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HELLENIC REPUBLIC

H.Q.A.

HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE AND
ACCREDITATION AGENCY

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

Τμήμα Θεολογίας
School of Theology

Αριστοτέλειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλονίκης (ΑΠΘ)
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

December 2013



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External Evaluation Committee

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the Τμήμα Θεολογίας (School of Theology) of the Αριστοτέλειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλονίκης ΑΠΘ (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki) consisted of the following four (4) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by the HQAA in accordance with Law 3374/2005 :

Prof. Dr. Anton C. Vrame, (President)

Director, Department of Religious Education, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and Adjunct Associate Professor of Religious Education, Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology (Brookline, Massachusetts, USA)

Prof. Dr. Assaad Elias Kattan

Professor of Orthodox Theology, Centre of Religious Studies, University of Münster (Münster, Germany)

Prof. Dr. Nicolas Prevelakis

Lecturer of Social Studies, Harvard University and Assistant Director of Curricular Development, Harvard's Center for Hellenic Studies (Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA)

Prof. Dr. Christopher Veniamin

Professor of Patristics, St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary (South Canaan, Pennsylvania, USA)

N.B. The structure of the “Template” proposed for the External Evaluation Report mirrors the requirements of Law 3374/2005 and corresponds overall to the structure of the Internal Evaluation Report submitted by the Department.

The length of text in each box is free. Questions included in each box are not exclusive nor should they always be answered separately; they are meant to provide a general outline of matters that should be addressed by the Committee when formulating its comments.

Introduction

I. The External Evaluation Procedure

- Dates and brief account of the site visit.
- Whom did the Committee meet ?
- List of Reports, documents, other data examined by the Committee.

The site visit of the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for the School (Τμήμα Θεολογίας) of Theology of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (ΑΠΘ) took place on December 9-10, 2013. The External Evaluation Committee was received warmly and with gracious hospitality by the members of the School and Administration of the University. We are thankful to the School of Theology for their hospitality and spirit of cooperation and fellowship during the site visit.

The Administration and faculty members were open and honest with the EEC. Many meetings were lengthy and the EEC was provided time for deep and provocative lines of questioning of all involved. While at times the questions may have pushed hard or opened up areas of discomfort, we believe that this was an important dimension to the process, creating the necessary dialogue for evaluation by the EEC and reflection by the School. At times, the conversations took place less formally, in between meetings, over a meal, or travelling to and from events. While these conversations were informal, they oftentimes provided necessary background information to what the EEC heard in more formal settings. While the discussions were held in Greek, some documents were provided in English translation and any needed assistance with translation was graciously provided.

For the sake of clarity, the following should be noted for the report. The term “School” in this report means the School of Theology, Τμήμα Θεολογίας. When referring to the teaching staff, this report will attempt to always use the term “faculty members”.

On Monday, December 9, the EEC was received by Prof. Dr. P. Ypsilandis, representing the HQAA. Because of some confusion about the schedule, this meeting was delayed and the presentation of the background for Evaluation was very brief, although he shared with us electronic copies of the PowerPoint presentation. This delay caused a challenge to the schedule for the day, pushing meetings later throughout. Worth noting is that neither day was the schedule kept strictly. This was often due to the length and intensity of the presentations and questioning and the desire of the EEC for private conversations. Nevertheless, on Monday, there were scheduled meetings and presentations with the Deputy Rector for Academic Affairs and Personnel, Prof. Dr. Despo Lialiou, who provided the EEC with an overview of the University itself. Next, the EEC met with the President of the School, Prof. Dr. Chrysostomos Stamoulis, Prof. Dr. F. Ioannidis, and the members of the faculty. In this meeting, various members of the faculty presented the PowerPoint “Με το βλέμμα στο μέλλον: Λειτουργίες, Δραστηριότητες, Προοπτικές,» “With the Eyes to the Future: Operations, Activities and Perspectives” a detailed introduction to the work of the School, ranging from its History and Aims, Undergraduate, Post-graduate, and Doctoral Studies, Practical (Field Work) Experiences for Students, Research and Academic Activity of the School (papers, books published, lectures delivered) and Student Life. This presentation was quite lengthy and occupied a good portion of the day. However, it provided an opportunity for the EEC to ask questions and engage in discussions with the faculty members. Observations from this presentation and other discussions will be included throughout our report.

In the late afternoon and into the evening, the EEC met with Alumni of the School of Theology and current students. There were nearly 50 people in attendance, in addition to faculty members and the EEC. Those attendees included notable alumni, ranging from the Metropolitan Panteleimon of Beroia, Naoussa and Campania, Metropolitan Anthimos of Alexandroupolis, Mrs. Stavroula Xoulidou, a local politician, Mr. G. Karatasios, the Regional Director of Education for Central Macedonia, and others. A more complete list and photos can be found on the School of Theology’s blog, Theologika Dromena, (www.blogs.auth.gr/moschosg) Following, the EEC met only with current students, about 20 of them, in addition to faculty members. Worth noting in these two meetings was the quite positive reflections and thanks offered by the Alumni about their experiences at the School of Theology. Metropolitan Anthimos, in particular, praised the efforts of the School’s Life Long Learning program for clergy in his Metropolis. Second, in the session with the students there was a heated exchange between the students and various faculty members. The EEC had to call a “time out” to refocus the conversation. However, the EEC found this heated exchange to be quite

revealing about the work of the School of Theology, revealing tensions in the theoretical underpinnings and attitudes among the faculty members and students about classes, instruction, examinations and the general atmosphere of the School. Third, there was the recurring theme expressed by many that “Theology was not my first choice as a university faculty to join” (there were a few exceptions to this sentiment) but they found the School to be a supportive community for learning and they appreciated their education at the University.

Tuesday December 10, 2013, the EEC met with Members of the Administrative Staff, members of ETEP and EEDIP, led by Mr. N. Gregoriadis, and others, about one dozen or so, including the President of the School. This conversation discussed the many administrative challenges facing the administration, the increased workloads and the uncertainty about future employment, given the financial situation facing the nation and university.

The EEC then visited the Library of the School of Theology and spent well over one hour touring the facilities and asking questions about the operations of the Library.

The EEC at their request attended a post-graduate seminar, that of Prof. Dr. P. Pachis. This was an opportunity to both see a classroom, but also see an instructional environment, speak with an instructor about instructional issues (the instructor that day was a doctoral student presenting her research).

The EEC visited the Computer Lab of the School of Theology, receiving a Power point presentation about the technological facilities available to students, the support the IT Staff provides for faculty members, and the work of the IT staff in general, for example, providing the platform for the publication of the e-journals of the School.

The EEC visited the Hagiographic Art Studio of the School of Theology. The studio had a display of various works of students, both holy icons and non-religious works in various stages of completion. The professor and two students explained the work of the studio.

The EEC visited the Pedagogical Workshop of the School of Theology, receiving a Power Point presentation by its Director and members of its Staff

on the history of the workshop and the current work with students, preparing them to teach in the High Schools and Schools of Secondary Education.

The EEC visited the Chapel of the School of Theology, receiving a presentation on the liturgical program of the Chapel and the history of the Chapel itself.

In each of the presentations, the EEC was able to ask many questions, engage the presenters and others in the room in conversations about that particular aspect of their work, and comment. Worth noting, in every part of this day, faculty members began engaging one another about various dimensions of the work of that unit.

Documents Received and Reviewed

The EEC received and reviewed:

- A complete schedule for the days of the site visit.
- The 2012-2013 Ετήσια Απογραφική Έκθεση dated Dec 5, 2013
- The 2011-2012 Ετήσια Απογραφική Έκθεση dated December 2012
- Evaluation of the School of Theology 2002-2010 dated March 15, 2011
- A number of letters between the University Administration and the School President, for example, a letter from the School President dated October 18, 2013. These letters discussed the Evaluation Process and provided an exchange of information between the two offices.
- A complete list of faculty members by rank.
- A full bibliography for each faculty member, electronically
- A Power Point from the Vice Rector, Prof. Dr. Despo Lialiou on the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, providing an overview to the University as a whole.
- A Power Point Presentation, Με το βλέμμα στο μέλλον: Λειτουργίες, Δραστηριότητες, Προοπτικές, “With the Eyes to the Future: Operations, Activities and Perspectives” on the present and future direction of the School of Theology – an introduction by the School to the EEC
- A copy of the article “The School of Theology: From its creation to today” by Prof. I. Petrou and N. Maggioros, which had been published in Synthesis 2 (2012).
- A Power Point Presentation Νησίδα Υπολογιστών Τμήματος Θεολογίας ΑΠΘ on the technological aspects (Information Technology) of the School

- A Power Point Presentation Εργαστήριο Παιδαγωγικής, Laboratory of Pedagogy
- 2010-2011 Guidebook of Studies (Οδηγος Σπουδων), electronically in pdf.
- The current Guidebook of Studies was available on the School's website.
- The EEC requested to see syllabi for courses. We received a number of them from 3 faculty members for a total of 12 syllabi, including the Schedule of Liturgical Services in the Chapel
- In addition, the EEC was provided a sample annual report/update from a doctoral student.
- The EEC was able to examine sample doctoral dissertations and master's theses from various students provided by members of the School in their individual offices and in the Library.
- The website of the School of Theology (<http://www.theo.auth.gr/theo/en/Pages/default.aspx>), including the 3 e-journals of the School
- The website of the Pedagogical Workshop
- Examples of School publications, books and articles, usually provided in faculty member offices

The EEC was able to visit

- Faculty Members' Offices
- Classrooms
- Library
- Computer Lab
- Hagiographic Studio
- Chapel
- Pedagogical Workshop/Laboratory

II. The Internal Evaluation Procedure

Please comment on:

- Appropriateness of sources and documentation used
- Quality and completeness of evidence reviewed and provided
- To what extent have the objectives of the internal evaluation process been met by the Department?

The documents:

There were quite a few documents to review in a short period of time. The documents the EEC received just before the site visit were among the most important because they were the most recent. This process was not only new to the School of Theology, it was also new to the EEC. Thus, there was a great deal of information to absorb in a short period of time. In the future, the EEC should be provided with the most recent evaluations of the School as early as possible, perhaps with some introductory material and comparative comments from older evaluations.

The documentation was very complete, but without introductory material the EEC was reviewing analyses “blind”. It would have been helpful to have been pointed to all the electronic documents of the School of Theology, e.g. course catalogs, syllabi, MODIP, “official handbooks” of the School for administration, students, and faculty members as part of an introduction to the site visit. Some questions that the EEC had would have been answered with these in hand.

The EEC did not receive any minutes from faculty meetings of the School of Theology. These would have been extremely helpful to review especially as the School is considering the development of new programs of study.

A lacuna in the Evaluation Process is the subject of the teaching staff itself, which would provide information, processes for evaluation, and analysis. Some of this information was provided in areas such as research, but an overall analysis would be helpful for future internal and external evaluations. For example, the self-evaluation could discuss its processes for promotion and tenure, grievance procedures, anticipated changes in the composition of the faculty (retirements, areas where they need more instructors), teaching loads, and expectations, and evaluation focusing on issues pertaining to the work of the faculty members, beyond their productivity as instructors and researchers.

It would have been helpful to have a private room at the School of Theology for the EEC for its private discussions in between meetings, and containing notebooks with the minutes of faculty meetings for the last few years (in the future, this would mean from evaluation process to evaluation process), syllabi from the entire faculty for all courses, all the internal evaluations, all the cv’s of faculty, and the most recent printed course catalogs.

It would have been helpful to have private meetings with a few students representing undergraduate and post-graduate students without the presence

of any faculty members. These meetings took place, but in the presence of the faculty members.

The openness and honesty of the faculty members was encouraged by the Administration and was evident in the meetings, to which all willing faculty members participated and spoke without rank distinctions. This being said, it would have been helpful to have private meetings with faculty members separated according to rank (Lecturers, Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, and Professors), in order to get a fuller sense of the specific concerns of each group.

The president (see p. 4) of the EEC and the EEC itself should be chairing the sessions and leading the discussions. The President of the School chaired the meetings, and in the spirit of fairness allowed all who wanted to speak the opportunity to do so, but at times this allowed the meetings to run too long.

The EEC was informed that one faculty member refused to participate in the meetings and the process.

In light of the financial situation facing the State and University, it would have been beneficial to hold a discussion with the finance officers of the School (or the University itself) about their ability to manage and control how funds are allocated and spent and to discuss the budgeting process and priorities.

The EEC Site Visit was too short. We cannot overemphasize that two days was very inadequate to cover all the materials, to meet the various constituencies, and for the EEC to discuss and consider and consult among themselves. As a result, we believe that our observations and conclusions might be based on partial information. In the future, site visits should probably be around 5 days or more for each School (Τμήμα), especially given the size of each School.

II. Curriculum

The EEC will provide some general comments on the curriculum overall and then provide specific observations on the undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral curricula.

General Comments

The aims of the curriculum of the School of Theology are quite clear: 1) preparing “future scientists” in Orthodox Theology and Christian theology, 2) preparing “future teachers of theology in Secondary Education,” 3) preparing “theologically educated clergymen” and 4) preparing “executives for various cultural, religious, and social organizations.” The programs of study are clearly defined in the Course Catalogs and the School of Theology’s website.

The curriculum of the School of Theology leading to the undergraduate and post-graduate degrees is organized in a classical or “traditional” format: students are enrolled in courses taught by the five departments in the School (in short, Bible, History, Dogma, Worship, and Ethics). In addition, the School has organized a Practicum or “field work” experiences for undergraduate students. Post-graduate students complete their courses and write a thesis supervised by a faculty advisor. In the doctoral program, students are accepted and then work with a senior faculty member, developing their program of studies leading to the writing of the dissertation.

The EEC noted that the School of Theology regularly expressed its “freedom”: its freedom of inquiry, freedom and openness in its theological research, and the resulting freedom and openness these create in the curriculum. Individual faculty members often expressed this freedom in terms of freedom from ecclesiastical control, which understandably in a School of Theology in general and in an institution preparing students for Church service in particular is an important constituency.

Given the nature of the Practicum, which provides students with field experiences in local parishes, and the Life-long learning program, four recent programs of which were aimed at clergy, there are clearly good relationships between the School and Church authorities. We were also told that feedback from the Church, as well as other institutions (NGOs, cultural organizations) are taken into account for the development of the curriculum. As part of future evaluations, providing «evidence» of the input, usually through documents, e.g., minutes of meetings, documents, etc., would provide additional transparency of these interactions.

Undergraduate Studies

The undergraduate program has clearly defined aims: “to provide high level education in the academic field of Theology, the study of religion, and the

study of culture” in order to prepare a) “scientists capable of studying the Christian and especially, Orthodox Theology but also the diversity of the phenomenon of religion as well as its relations with the society and culture,” b) “theologians school teachers who will work in secondary education,” c) “clergy with theological education who will provide service to the Church,” and d) “executives who can offer social work and work in cultural or religious organizations.”

One significant characteristic of the School of Theology is that the students who find themselves there may belong in very different categories. Specifically, a relatively small number (we were told 10 percent) of them had selected theology as their first choice, while almost one half or more finds itself in Theology only because this was the only School they could matriculate, given their – relatively – low scores in the Panhellenic exams. Students and alumni of the School regularly told the EEC words to the effect, “the School of Theology was not my first choice. But I found the School to be a wonderful place to study.” Somehow related to this is a tension between a) those who see their theological studies as connected to their faith, and often deplore the openness of the School to such – secular – disciplines as sociology or to the study of other religions, such as Islam, and b) those who see their studies as unrelated to faith, and may be quite secular in all respects. This distinction is, we suspect, related to the former one (between those who chose theology as their first choice and those that only “ended up” there). The EEC witnessed this tension in the meeting with students on the first day of their visit.

This is a matter that should inform the logic of the curriculum. The aims of the program are largely unchanged after many years. The program of studies, while recently revised, is organized in many respects as a “religious studies” program, with the obvious deference to and concentration on the Christian Orthodox Tradition. However, some faculty members in their concern for preparing undergraduate students for more general careers in society (rather than as scientists in theology or clergymen), appear to treat the curriculum as one of the humanities, and the undergraduate program as a “general education.” To use the example from undergraduate education in the United States, undergraduate liberal arts and sciences curricula contain a “core program” in general studies that cross multiple disciplines (history, science, literature, et al) and then offer a major in one particular discipline (e.g., history or biology). The curriculum of the School of Theology implicitly seems to work in this way without the necessary flexibility in course offerings (due to the nature of the university system itself) while explicitly being a program in theology.

The evidence for this observation is found in the *very* lengthy list of Learning Outcomes, which are listed as “Generic” and “Specific,” and these are broken down into Knowledge, Skills, and Competencies.” The EEC counts 28 Learning Outcomes (they can be found on the website and in the Self-evaluations), which are often repeated in the course syllabi. The general competences aimed for are *very* general, and are often the same for multiple courses. More specifically, many courses list the following under “General Competencies”: work autonomously, work in teams, work in an interdisciplinary team, generate new research ideas, appreciate diversity and multiculturalism, be critical and self-critical, advance free, creative and causative thinking. These criteria are extremely general and apply to any course in almost any field of study (even chemistry), and are therefore not specific to the particular course, not even theology in general. These «Generic» competencies and outcomes have been set by the University and the individual faculty member determines those that are appropriate to his/her particular course. Linking courses to generic competencies is positive and points to an implicit issue of preparing students for any variety of careers in society no matter what program of study they have matriculated. However, it creates a very bizarre picture of a particular course. Perhaps the University and School should review this area of its work and create a clearer «hierarchy» of competencies from the general outcomes of a university education, the outcomes of a specific degree program developed by the School, to the outcomes of a particular course articulated by an individual faculty member.

From the information provided to the EEC, there is a high percentage of students who do not complete their undergraduate degrees. This could point to the nature of the curriculum or other factors, such as economic realities of the students themselves. An undergraduate program with fewer courses would be a positive development toward increasing graduation rates.

We were told that according to official statistics 75 percent of the graduates are unemployed after graduation. More importantly, given the high number of students and the limited number of positions available in areas that would traditionally employ graduates (the Church and secondary education), the Aims of the Curriculum (see above) do not adequately reflect the professional futures of the students. This new situation should be addressed more thoroughly and inform the curriculum (making any necessary changes) and the general goals of the program.

The curriculum in undergraduate studies has included use of technology as part of the course work required of students (one mandatory course and four electives). We suggest moving even further in this direction, potentially adding technology in all courses. For example, a course could require students to create websites, videos, or other technological products (apps?) as part of their coursework. These students could then take greater advantage of the Computer and Pedagogical Labs, as well as developing important skills that could benefit them as they enter the workforce after completing their studies.

The Practicum is an excellent development in the curriculum, providing students with useful experiences preparing them for the job market after graduation. The Practicum appears to be underutilized by students, but the students who participate in the Practicum are those with overall better grades. “Cooperative learning” is highly prized by potential employers and could become a requirement in all areas of the undergraduate program. The EEC was informed that Practicum is evaluated by the Ministry of Education.

Post-graduate Studies (Master’s and Doctorates)

Post-graduate Studies in the School of Theology are very clear and well organized. The School’s reputation in this area is well known, attracting students from around the world as well as from Greece.

The aims of the program are a) “to promote specialized knowledge and the development of high-level research in the academic field of theology;” b) “the study of religion and culture and their implementation in education, Church, and society,” and c) particular emphasis in Orthodox Theology. The EEC was informed that the final aim was inserted because of criticism that the program was not explicitly oriented enough towards Orthodox Christian theology. While making this statement explicit is admirable, the curriculum itself has very strong emphases, if not exclusive emphases, on Orthodox Christianity. Indeed, studying Orthodox Christianity at an advanced level at the School of Theology has historically been one of its greatest strengths.

The post-graduate curriculum is organized along the lines of the five Departments, with the following specializations: hermeneutics in Scripture and Religion; history, literature, and archeology; systematics with an emphasis on doctrine and philosophy; systematics with an emphasis on ethics, pastoral, and sociology; practical with emphases in pedagogy, liturgy, and ecclesiastical and canon law. There is also a sixth “Interfaculty field of

Ecumenical theology,” which draws from across the Departments. This last specialization points to the growing inter-disciplinarily in theological study and thought, the growing areas of inter-Christian study and inter-faith study.

The first level of post-graduate study – the Master’s degree – requires four semesters of study, three of which are devoted to courses, for a total of twelve courses. The final semester is devoted toward writing the thesis, with the possibility of extending for one additional year to complete the thesis.

The doctoral program works in a “traditional manner” with a student applying to the School and having a thesis approved by the supervising faculty advisor and reviewed by the three member committee usually within a period of three to six years.

The EEC did not have enough time in its visit to meet with graduate students – either Master’s or Doctoral students – as an independent group to explore more issues of the program. While faculty members showed the EEC copies of dissertations and theses and there was some time to review them in the Library, the EEC did not have enough time in its visit to carefully review them in order to make its own assessment of their academic quality. As part of the internal self-evaluation process of the School, the EEC would recommend that a sub-committee of the School review theses and dissertations to discern their academic quality. This would provide the School with one method for reviewing the outcomes and objectives of the Master’s and Doctoral programs.

Our comments about the Post-graduate programs reflect information we were given in the reports and some discussions with the School and individual faculty members.

Eighty students in the Master’s program is a fairly large number, even with their distribution among the faculty members. Supervising graduate students can be quite time consuming for a faculty member. Supervising as many as five at one time, especially when they write their thesis, can detract from the other responsibilities of a faculty member as well as limit their ability to focus well on the graduate student. The number of doctoral candidates seems more reasonable for an individual faculty member to supervise, although we would suspect that this could vary from faculty member to faculty member, as is usually the case, some faculty members are more “popular” as supervisors than others based on the varying interests of students from year to year.

The graduate curriculum provides a great deal of freedom to the student and supervisor. Central to maintaining the quality and reputation of graduate studies is the predictability and reliability of the academic work being completed by students and their readiness for advanced work. While a student should be able to pursue his or her own research interests, at the Master's level, too much freedom or too few requirements could create unevenness in the preparedness of students both to write the thesis and thus complete their degrees as well as insure a standard of academic quality in the graduates. A similar statement could be made about doctoral studies, although typically a student has more freedom to pursue his or her distinct research interests leading to the dissertation, either in course work or in independent research.

This could be addressed with more structure in the programs, such as a few required courses for each discipline (Bible, Patristics, Church History, etc.) as well as an introduction to the different ways to deal with texts (research methods, semantics, semiotics, etc.) that should be attended by every student in the Master's program. Similarly, the doctoral program could require an advanced course or seminar for all and exclusively doctoral students, in such areas as research methods, new trends in theological study, current debates, etc. For doctoral students this could raise the level of discourse, develop the "community of doctoral students" (doctoral work is famous for isolating students who work alone and with little contact with other doctoral students), and most significantly, begin to insure a higher academic quality in their work.

Because of the lack of time, the EEC was left with many questions about Postgraduate studies based on its reading of Articles 14-16 of the program as described in the 2012-2013 Ετήσια Απογραφική Έκθεση (page numbers refer to the report):

- 1) It seems that all that is required for enrolment in the doctoral program is the successful completion of the Postgraduate Studies program or a recognized equivalent Master's degree.
Note: There appears to be no minimum grade required, however.
(Article 14, p. 24)
- 2) How many professors are actually appointed from outside the School?
(Article 15, p. 24)
- 3) Do statistics exist on how many doctorates and in which foreign languages doctoral dissertations have been written? (Article 15, par. 4, p. 25). It would be helpful to know how this works in practice.

- 4) Article 15, pars. 56, p. 25 raises the question, How does the Three-member Advisory Commission work in practice? (Article 15, par. 1ff, pp. 24-25)
- 5) How does one prove that he or she has gathered “sufficient” material for the purpose of writing a doctoral dissertation? How does one prove “objectively” that there insufficient material has been amassed by the doctoral candidate? How much does this depend on the opinion of the supervising professor? How much is this at the discretion of the other two members of the Advisory Commission? What influence do they have in this matter? (Article 15, pars. 6-7, p. 25)
- 6) What is the grievance procedure in the case of unfair treatment of doctoral candidates by his or her supervising professor or by another member of one’s Advisory Commission? Do records exist that show how such situations have been handled in the past? (Article 15, pars. 9-10, p. 26, and 17, par. 2, p. 27)
- 7) What’s the purpose of grading a doctoral thesis? (Article 16, par. 5, p. 27). Perhaps a system of «Accepted As Is,» «Accepted with Modifications,» and «Not Accepted» would be adequate. It might also lead to higher quality in theses because the Supervisor would only want to allow the highest quality work to proceed to the Viva Voce presentation. Students would thus be encouraged to submit their best thesis work, rather than poorer work that receives a lower grade, yet still receiving the degree.

A final question that the School should begin to explore is how alumni of the post-graduate programs are using their degrees in theology. As part of the self-evaluation process, alumni could be surveyed at regular intervals, e.g., immediately after graduation, five years after, ten years, etc. Are these alumni able to find positions that directly employ their theological training, whether in the Church, the schools, or the other agencies (whether in Greece or elsewhere) named in School’s express aims? Can these venues absorb all the graduates from year to year? Or are these alumni using their degrees in other ways? How satisfied are the alumni with their academic preparation? This data would be extremely useful in assessing the curriculum’s outcomes.

B. Teaching

Please comment on :

- Teaching methods used
- Teaching staff/ student ratio
- Teacher/student collaboration
- Adequacy of means and resources
- Use of information technologies
- Examination system

The EEC was able to attend only a few classes of undergraduates and graduate programs, watching live classroom experiences. The committee was also able to look at syllabi and the course information from the MODIP system of the University.

The faculty members repeatedly discussed that the number of undergraduate students is too large, and the faculty members did not have adequate support to manage such numbers, e.g. evaluating 200 final examinations. Also, the lecture halls are frequently not large enough to accommodate all students registered for classes. However, class attendance is not required, and class attendance is poor, so questions of space may not be critical. Should the University or School begin to require class attendance, then lack of space would become an issue. As it is, many classes are taught by lectures with little time for questions and discussions because the class is too large. Many class sessions involve the use of Power Point presentations. Classes often use Blackboard containing additional readings and experiences (the EEC did not have the time to investigate this). Lecturing often leads to an instructional style of handing over information from teacher to student. Students often mentioned that the goals of a class are often repeating the content and conclusions of the assigned readings and lectures from their professors. Engaging and possibly requiring doctoral students – perhaps with scholarship funds as incentives – to serve as teaching assistants, leading discussion groups, teaching smaller sections of undergraduate classes, assisting with undergraduate student assessment could alleviate many of these issues.

The process of instruction appears to rely heavily on the transfer of information from the professor to the student, sometimes in a “rote” manner, perhaps due to the quality of the students. Providing access to primary sources is central to academic research and the School’s stated goals in this area are admirable. In the classroom students could be given the same sources and asked to investigate them looking for “the questions to be solved,” the context of the source, the concerns of its author, the process the author used to arrive at his or her conclusions and the reception of these conclusions by the period in question and through the years following, etc. This could strengthen the instructional environment, assuring the acquisition of information, but adding critical thinking skills such as analysis, evaluation, and synthesis, leading to improved research and writing skills. This would transfer, over time, from undergraduate to graduate to doctoral work, steadily improving the quality of the research conducted and disseminated by the School.

The quality of education at any institution can only be significantly improved by having clear course outcomes and teaching and evaluation processes that are tied to the course outcomes. Students writing research and other papers, reading and discussions, and other classroom experiences (debates, projects, presentations) supervised by faculty members and/or advanced graduate students are time tested methods in university classes.

Adding Power Point presentations to classes certainly adds to the nature of a lecture, providing opportunities for a visual presentation of main points, examples of texts, images, short videos, and given the high quality of the WI-FI network in classrooms, access to information available on the internet. It is a strength that the School wants to use new technologies in instruction, but greater training in better use of these technologies for instruction must be undertaken. Because most classrooms are “smart classrooms,” with fixed projectors and cables for easy connection, taking advantage of the capability of this technology is very positive. On the other hand, merely reading the content of Power Point slides to students as a lecture reinforces the passive nature of learning in the classrooms and the repetition of presented information as the main purpose of learning.

According to the information on MODIP, many courses report one method of examination of a student, often an oral examination. In discussions with faculty members – especially junior faculty – they mentioned that they strive to use multiple means of assessment – papers, exams, projects, and an oral exam. More thorough descriptions on MODIP would be helpful here. The increasing use of on-line examinations through Blackboard and other such software is a positive development. However, on-line exams with multiple choice and short answer questions leans on “rote learning” rather than critical thinking and research skills. In addition, faculty members could begin to become to be better skilled in “embedded assessment strategies” for their courses.

Faculty members have personal websites, with courses listed and through the site, there is access to the MODIP system with the course information, such as a general discussion of the course, learning objectives for the class, the readings, the assignments of the course, methods of examination, and links to Blackboard.

In this area, the EEC found unevenness in the information provided to students about courses. In some cases the syllabus was quite complete, providing week to week information about course readings, content,

assignments, etc. In other cases the syllabus was very vague, providing very general learning outcomes, such as teamwork and thinking critically, or a schedule covering 5 or more weeks of content in just a few words. In some cases the readings assigned were enormous, more than probably can be accomplished realistically while in others the readings assigned were too few. Students mentioned that their teachers do not always adhere to the syllabus, diverting from the planned material, not completing the course content, but yet they are still held responsible for all course content, whether it was presented in class or not.

From the syllabi we received, the EEC could see that course readings often rely on «classical texts» in Orthodox theology by important authors from fifty to seventy-five years ago, e.g., Georges Florovsky or Ioannis Foundoulis. In conversation, it became evident that the faculty members work to balance these «classical texts» with «contemporary thinkers» in their courses. However, it was difficult to ascertain this from the syllabi.

Of special note is the experience of non-Orthodox Christian students in an Orthodox Christian School of Theology. Through ERASMUS, the School is steadily increasing the numbers of foreign students and non-Orthodox foreign students. This is an excellent way for the sources of the Orthodox Church to be shared and studied in an academically rigorous environment. A recurring theme in the discussions with faculty and students was the «openness» of the faculty to diverse ideas and people. That many student come from abroad to study in the School of Theology is a positive development and should be encouraged. The School of Theology appears well suited to receiving non-Orthodox Christian students from abroad.

Students are asked to evaluate their courses. The EEC had the opportunity to review the questionnaire being used and the responses. The School reported that the response rate is still very low. One challenge has been the transition from a manual, “paper and pencil system” to the electronic system. Methods to create incentives for increased student participation should be investigated and considered for future implementation. The EEC heard that students were afraid of the old system, that faculty members might grade the student respondent harshly based on their responses in the manual system. Emphasizing with students the importance of these course evaluations, their anonymity, and that the School uses this data for self-evaluation and development will over time build more trust in the system.

Significantly, the “feedback loop” from “syllabus to course evaluation” needs improvement. Courses with thorough syllabi with specific and reasonable learning objectives, a clear schedule, organized readings and presentations, and multiple means of student assessment can be better evaluated. As this information is returned to the instructor, then courses can be adjusted over time. This can provide the data that the School and individual faculty member needs for self-evaluation as well as external evaluation.

The question of how to lower undergraduate student: teacher ratio must be addressed. Faculty members regularly discussed that the current student to teacher ratio needs to be adjusted downward or greater academic support needs to be provided to instructors to manage the ratio. The EEC agrees that while two hundred students enrolled in a single undergraduate class can attend a lecture by one faculty member, these same students cannot be effectively engaged in discussion or have research projects and examinations evaluated by a lone instructor. The EEC was told that very few students actually attend classes (because attendance is not required), but managing student papers and examinations is practically impossible to do. This means that a course may be reduced to reading a 100 page book and taking an exam, probably orally, and in a rote manner, hardly university level teaching. Some of this could be addressed by engaging doctoral students as teaching assistants or with greater use of on-line, distance, learning protocols (The School already uses the on-line learning platform Blackboard, so the technology is there). Greater use of technology could help support the curriculum on this point, but this would change the work load of faculty members (it is a lot of work, very time consuming, to do on-line teaching), thus reconsidering the teaching load of individual faculty members would also be needed. On-line teaching also requires administrative and technical support.

Finally, the School in its presentation and discussions appears very aware of these challenges. They are already working to address many of these issues.

C. Research

For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate level, if necessary.

Research is an important strength of the School, as noted before, especially in such contemporary approaches to hermeneutics, sociology of religion, the contemporary dialogue among Church, State, and Society, Multi-culturalism and Pluralism, Inter-religious dialogue, ancient and other religions, and

more. The growing developments in “inter-disciplinarity” demonstrate that the School is engaged with contemporary discourse and research in theology.

The reports provided to the EEC contained a great deal of information about the faculty’s research and publications, including detailed listings, tables showing the number of articles in peer-reviewed journals and non-reviewed journals, to books and monographs. The numbers and tables provided in the Annual Report and the bibliographies provided to the EEC show that the professors are very productive and engaged in research. It shows very positive developments and confirms the School’s reputation for being a strong research center. The fourfold increase in citations is very impressive. Their participation in international conferences and engagement with international scholars demonstrates a highly engaged and active School. Naturally, this information should be part of each individual faculty member’s self-evaluation and their external evaluation in order to ascertain which faculty members are being more productive, which are being cited more frequently, etc., to determine the impact of particular faculty members in their respective fields.

The School has also developed their own E-journals: *Synthesis*, *Culture and Research*, and *Fragmenta HellenoSlavica*. The EEC received a presentation on these journals. As sustaining print journals becomes increasingly problematic, these are positive developments for the School. Nurturing their development and promotion to increase readership will be needed.

This being said, most of the faculty is still publishing heavily in the Greek language and in Greece, which limits the international impact of the School. This keeps the level of discourse internal to Greece, and often gives the impression, in international circles, that Greek theology is insular and introverted. The School is aware of this challenge, and we have seen substantial efforts to expand the scope of publications in English and German, especially in the last years. Such a widening of the scope would be expected to have a positive impact on the quality of research and the impact of the School. In addition, finding ways to develop good translations of the works and publications of the School would help.

Funding of research and travel to academic conferences is always a challenge even at the largest and best funded of universities. Globally, faculty development budgets for research and travel have been slashed. Given the economic context of AIIΘ today, this reality is also being faced.

Moving forward, the School and AΠΘ will need to find a feasible balance between teaching and student advisement responsibilities and research and publications.

D. All Other Services

For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate level, if necessary.

Library

The EEC toured the Library in the School of Theology building, through all levels. The library itself was organized well, but the librarians admitted that there are issues with space. The librarians have maintained a good schedule of cataloguing, keeping the collection current. The processes for acquisitions, cataloguing, and managing usage of the library have been updated and modernized over the last 10 years. Holdings are variable by area. The efforts to acquire the collections of late or retired faculty are laudable. An annual meeting of the School Library Committee to review acquisitions is a good start, but more frequent meetings could be beneficial.

An important concern was raised that the library has had to cancel subscriptions to many journals because of the budget cutbacks. This could cause large gaps in the collection over time, depending on how long these cuts remain in place, thus frustrating the scholarly work of the School and Students.

While compact shelving in the stacks has added life to the capacity of the library, a plan needs to be in place for the day when the library outgrows the space, e.g, remote storage of infrequently used books. The EEC noted that only 3 of the public computers were functional.

Our guide admitted to the “sewer odor,” on one floor of the lower level. This points to issues of hygienic working conditions and to possible problems with the infrastructure of the building itself (or the current construction of the Metro station near the building?). The rare book room was well secured, but admittedly the room lacked fire suppression systems that are often found in such spaces.

Chapel

The EEC visited the chapel of the School and learned about its history and function, receiving a copy of the schedule of services for the semester. The chapel naturally is a central place for the community to gather on a regular basis and have their spiritual needs met. The chapel is a place for private prayer and worship, and while not explicitly stated, provides a space where the connections between faith and scholarship can be made. In addition, the

chapel serves as a “classroom,” providing a place for instruction in the celebration of the divine services of the Orthodox Church as well as a place for exposing students to the richness of Orthodox worship. The EEC noted the creativity of the liturgical life in the chapel, especially how students are exposed to a greater variety of liturgical services than would be found in a typical parish, e.g., the Liturgy of St. Gregory the Theologian.

While the EEC did not visit the room, we were told about how the School of Theology has a room dedicated for Islamic prayer and that this space is used by the local Muslim community in Thessaloniki. We were told that the space needs a better location and renovation.

Computer Lab

The EEC visited the School’s Computer Lab and received a presentation on how it is used by the School. The recent acquisition of new computers is positive.

Hagiographic Studio

The presence of the art studio and its connection to courses in Byzantine art is positive. This points to a concern for learning that is more than “academic” but also practical, maintaining and enhancing the Byzantine heritage, as well as providing training and experience in skills – icon painting – that could be utilized in the job market. Perhaps in time, the skills being taught could be expanded to include restoration of iconographic works, mosaic work, all within the framework of ecclesiastical art.

Pedagogical Workshop

The Workshop belonging to the School of Theology has been in existence for nearly 60 years, pointing to a history of forward-looking faculty in this field, providing students with a place to develop their skills as teachers. As the School pointed out, the workshop has changed over the years and today’s Workshop is well appointed with equipment devoted to the use of technology for instruction. The rest of the space appeared to be used for other purposes, but perhaps this was because of the site visit. Perhaps the addition of other educational resources (e.g., other audio visual aids, various hands-on resources, manipulatives) that a teacher might use with various topics of instruction could be obtained over time. In addition, this workshop could be used to assist current professors and teachers of the School to improve their teaching skills. The programs being offered by the Workshop to the wider community were strong.

The EEC noted that the building itself was older and had “seen better days.” Much of the building seemed to be designed to maintain security, with bars on windows, some broken windows, metal fencing near walls to prevent vandalism and graffiti, and heavy locks on offices. The classrooms the EEC visited were “Spartan,” with white walls, desks and chairs in rows, albeit with the projectors and screens. On one colder morning, we noted the lack of heat in the classroom we visited. Students needed to wear their coats or jackets to stay warm (as did we). There were issues of cleanliness in some areas. The EEC was told that the cleaning staff had been reduced and the School made a collection to raise funds to clean parts of the building.

The EEC met with members of the Administrative Staff. In this meeting, the general sentiment was that there are too few people trying to do too many things, largely caused by cuts to the administrative budget and personnel. The increased number of reports, the challenges of managing traditional correspondence and electronic correspondence (e-mail), have stretched the Administrative Staff to their limits. To better evaluate these claims, providing an organizational chart of the School, showing School and Administration and Staff, their lines of accountability, and how these numbers have changed (reduced) over the last few years would have been useful. In addition, as mentioned at the beginning of this report, while reviewing the finances of the School was not part of the external evaluation process, it would have been useful to have a discussion with key financial officers so that the EEC could better understand the financial situation of the School.

Collaboration with social, cultural and production organizations

The School has many collaborations and exchanges with institutions and organizations outside Greece. There are clear criteria for establishing them, namely, “the quality of the education at the other institution,” and “the specialization of the other institution in areas of theology and religious studies.” The School has worked to maintain geographically balanced relationships with enough diversity along religious lines. The School participates in ERASMUS.

The reports given to the EEC reveal that only a relatively few faculty members appear to have participated in the exchanges over the last few years. The reports, however, were incomplete, making it very difficult to determine if

this is a short-term anomaly, something more widespread, or that the report itself was incomplete.

The School has well established relationships for exchanges with schools and universities in the Balkans, Western and Eastern Europe, the United States, and Asia. Individual faculty members coordinate specific collaborations with additional institutions in the United States, Eastern and Western Europe, and the Middle East. A very interesting exchange that is in the earliest stage of discussion and should the program in Islamic Studies be approved is that with the Royal Institute for Inter-faith Studies and the University of Amman.

Faculty members should be encouraged to participate to the best of their ability in these exchanges. The School regularly discussed its openness to be in conversation with other partners, from religious to geographic. Greater participation with these collaborations and exchanges would be beneficial to the School as well as to the individual faculty member. Orthodox Christian theology has a tendency to become self-referential and self-marginalizing. These exchanges, collaborations, and contacts broaden the perspectives of the School and these can only enhance the curriculum and instruction of the School.

The School should continue these collaborations while attempting to establish criteria for their periodic evaluation in order to determine whether or not they should be continued or altered in some way, in order to maintain the highest quality exchanges. Accumulating exchanges that have poor or no participation or are of poor quality can become an administrative challenge.

The School is actively involved with cultural and other social organizations, organizing events, exhibitions, conferences and exchange. These programs broaden the exposure of the School and students to numerous communities in Thessaloniki and in the international academic community. Of particular note were the programs on Women in Theological Research held in 2010, 2011, and the planned event for August 2014. Highlighting and promoting an increasing role for women in academic theology – particularly within Orthodox Christianity – is significant. These programs should continue. Like many programs of this nature, expanding these events probably depends most highly on the initiative of the administration and individual faculty members. Finding funding sources for such programs is always a challenge, but outside funds, from individuals and foundations, can usually be located with the assistance of Offices of Institutional Advancement.

E. Strategic Planning, Perspectives for Improvement and Dealing with Potential Inhibiting Factors

For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate level, if necessary.

The School of Theology's Strategic Plan was being finalized at the time of the site visit and should be complete by the end of the present academic year. The content of the Plan was presented to the EEC in the various meetings. The School is working in an organized manner, looking towards its future.

Two forward looking post-graduate programs look very promising and are notable: the program in Islamic Studies and the English language Masters in Orthodox Theology. Both programs in general demonstrate the openness of the School and its willingness to enter into conversation with new dialogue partners, in these cases, Islam and English-speaking students from around the world. Both programs offer the potential for new institutional partners to support and enrich the School. Both programs offer challenging new directions for the School and its heretofore self-understanding. The program in Islam recognizes the distinct location and history of Thessaloniki. The School's relationships with the Ecumenical Patriarchate, as well as with the Church in Western Thrace could be in a position to contribute greatly to Islamic studies, e.g., languages, archaeological history, artistic and political conversations, and in a way that would be both respectful and informative of the real challenges of today and the future, not only theoretically, but practically, for Greek society as well as European relationships with Islam and Islamic societies. The English language Master's program would certainly encourage greater contact – faculty and student exchanges, collaborative programs – with the English speaking theological world. These contacts, first with Orthodox theologians such as those in the United States and Europe, as well as with non-Orthodox theologians throughout the world, could give the School the opportunity to emerge from relative obscurity in theological circles.

There are many “feedback loops” within a university. Data is being collected and reports are being generated, but the process of using this information to inform and influence the School in general, its curricula, its courses, and its programs is only beginning to be put in place. First, there is the feedback loop of curriculum for a degree program, the courses and their syllabi, and the classroom and student experience. These should be tied more closely so that

the classroom experience is connected to clear and specific course outcomes and the course outcomes in total support the curriculum and degree outcomes. Second there is the feedback loop between School and faculty members to University Administration and policies, so that there is an ongoing dialogue between them to review policies and procedures related to the aim and scope of the programs, issues of faculty members (e.g, student-teacher ratio), and how they all contribute to the life of the University. Collecting quantitative data through student and alumni surveys, tables of information with grade point averages, articles published, and the like, are essential. Gathering qualitative data through meetings and focus group questioning will also be essential. In some respects, the meetings that the EEC held with various individuals or groups provided the qualitative information and compared this with the quantitative data provided by the School. The School and University should institutionalize such processes as part of the periodic self-evaluation.

The recent creation of a Joint Committee comprised of members from the two theological Schools – Theology and Pastoral – is a promising development for the future and could yield fruitful results for both. Common events and activities, especially building on the distinct strengths of the two faculties for common research would serve to strengthen the whole. Already one summer program unites faculty members from the two Schools. Interdisciplinarity is an increasing development in the academic arena, in academic research, and in curriculum development. Perhaps the University and the School could explore the development of a “committee on collaboration”, comprised of members of other Schools with similar themes (e.g., philosophy, law, sciences). The EEC was informed that such possibilities were quite difficult to accomplish under older laws governing the University, but the newer laws have facilitated such avenues of collaboration.

Developing a culture of evaluation and assessment. As one faculty member told the EEC, “we are afraid of evaluation” and as we often heard, there is no culture of evaluation in the School. It will take time to build trust in this system, especially as it is beginning at a time of financial stress and cutbacks in the university, which only heightens fears. The School has collected large amounts of statistical data about its work. This is an important first step in the evaluative process. Combining statistics with regular individual and collective self-evaluation will enrich the level of information collected. Making decisions on curriculum development, courses, and faculty promotion that are based on the data collected – quantitative and qualitative – will begin to create the culture of evaluation that is desired in this process and over time build trust.

The EEC heard from students and some alumni of the School. As part of the Internal Evaluation process, periodic surveys of alumni could be performed to assess the opinions of alumni about their education and collect data about how they use their diplomas and their levels of satisfaction with their academic preparation.

F. Final Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC

For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate level, if necessary.

Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC on:

- the development of the Department to this date and its present situation, including explicit comments on good practices and weaknesses identified through the External Evaluation process and recommendations for improvement
- the Department's readiness and capability to change/improve
- the Department's quality assurance.

The School of Theology – teaching staff, administration, and staff -- has made a tremendous effort in preparing for this first-ever external evaluation. The structures and procedures already established for this process, the data collected, the commitment and openness to the future, is promising for the future of the School. That the School has accomplished this under difficult circumstances is worthy of praise. The School is working to face many challenges as it moves into the future with honesty and creativity. The EEC was impressed by the commitment and dedication of the School both in terms of their present situation and their future.

The School is already well engaged with constituencies outside the School and appears highly collegial internally on decision-making processes. Greater documentation of the dialogues within the School and outside the School about the various dimensions of the life of the School – about faculty members, students, degree programs, etc. – would serve at least two purposes. First, it would add to the “data set” about decisions. For example, it would provide the evidence for the rationale of any curriculum change. Was a change in a program implemented in response to students, a faculty member, or church authorities? Second, it would provide transparency and accountability about the decisions being made. For example, who decided to add a new program or event to the calendar?

The School and University should consider the establishment of an Office of Institutional Advancement. The School and University should not think it “improper” to engage in this kind of institutional activity. Many public and well-established private universities have made major commitments to institutional advancement. This office could provide many support services, from fund raising activities from alumni, foundations, and other donors, to organizing and communicating with alumni about School and University activities and programs. Searching for outside financial support for the cultural programs, research activities and conferences, translations and publications, collaborative exchanges, as well as potential donors for other elements of the School’s work and life should not fall solely on the shoulders of individual faculty members but on the broader work of the School and University.

The University’s work to create an Alumni Association is a positive development. The School of Theology is laudably moving ahead with this program as quickly as possible. And it recognizes that contact with alumni would, over time, provide many benefits to the School and University. First, alumni can provide feedback about their experiences of the curriculum and degree programs as noted earlier in this report. Second, alumni can become a network for supporting current students and new graduates, from career advisement to job searches. Third, alumni can be cultivated to financially support the School and University.

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