



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
HELLENIC REPUBLIC



**Εθνική Αρχή
Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης**
Hellenic Authority
for Higher Education

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

Accreditation Report
for the Undergraduate Study Programme of:

Cultural Technology and Communication
Institution: University of the Aegean
Date: 6 February 2021



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 **Cultural Technology and
Communication** of the **University of the Aegean**
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 **Cultural Technology and Communication** of the **University of the Aegean** comprised the following four (4) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

- 1. Assoc. Prof. Paschalis Paschalis (Chair)**
University of Nicosia, Cyprus

- 2. Prof. Costas Iliopoulos**
King's College London, United Kingdom

- 3. Prof. Constantinos Mavromoustakis**
University of Nicosia, Cyprus

- 4. Mr. Michail Bletsas**
Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

The external evaluation and accreditation Panel (henceforth “EEAP” or “Panel”) visited virtually through teleconferencing the Undergraduate Programme of Cultural Technology and Communication of the University of the Aegean on the 2nd and 3rd of February 2021. They were greeted upon connecting to the virtual conference room by the Head of the Department Associate Professor Christos Kalloniatis, and the Head of MODIP Professor Elena Theodoropoulou, Vice-rector of Academic Affairs and Student Welfare.

The Panel then met with the Head of the Department of Cultural Technology and Communication who delivered a presentation on the history, academic profile and current status of the undergraduate programme and with OMEA and MODIP representatives who delivered a presentation on the compliance of the programme to the quality standards for accreditation. Both presentations encouraged useful and elaborate discussions on all aspects related to the programme of study.

On the first day of the virtual visit the Panel also met with the teaching staff members where everyone was given the opportunity to introduce themselves and talk about their educational background, research interests and activities, and their classes. The following teleconferencing session of the same day involved a meeting with current students where everyone was given the chance to discuss their educational experience, their interests and interaction with the department’s facilities and faculty members of the programme.

On the 3rd of February, the second and final day of the virtual evaluation visit, the Panel had a teleconference with administrative and technical staff and watched a video-tour of the University including common facilities, classroom and lecture halls, laboratories and the library. The video presentation encouraged a fruitful discussion on the facilities of the programme, involving hardware and software, and additional equipment that is available for students to borrow.

The Panel then met with graduates of the programme and had another effective discussion regarding their follow up studies and career paths. The Panel was presented with both recent graduates as well as graduates from the early years of the programme’s existence. The following teleconferencing session involved a meeting with employers and social partners showcasing the many and significant professional connections of the programme. During the meeting all partners were given the opportunity to elaborate on their relation to the programme and the valuable contribution of its students and graduates to their businesses and organizations.

The day and virtual evaluation visit ended with a teleconference with OMEA and MODIP representatives through a fruitful discussion on the Panel’s findings as well as discussions on several points that needed clarification. All meetings were well organized and provided valuable information to the members of the Panel generating open and rewarding discussions.

The Panel was provided in advance with the internal evaluation report created by the Department and extensive additional information and electronic copies of the presentations delivered to the Panel. In addition, the Panel requested and received further material including

admissions statistics and student portfolios. Overall, the Panel is pleased with the welcoming and openly cooperative attitude of the programme, Department and University, who made every effort to ensure that the Panel had ample and open access to all related materials.

III. Study Programme Profile

The Undergraduate Programme of Cultural Technology and Communication is a four year - 8 semester (240 ECTS) programme and awards its graduates with a Bachelor of Sciences (BSc) degree. The UP offers an interdisciplinary approach to education, blending disciplines of computer science with cultural and communication studies. It offers students training in areas of study related to internet and information technologies, video and audio production, 3D modelling, graphic, interface and web design and development, history of art and museology and offers a plethora of additional elective courses giving students the opportunity to concentrate on various related domains. It has approximated 750 active students and 18 full time faculty members. It was founded in 2000 and it has gone through a few updates and reconstructions throughout the years with the most recent and major one taking place in 2013 when the various concentrations offered were disregarded in favour of a freer selection system with more elective subjects for students to choose from.

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 of Cultural Technology and Communication of the Aegean University offers a novel interdisciplinary undergraduate programme of studies which comprises of 20 compulsory courses that are taught during the first three years of studies, and a number of optional courses. The programme meets the state of the art, and has substantial width/depth whereas, it converges with the international standards of the fields involved and the subjects taught at undergraduate level. An important part of the latter is the academic staff that teaches courses which are close to their specialization and/or have substantial knowledge of the course topics.

The Department uses a number of brought-in staff to cover optional courses due to lack of manpower and/or in topics that the academic staff may not have sufficient expertise.

The Department underwent external review of its undergraduate programme in 2013 and has subsequently addressed all the recommendations made in the 2013 report. From this, it is clear to the EEAP that the Department has the willingness to promote the quality and effectiveness of its teaching, and that it puts the needs of the students at the heart of its activities.

The process of assessing and examining students is along the lines. The Quality Assurance (QA) policy has been developed by the MODIP in cooperation with the OMEA of the Department; its quality assurance policy follows the strategic goals and quality policy of the Aegean University. The Department conducts electronic faculty evaluations using questionnaires that are created by the OMEA and the MODIP. The periodic review of the courses of the programme are not periodically evaluated (bi-annually, using the assistance of external holders so that it is up to date and aligned with trends and demands). However, there are no feedback reports provided by both academic and industry/external advisors (joint-consolidated reports with the extracted outcomes) on the quality of the programme.

The EEAP found that the Quality Assurance Policy is communicated to all stakeholders involved. There is adequate up-to-date information on the Department website (KPIs, analysis, statistical data), including the report of the External Evaluation that took place back in 2013.

The students confirmed that the Department actively promotes their involvement in the evaluation processes and discloses the information in class and via electronic means. The EEAP also confirmed with the students their willingness to participate actively in the evaluation process.

The Department's documentation clearly states the learning outcomes and qualifications of its programme following the guidelines of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education. The programme on Cultural Technology & Communication of the Aegean University should better combine both theoretical and practical knowledge in the fields involved. It is important to highlight that the EEAP spotted that there is a link of teaching and research with a number of examples that were presented, demonstrating the use of research topics used in teaching and project work by students. To this extent, social partners and market representatives have excellently figured-out the value of knowledge of the graduates of the Department and their effective contribution in real-time.

Faculty members of the Department are easily approachable, they are available in person as well as via phone and email. Information can be easily obtained online too via email. Students and teaching staff seem to be actively participating in the local community and industry through social and training activities.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The Department should include main fundamental linking courses (basic and advance i.e., Mathematical foundations) so that more students can follow without difficulties the programme.
- The Department is encouraged to establish systematic processes for eliciting input from external stakeholders, like industrial partners and alumni, for reviewing and /or consulting purposes towards the continuous enhancement of its study programme and QA policy and processes.

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

After reviewing the provided information, attending the presentation of the QAU and the discussion sessions with the faculty, students, alumni and societal partners, it is the Panel's opinion that the programme is largely successful in achieving a balance between increasingly conflicting requirements.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The academic achievement demographics of the students, as well as the general environment that the programme operates in, present a great challenge in balancing academic rigor in the curriculum with the ability of the student body to progress through the programme's requirements in a sustainable pace. The Panel feels that more emphasis should be given to the fundamentals, in the first half of the studies, especially given the worsening trend in the incoming classes' grades. Mathematics (discrete math, linear algebra, statistics) are necessary fundamentals that the programme should incorporate into the required curriculum in the first year of study for all students.
- Given the creative orientation of the programme, the curriculum paths should be designed with the construction of a student work portfolio in mind. This will help graduates in both employment and further education plans and could provide a much richer alternative to the diploma project work.
- More emphasis should be placed on developing "reverse classroom" processes, where lectures could be watched on demand and in-person recitations could become more productive in facilitating the understanding of the material. Educational material from international sources (ex: EdX) could be subtitled and utilized. This could also help alleviate scheduling difficulties, something that was raised in discussions with the student body.
- Finally, the programme needs both a more explicit short term and long-term strategic plan for faculty hiring and development.

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

The Undergraduate Programme of Cultural Technology offers an interdisciplinary approach to education, blending disciplines of computer science with cultural and communication studies. The reconstruction of the programme in 2013, which disregarded the various concentrations in favour of a freer selection system with additional elective subjects for students to choose from, has enabled more flexible learning paths, giving students the opportunity to concentrate their studies in a variety of interrelated domains.

The programme uses a variety of teaching and assessment methods which are published and made known to students at the beginning of each course through course outlines. The lecturers

are available to students with their office hours and there seems to be good communication amongst them. Furthermore, each student is assigned one of their lecturers as an advisor who is guiding them on academic matters throughout their studies.

The learning process is enhanced by the facilities of the department with adequate specialized labs and additional equipment that is available for students to borrow. The EEAP was concerned whether it is possible for all students to have access to labs and equipment due to the large number of students in relation to the available equipment, but the department seems to have an effective system in place allowing access to all student either by dividing them into smaller groups or by permitting them to book a workstation to work on their projects after class hours.

There is an evaluation system in place in the form of an electronic questionnaire taking place between the 10th and 12th week of classes. Approximately 30% of the students complete and submit the questionnaires which the EEAP finds satisfactory but urges the department to find ways to increase the percentage even more.

The EEAP was not convinced whether there is an effective formal procedure for student appeals in place, and even if there is, students don't seem to be aware of it.

In conclusion, the EEAP is convinced that there is a good student-centered learning system in place and finds the programme fully compliant in this principle.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- Although approximately one third of the students complete the evaluation questionnaires at the end of each term, the EEAP urges the department to find ways to increase the response.
- The EEAP was not convinced that students are aware that there is an appeal system in place and recommends that the department formalizes the procedure and makes it known to students upon entry to the undergraduate programme of study.

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 processes to manage student progression are fully integrated and automated within the University computer systems. The course and teaching staff evaluations are all done online and their analysis automated. They have robust procedures to address any problem.

The information gathering regarding admissions, certification etc is automated to a high standard.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The departmental web pages may need further attention as some links are broken and some material is missing.

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 procedure of hiring of academic staff is dictated centrally, as it is Government driven; it is as expected, with procedures clear, straightforward for hiring appropriately qualified staff that perceive the significance of education and research.

The Curriculum Vitae of the academic staff show that they have a suitable background and their research publications, to a large degree, are related to the teaching topics. The research output is marginal in some cases. Some academic staff are more research active than others.

The Panel feels that the department had sufficient funding to support conference attendance and other scholarly activities. The majority of the teaching staff have taken these opportunities to enhance and accelerate their research and scholarly development. The teaching staff has done extensive use of the ERASMUS+ travel funding, having a plethora of opportunities as the Department has signed 30 plus ERASMUS+ agreements. Additionally, a further expansion of international and national research exposure of the teaching staff is desirable.

The Panel has concerns that a large proportion of the teaching staff is not located on the island. But the students appear to be happy with the staff availability and accessibility.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

An increase of the volume as well as the quality of the research will be desirable.

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

Overall, the Department has very good facilities. The lecture rooms are well designed and kept in excellent condition. The buildings are clean and in good shape. In total, it is a first-class environment for teaching and research.

The labs are very well equipped. The equipment is modern and up to date. The software is upgraded almost annually, and it is kept UpToDate. The labs are well managed and they run smoothly to the benefit of the students, as for example they can borrow equipment and study/experiment at their own pace

The pastoral care is well planned and managed. On the academic level, every student is assigned a tutor. The tutor advises the students for the duration of their studies, addressing academic and personal issues that may arise. The Department has adapted the working environment to accommodate students and staff with special needs. We have seen examples of schedule alteration to accommodate the needs of students with children. The Panel met students with disabilities, and they seemed to be happy with the accessibility to the lecture rooms, labs and staff offices.

Housing and eating facilities are modern, clean and in excellent order. The restaurant and the accommodation are well managed and kept in pristine condition. There is a Wi-Fi network that allows the students to work from home.

The administration is run on modern computer systems and it is effective and well organized. It offers adequate support to the academic staff and students

The student mobility is well organized. Plenty of students take advantage of the ERAMUS+ opportunities to widen their knowledge and expose themselves to new ideas and ways. The Department has ensured that there many agreements in place, increasing the choice of places to visit and topics to study.

Panel Judgement

Principle 6: Learning Resources and Student Support	
Fully compliant	✓
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 analyzing information and planning follow-up activities.

Study Programme Compliance

The department fully complies with Information Management principle. Its commitment to collect course evaluation data from students is exemplary and its staff was able to provide answers to all of the Panel's questions. Students seem to be very satisfied with internal communications.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

A lot of the data presented to the Panel should also be on the website. Transparency is rarely harmful. The department is doing a commendable job given the academic achievement level of its incoming class.

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 operates a fully functional web site that covers satisfactorily most of its activities and seems to be regularly updated. Furthermore, it provides orientation to its first-year students, something that has continued under the circumstances of the pandemic. The Academic and Procedural guides of the department are detailed and well written.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

Given the department's focus on cultural technology and communication, the Panel feels that the department should expand its website to showcase the work of its students and emphasize its focus on creativity.

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 EEAP appreciates that under many external factors and difficulties, the Department offers valuable graduate members to the society and community. The Department and the programme not only comply with the principles of the Quality Assurance System but, in fact, is a unique programme and a leading exponent for interdisciplinary studies. The meetings with MODIP and OMEA representatives confirmed the impression extracted that both Aegean University and the Department are in compliance with Principle 9, though there is still room for further improvement.

Thorough review procedures exist for the evaluation and improvement of the programme with integration of latest research in the discipline, changing society needs, effectiveness of students' assessment, students' expectations, workload progression, learning environment, support services and support with people with disabilities. However, the evaluated programme is not obviously thoroughly reviewed and revised on a periodic and regular basis, a process in which students and stakeholders' involvements are necessary. Department -and on the basis of periodically reviewing the programme- is encouraged to carry on internal quality assurance procedures for audit, annual internal review of the courses of the programme of studies to achieve objectives through monitoring and revisions for continuous improvement. The revision process of the programme should be periodically described in the departmental proposal and should follow the procedures indicated in the Department's code-of-practice for any modification, and confirmed during the meeting with representatives of the MODIP and OMEA.

The content of courses and the corresponding bibliographies should be substantially revised to keep up to date, in light of new research findings and the development and availability of new technological tools and processes in the sector of Cultural Informatics.

The EEAP considers that the revision process of individual courses can be better defined and documented, and it is informed and updated, among other things, from the students' questionnaires and external stakeholders. However, as far as the evaluation of the Study Programme as whole is concerned, while the process is clearly documented, the feedback mechanisms by social partners and stakeholders are not defined.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The Department's Curriculum Programme Committee, as the responsible body to review the courses and programme's compliance with regards to the efficiency and quality, should formally schedule meetings at regular time-frames (with extracted minutes) in order to review periodically the curriculum and maintain detailed meeting minutes to be accessible at any time.

The Department should ensure that the self-assessment results should be shared among all members of the academic unit (including faculty, students, and non-teaching staff). Additionally, the department -and based on the assessment reports- should create an action plan with aims, objectives and goals of their short and long term goals based on the feedback obtained by the involved stakeholders (i.e., students, external social partners, external evaluator(s) or Programme review steering committees etc).

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

This accreditation review is the second external review for the undergraduate study programme on Cultural Technology & Communication of the Aegean University, following that of 2013.

Based on the information gathered during the online discussion, it appears that the faculty, lab personnel, and administrative staff are aware of the importance of the external review process and its contribution to improvement. All stakeholders of the programme, including academic, administrative and support staff, and undergraduate and graduate students, are actively engaged in the current review. During the meeting, the staff members demonstrated that they are fully aware of the importance of external review and the positive effects that can result from it.

The first review was positive with some constructive recommendations, which are listed in the report. The Department's commitment to the spirit and the processes of Quality Assurance is evident in all principles and aspects. The Department should establish formal, well-defined procedures to elicit, use and evaluate feedback from students and external stakeholders. Both faculty and staff seem to be passionate about their work, display a great team spirit and they are dynamic and innovative. Students and recent graduates were really satisfied with their student experience and were praising the efforts of the Department's and University's faculty members and staff. The Department should establish formal, well-defined procedures to elicit, use and evaluate feedback from students and external stakeholders (social partners).

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The development of an action plan for the department to assess and ensure the implementation of the appropriate external evaluation suggestions and recommendations.
- The department's faculty members should employ innovative and efficient procedures for collecting meaningful and actionable feedback from the students and external stakeholders. In addition, all their actions and committee meetings should formally be recorded (minutes) so that formal actions can be then applied with assigned and associated responsibilities.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

- The programme has substantial width/depth whereas and it converges with the international standards of the subjects taught.
- The academic staff teaches courses close to their specialization with substantial knowledge of their topics.
- The Department addressed all the recommendations made in the 2013 external evaluation which shows that there is willingness to improve the quality and effectiveness of its curricula.
- The Department's quality assurance policy follows the strategic goals and quality policy of the Aegean University.
- The Quality Assurance Policy is communicated to all stakeholders involved.
- Faculty members of the Department are easily approachable, available in person, via phone and email.
- The programme is largely successful in achieving a balance between increasingly conflicting requirements.
- The programme uses a variety of teaching and assessment methods which are published and made known to students at the beginning of each course through course outlines.
- The learning process is enhanced by the facilities of the department with adequate specialized labs and additional equipment that is available for students to borrow.
- There is an evaluation system in place in the form of an electronic questionnaire taking place between the 10th and 12th week of classes.
- The processes to manage student progression are fully integrated and automated within the University computer systems.
- The Curriculum Vitae of the academic staff show that they have a suitable background and their research publications, to a large degree, are related to the teaching topics.
- The department has sufficient funding to support conference attendance and other scholarly activities.
- The teaching staff has done extensive use of the ERASMUS+ travel funding, having a plethora of opportunities as the Department has signed 30 plus ERASMUS+ agreements.
- The Department has very good facilities. The lecture rooms are well designed and kept in excellent condition. The buildings are clean and in good shape. The labs are very well equipped. The equipment is modern and up to date.
- The pastoral care is well planned and managed. Every student is assigned a tutor who advises them for the duration of their studies, addressing academic and personal issues that may arise.
- Housing and eating facilities are modern, clean and in excellent order.
- The student mobility is well organized. Plenty of students take advantage of the ERASMUS+ opportunities.
- The department operates a fully functional web site that covers satisfactorily most of its activities and seems to be regularly updated.

- The Department and the programme are unique and a leading exponent for interdisciplinary studies and comply with the principles of the Quality Assurance System.
- The Department's commitment to the spirit and the processes of Quality Assurance is evident in all principles and aspects.

II. Areas of Weakness

Identified in the recommendations below

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

- The Department is encouraged to establish systematic processes for eliciting input from external stakeholders, like industrial partners and alumni, for reviewing and /or consulting purposes towards the continuous enhancement of its study programme and Quality Assurance policy and processes.
- The Panel feels that more emphasis should be given to the fundamentals, in the first half of the studies especially given the worsening trend in the incoming classes' grades. Mathematics (discrete math, linear algebra, statistics) as well as introductory art courses are necessary fundamentals that the programme should incorporate into the required curriculum in the first year of study for all students.
- Given the creative orientation of the programme, the curriculum paths should be designed with the construction of a student work portfolio in mind. This will help graduates in both employment and further education plans and could provide a much richer alternative to the diploma project work.
- The programme needs both a more explicit short- and long-term strategic plan for faculty hiring and development.
- The department should formalize the appeal system procedure and make it known to students upon entry to the programme of study.
- The departmental web pages may need further attention as some links are broken and some material is missing.
- An increase of the volume as well as the quality of the research will be desirable.
- A lot of the data presented to the Panel should also be on the website. Transparency is rarely harmful. The department is doing a commendable job given the academic achievement level of its incoming class.
- Given the department's focus on cultural technology and communication, the Panel feels that the department should expand its website to showcase the work of its students and emphasize its focus on creativity.
- The revision process of the programme should be periodically described in the departmental proposal and should follow the procedures indicated in the Department's

code-of-practice for any modification and confirmed during the meeting with representatives of the MODIP and OMEA.

- The Department’s Curriculum Programme Committee should formally schedule regular meetings in order to periodically review the curriculum and maintain accessible detailed meeting minutes.
- The Department should ensure that the self-assessment results should be shared among all members of the academic unit. Additionally, an action plan with aims, objectives and goals should be created based on the feedback obtained by the involved stakeholders (i.e. students, external social partners, external evaluator(s) or Programme review steering committees etc.).

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: **1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10**

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: **2, 9**

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are: None

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are: None

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

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname

Signature

- 1. Assoc. Prof. Paschalis Paschalis (Chair)**
University of Nicosia, Cyprus

- 2. Prof. Costas Iliopoulos**
King's College London, United Kingdom

- 3. Prof. Constantinos Mavromoustakis**
University of Nicosia, Cyprus

- 4. Mr. Michail Bletsas**
Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA