course, there is room for improvement and that could be a future goal.

In their meeting with the EEAP members, departmental alumni stressed the complementarity between their university coursework and their post-graduation activities (such as employment in NGOs or Greece's Foreign Service). It is particularly encouraging that an alumni association is currently in the works.

Based on the 2015-2017 alumni departmental survey, graduates perform relatively well in the job market. Only 10.64% have self-reported being unemployed and actively searching for a job. In the same survey, respondents expressed relatively high satisfaction with their undergraduate education, yet most of them state that their current job has little to do with their academic training. Only 37.14% report that their current job is sufficiently related to their studies. In other words, alumni prospects are largely a function of the overall labor market and of individual abilities or circumstances. It is indicative that only 29.2% state that their first job was related to their degree.

While most alumni consider their undergraduate studies helpful to their job search, their responses highlight the extent to which their employment had to do with foreign language skills, interpersonal communication, writing skills and technical capacities. This is quite common for numerous liberal arts degrees and is observed internationally. In other words, part of the reason for these figures is the gap that inevitably exists between the university and the "real world". The alignment of opinions between alumni and current students (as reported in the questionnaires made available to the EEAP) suggests that this is an area for further improvement.

There are many more female than male students in the Department. There are currently 167 male and 510 female students within the four-year regular range of their coursework. There are 43 males and 132 female students who have exceeded their normal 4-yr period by one year; 36 male and 87 female students who have exceeded their normal 4-yr period by two years; and 156 male and 317 female students who have exceeded their normal 4-yr period by more than two years. These figures appear to be relatively stable over time (as a cursory comparison between the 2019 and the 2015-2016 reports suggests). There are structural constrains in streamlining the student body, as the University does not have the legal power to expel students. This is a major issue that runs throughout Greece's higher education system.

Panel Judgement

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

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

23

Panel Recommendations

- The Department's future objective of offering a number of undergraduate courses in English is laudable. Accelerating the implementation of this change will strengthen the Department's international character.
- Given the usefulness of the 2015-17 Departmental alumni survey, the EEPA recommends that the Department carry out similar alumni surveys regularly. This could help, *inter alia*, benchmark the effectiveness of the new curriculum.

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

24

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

The Department provides a wealth of information on its academic and educational activities, as well as the learning and research opportunities it offers to its students, in a direct and accessible way. The main avenue of communication is the Departmental website (www.des.unipi.gr/el) which has been recently redesigned and updated[2]. Additional course-specific information is provided by the *e-class* platform (see below). Both faculty and members of the Secretariat provide information via e-mail on issues pertaining to the curriculum or other Departmental activities. The website is checked for its validity and updated by a relevant committee appointed by the Department.

The EEAP explored the publicly available information at the Department's website. Some shortcomings were identified. While the website claims to have information in both Greek and English, the coverage of the latter is minimal. In most cases clicks to English links bounce back to the Greek language version. Information on individual faculty is neither complete nor consistent. In many cases CVs are not available, neither is the research orientation and related research work of faculty. The Department's Newsletter has not been updated since the 2016-17 academic year, although it is meant to be updated semi-annually.

The EEAP requested and was kindly offered an online tour of the *e-class*, *classweb* and *e-πρακτική* platforms, which are encrypted and therefore not publicly available. The EEAP appreciates the OMEA's willingness to accommodate our request.

The *e-class* and *classweb* websites perform important roles in terms of the digital resources used for the operation of the program. The *e-class* platform (http://eclass.unipi.gr) directly supports the educational process by providing detailed course content, teaching and learning material and related bibliography, useful links and valid digital open access manuals The *classweb* platform (https://classweb.unipi.gr/) records registered students and their performance, providing students with personalized information about their education (grades, grading history, course statements, etc.) while reducing bureaucratic procedures. Also, other media that aid teaching

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[2] *Inter alia*, the website includes information on: structure and organization of the Department; faculty members; program of studies, curriculum per semester and basic course description; Study Guide and Study Regulations; educational and research activities inside and outside the Department (mobility programs, Internship); Laboratories, including links to those that have their own websites; events and activities (seminars, speeches, lectures, conferences); and information on the postgraduate programs offered by the Department.

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

25

and foster communication is the social networking systems (Facebook), *inter alia* being used as a discussion forum and solving questions posed by students on attended courses.

There is evidence of considerable faculty engagement in various outreach activities, including: YouTube; TV and radio programs; conferences; articles in electronic media and newspapers; panel participation, etc.

Finally, the Department provides extensive information to high-school seniors through special workshops on the prospects offered by their studies at the Department, with the view of attracting best talent through the National entrance examinations.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- While the Department's website contains a wealth of information on the curriculum and individual course content, essential information on faculty is missing. The EEAP further recommends more consistency in presenting information.
- The website needs to become truly bilingual considering the international academic profile of the Department and the desire for increasing its public outreach activities.
- The Newsletter should be updated regularly or be dropped if no longer of use. It is possible that newsletter material is already covered elsewhere in the website.

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

26

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 takes self-assessment seriously. Its OMEA has worked consistently over time as evidenced by the plethora of statistics available in the relevant Internal Assessment Report that can be accessed online. Since 2008-09, when the Department became autonomous, detailed metrics and indicators are used to assess the evolution of its performance over time. Quantitative indicators regarding Departmental ambitions on research output, graduation timeframe and much more are set and updated.

The 249-page relevant report is available in the Department's website. The data includes detailed presentation of scholarly publications and information about courses and various other activities, such as organizing symposia and lectures. Quality assessment as well as the external assessment report are also featured. In the EEPA's opinion, faculty appreciates the importance of student participation in departmental activities and seeks to further encourage it through the use of Research Laboratories, coursework, internships, conference organizing and informal mentoring.

The Department cooperates with the University's four-member career office and seeks ways to facilitate student involvement. The office offers assistance with event organization, posting announcements, and collecting data on University graduates. The office is a rich information and advice source for students on national and international internship placements, entrepreneurial opportunities, volunteering and scholarships for further study. Its well-resourced website enhances student experience and its added value was mentioned to EEAP members during the interviews.

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

27

Since 2017, the University has an alumni office. To date, the Department has no alumni association of its own, yet one appears to be on the making and is expected to become operational in the near future.

Since 2014, the Department prepares an annual self-assessment report of the study program. The outcomes of that report are properly recorded and submitted to MODIP. However, the report's findings are not adequately communicated, since the relevant website contains only limited information. The findings are shared within the Department and an action plan is regularly formulated. The Department's OMEA is strong, well organized and committed to fulfilling its mission. It does a very good job gathering and analyzing relevant data. OMEA seems to have a good and effective relationship with the University's MODIP.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The Department should communicate the rich work undertaken by its OMEA with reference to internal evaluation and monitoring more effectively. Although internal evaluation is conducted thoroughly and professionally, electronic access to relevant data is limited to a single report. Existing reports shared with the EEAP should be made available online.

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

28

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 Department has devoted time and resources to facilitate the EEAP's work. All requested data were promptly delivered, and OMEA members in particular have been more than willing to accommodate EEAP requests for further clarifications. Faculty members and administrative personnel have been courteous and cooperative throughout the review process. The Department is fully aware of the salience and potential contribution of the evaluation and accreditation process to the setup of its own goals and the improvement of its overall operations. The EEAP appreciates the Department's actions in facilitating its work under conditions of mutual respect amidst the adverse circumstances generated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent need to conduct the accreditation process exclusively through digital means.

The Department's 2014 External Evaluation Report (EER) includes recommendations to enhance student experience and add further value to faculty activities. The key recommendations call for curriculum innovation, the development of a strategic plan for the Department and the enhancement of research output.

The 2014 EER recommends reforming related policy to allow for more research time and address teaching overloads. Since 2014, the Department has complied by reducing the number of courses required for graduation, filling in teaching gaps and increasing the number of faculty members, which in turn has allowed for more equitable distribution of teaching responsibilities among faculty and addressing teaching overloads.

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

29

In the EEAP's view, the Department has complied with the 2014 EER recommendations by (a) undertaking a major curriculum revision in 2016, (b) enhancing its outreach activities as well as overall research output and (c) setting up an efficient OMEA collaborating closely with the University's MODIP, reinforcing the University's strategic orientation.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

Despite the fact that the Department is very young, since it became fully autonomous as recently as 2009, it has managed to create a track record of reform willingness and ambitious goal setting. The Department is encouraged to continue building on its past success. The concrete recommendations of this Report are expected to add further value to its overall operations. Some of the suggestions present in this Report, such as the setup of "brown bag" research seminars or the institutionalization of Departmental policy regarding research targets, are to be found in the EER of 2014 as well.

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

30

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I.   Features of Good Practice

- Active involvement in policy-making circles
- Strong outreach and engagement with relevant stakeholders
- Innovative internship program and related software
- Faculty availability/open-door policy to students
- Wide range of supplementary resources available to students
- Informative orientation process for incoming students
- Attractive, flexible and student-centered curriculum
- Quality of teaching
- Research laboratories linking teaching and research
- Readiness to cooperate and improve

II.   Areas of Weakness

- No option for senior thesis writing
- Student advising is unevenly distributed among faculty members
- Partial communication and dissemination of information
- Underdeveloped web presence, especially in English

III.   Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

- The Department should establish a student advising system by which each student is paired with an academic advisor.
- The Department should communicate the rich work undertaken by its OMEA with reference to internal evaluation and monitoring more effectively. Although internal evaluation is conducted thoroughly and professionally, electronic access to relevant data is limited to a single report. Existing reports shared with the EEAP should be made available online.
- The EEAP recommends more consistency in information delivery through the departmental website. Concretely, essential information on faculty is missing from the Department's website. Also, the website needs to become truly bilingual considering the international academic profile of the Department.
- The Newsletter should be updated regularly or be dropped if no longer of use.
- The EEAP recommends that the Department carry out regular alumni surveys.
- The Department can help reinforce University policy on people with special needs by requesting the institutionalization of a relevant University-wide unit.
- The Department's research culture could be enhanced by setting up "brown bag" research seminars.

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

31

- The Department is encouraged to use international scholarly metrics (ISI Web of Science, Scopus etc.) to obtain valid indicators for research output.
- In line with existing laws and regulations, ways may be explored for increasing internship funding, including accepting contributions from participating Stakeholders.
- The Department could consider expanding the practice of awarding distinctions and prizes to excelling students by granting non-monetary awards.
- The Department is encouraged to clarify its approach regarding student complaints on non-academic issues in consultation with University authorities and the counseling center.
- On curriculum revisions, the views of external stakeholders could potentially be taken into consideration through formal or institutionalized means.

IV.   Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where **full compliance** has been achieved are: **1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10**.

The Principles where **substantial compliance** has been achieved are: **8.**

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	

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

32

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname   **Signature**

1. **Assoc. Prof. Dimitris Tsarouhas** (Chair), Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey

2. **Dr. Panos Konandreas**, Trade Policy Plus, Geneva, Switzerland

3. **Assoc. Prof. Victor Roudometof**, University of Cyprus, Republic of Cyprus

4. **Prof. Yannis Stivachtis**, Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, Virginia, USA

Accreditation Report for the Undergraduate Study Programme of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus

33