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HELLENIC REPUBLIC



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# Accreditation Report for the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS)

Institution Name: Ionian University

Date: 12 December 2020



Επιχειρησιακό Πρόγραμμα  
Ανάπτυξη Ανθρώπινου Δυναμικού,  
Εκπαίδευση και Διά Βίου Μάθηση

Με τη συγχρηματοδότηση της Ελλάδας και της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης



enqa.

Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS) of the **Ionian University** 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 Internal Quality Assurance System** (IQAS) of the **Ionian University** comprised the following four (4) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

- 1. Professor Emeritus Emmanuel Thanassoulis (Chair)**  
Aston University, Birmingham, United Kingdom
- 2. Professor John Volakis**  
Florida International University, Florida, USA
- 3. Professor Konstantinos Salonitis**  
Cranfield University, Cranfield, United Kingdom
- 4. Dr. Paraskevas Dalianis**  
Uni Systems S.M.S.A., Athens, Greece

## **II. Review Procedure and Documentation**

The evaluation was carried out remotely over the period 30 November to 5 December 2020. Prior to November 30<sup>th</sup> the External Evaluation and Accreditation Panel (**EEAP**) was sent background material originating both from the Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (**HAHE**) and the Ionian University (**IU**). The material included the Accreditation Proposal by IU along with supporting documents including the University's strategy and aspirations, the manual for Self-Assessment, the University's Statutes, quality targets and target setting process. Meetings were held online via Zoom with staff from IU during 1-3 December inclusive. These normally took place between 15:00 and 21:00 Greek time in order to enable a suitable time window for all, as participants covered time zones where the earliest time was 7 hours ahead of the latest.

All meetings included all members of the EEAP. From the side of the Institution, the meetings on Tuesday, December 1<sup>st</sup> began with a brief welcome by the Rector Andreas Floros who outlined the structure, staff and student composition of the University, including its aspirations going forward as an integrated Institution with the former TEI of the Ionian islands. The meeting was joined by Vice Rectors Yarenis, Makris, Banou and Beneki and covered key features of the Institution. These included the fact that at this stage the Institution is in a transitory state due to the merger with the Ionian Islands TEI in 2018, the need to consolidate and rationalize course provision while also dealing with the multi-island setting of the University, where transport between the islands is very time consuming. Two meetings followed on December 1<sup>st</sup>, one with members of the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (**MODIP**) and then with the Departmental quality assurance members (**OMEA**). These two meetings lasted just under 4 hours. They covered extensively all the aspects of quality assurance ranging from procedures for quality assurance to coordination between University strategy on teaching, research and infrastructure and their reflection in the measures and procedures overseen by MODIP in collaboration with the Departmental OMEA.

On December 2<sup>nd</sup> the EEAP met a group of undergraduate students, followed by a group of postgraduate students. The discussions focused on their experiences as students, their access to teachers, available equipment and software and more generally student progression and welfare. Following these two meetings a meeting was held with administrative staff. This covered the services of the Institution that they support in general, and their engagement with MODIP in particular in the context of quality assurance. This meeting was succeeded by two more meetings, one with alumni and the other with external stakeholders. The discussion with the alumni covered both their experiences as students and the extent to which their courses prepared them for employment. The local stakeholders focused on the contribution the University makes to the local economy and cultural life. Both parties were very positive about their association with the University.

The final day of meetings (3<sup>rd</sup> of December) covered an on-line tour of the buildings of the University in all four islands where the University has Departments. This was followed by meetings with MODIP and OMEA staff for any final clarifications that the EEAP needed as input in their assessment. The day concluded with a meeting with the Rector Andreas Floros and Vice-Rector Ilias Yerenis for an initial feedback by the EEAP.

All meetings proceeded without technical hitches. All presentations were clear and well prepared. Participants answered all questions the panel put to them.

### **III. Institution Profile**

The Ionian University was set up in 1984 with its centre in Corfu island, one of the 7 main islands in the Ionian Sea to the west of mainland Greece. It can be seen as a successor to the Ionian Academy which existed between 1824 and 1864 when the Ionian islands were integrated into the Greek State. Between 1984 and 2019 the University consisted of 6 academic Departments. During the academic year 2019-2020 the 6 Departments of the TEI of the Ionian islands became part of the Ionian University which therefore now consists of 12 Departments located in 4 Ionian islands. The Departments offer a number of undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes, taken by a total of 9,600 undergraduate and 560 postgraduate students. An additional 420 students are engaged in PhD research. There are 162 academic and 95 administrative staff on permanent contracts. There are additional academics on temporary, adjunct or on various types of contract numbering circa 90.

Two distinguishing features of the University are that it is a multi-island University, and many of its Departments cover cultural and artistic subjects not normally seen as integral to the academic disciplines covered by Universities. The Departments of the University are located in 4 islands (Corfu, Lefkada, Kefalonia and Zakynthos). The islands are relatively distant from each other and travelling between them is time consuming. Thus, in terms of interactions in person between students and staff they can only in practice happen within island and indeed within town. The three issues – merger with TEI, multi-island location and discipline diversity- present challenges which the Institution is facing and aspires to handle successfully. Indeed, in the case of discipline diversity it gives it a unique opportunity to distinguish itself as a provider in the Greek higher education landscape, as no other University covers in Greece the same range of disciplines as the Ionian University.

## PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

### Principle 1: Institution Policy for Quality Assurance

**INSTITUTIONS SHOULD APPLY A QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY AS PART OF THEIR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT. THIS POLICY SHOULD BE DEVELOPED AND ADJUSTED ACCORDING TO THE INSTITUTIONS' AREAS OF ACTIVITY. IT SHOULD ALSO BE MADE PUBLIC AND IMPLEMENTED BY ALL PARTIES INVOLVED.**

*The quality assurance policy is the guiding document which sets the operating principles of the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS), the principles for the continuous improvement of the Institution, as well as the Institution's obligation for public accountability. It supports the development of quality culture, according to which, all internal stakeholders assume responsibility for quality and engage in quality assurance. This policy has a formal status and is publicly available.*

*The policy for quality is implemented through:*

- *the commitment for compliance with the laws and regulations that govern the Institution;*
- *the establishment, review, redesign and redefinition of quality assurance objectives, that are fully in line with the institutional strategy.*

*This policy mainly supports:*

- *the organisation of the internal quality assurance system;*
- *the Institution's leadership, departments and other organisational units, individual staff members and students to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance;*
- *the integrity of academic principles and ethics, guarding against discriminations, and encouragement of external stakeholders to be involved in quality assurance;*
- *the continuous improvement of learning and teaching, research and innovation;*
- *the quality assurance of the programmes and their alignment with the relevant HAHE Standards;*
- *the effective organisation of services and the development and maintenance of infrastructure;*
- *the allocation and effective management of the necessary resources for the operation of the Institution;*
- *the development and rational allocation of human resources.*

*The way in which this policy is designed, approved, implemented, monitored and revised constitutes one of the processes of the internal quality assurance system.*

#### Institution Compliance

The Ionian University has established its Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS). This decision was approved by the University's 12<sup>th</sup> senate meeting on March 28, 2018 and then published at the Greek Government official gazette (Εφημερίδα της Κυβέρνησης) 16047 Αρ. Φύλλου 1468, April 27, 2018.

The Ionian University has also published a number of documents relating to the policy of the Institution. These documents, as submitted to the accreditation folder, include:

- Πολιτική Ποιότητας Ιδρύματος (Quality Assurance Policy of Ionian University)
- Στρατηγικός & Επιχειρησιακός Προγραμματισμός (Strategic and Operational Planning)

- Στοχοθεσία Ποιότητας του Ιδρύματος (Establishing the Quality Assurance Objectives)
- Εγχειρίδιο Ποιότητας ΕΣΔΠ (Quality Assurance Manual)
- Εσωτερικοί Κανονισμοί (Internal Regulations Manual)

The members of the EEAP in their meetings with the Rector, Vice-Rectors and MODIP were able to observe the obvious support and commitment of the administration to the Quality Assurance goals. Ionian University has an established set of internal regulations that is based on the model of internal regulations for the operation of Higher Educational Institutes. The Ionian University underwent a major restructuring after merging with the Technological Educational Institute of Ionian Islands in 2018, and as a result of this the documents relating to the policy of the Institution attempt to reflect the diversity of disciplines included.

The Ionian University has published a set of six strategic objectives, and it has mapped these on quality assurance targets and indicators, following the common practice for all Greek Higher Education Institutes. The indicators / metrics set for each objective are clear. In the following paragraphs brief comments with further suggestions on each objective are provided.

- Strategic objective 1 is clear and well defined focusing on the teaching provision of the University. Seven quality targets have been defined and mapped to respective indicators. The objective should, however, better reflect postgraduate and doctoral programs and students and could be even more ambitious (e.g. aiming for improvements of more than 2% per year).
- Strategic objective 2 focuses on the support and development of research provision. Six quality targets have been identified which are clearly mapped to indicators. It is suggested that the indicators be articulated and further clarified as relates to the timeline of attainment and variation by career level.
- Strategic objective 3 relates to internationalization of education and research having set two quality targets relating to the student and staff mobility. The targets defined are important and fit for purpose. It is further suggested that targets and indicators be set regarding the ranking of the University in league tables, the possibility of developing teaching programmes delivered in foreign languages, the recruitment of international students etc.
- Strategic objectives 4 and 5 are related to the internal operations of the University. Objective 4 focuses on the development of human resources. It is suggested that an indicator be devised related to the development and training of personnel. Objective 5 focuses on the available infrastructure. Ionian University is facing a challenging reality of having to manage and operate facilities in four islands. The indicators that have been set present cumulative data which allows the monitoring of the whole University. It is further suggested these indicators be monitored for each campus in the different islands as well.
- Finally, Objective 6 sets quality targets related to the Institution's contribution to the local community. The targets defined are clear and the associated indicators allow the monitoring of the improvement achieved.

The EEAP believes that, given the plethora of the objectives and targets set, that these should be prioritized for the easier implementation of improvements and the sensible allocation of resources.

There are adequate processes in place for the periodical review and improvement of the set policies for quality assurance. The system in place allows for tracking such improvements and assessing their efficiency and efficacy. The communication strategy and approach of the quality policy to the University's community as well as the external stakeholders is clear and fit for purpose.

The members of the EEAP confirm the Institution's constituencies (faculty, administration, students, alumni, stakeholders and local government) are fully supportive of the Institutions goals and spoke enthusiastically of the Institution's programs.

### Panel Judgement

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

### Panel Recommendations

- The strategic plan set is a good starting point. The senior management should look into further refining this plan (a number of management techniques such as SWOT, PESTLE etc. can be used for this purpose at both Institutional and Departmental level).
- Due to the plethora of strategic objectives and targets set as well as the metrics to be monitored, senior management is advised to set priorities and identify the "few" important ones that most of the effort should be invested in.
- It is also suggested that further indicators be introduced that are related to the development of the employees themselves (for example for the induction of new academics in academic practices). In a similar way indicators should be introduced for monitoring the training of administration staff, through for example the number of training hours per year each person took.

## **Principle 2: Provision and Management of the Necessary Resources**

**INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ENSURE APPROPRIATE FUNDING FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING ACTIVITIES, RESEARCH, AND ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES IN GENERAL. RELEVANT REGULATIONS SHOULD BE IN PLACE TO ASSURE THAT ADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES FOR TEACHING AND RESEARCH ARE AVAILABLE AND READILY ACCESSIBLE (E.G. CLASSROOMS, LABORATORIES, LIBRARIES, IT INFRASTRUCTURE, PROVISION OF FREE MEALS, DORMITORIES, CAREER GUIDANCE AND SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES, ETC.).**

### Funding

*The Institution ensures adequate funding to cover not only the overhead and operational costs (regular budget and public investment budget) but also costs related to research, innovation and development (Special Account for Research Funds, Property Development and Management Company). The financial planning and the operation of an effective financial management system constitute necessary tools for the full exploitation of the resources.*

### Infrastructure

*Based on the requirements and needs arising during its operation, the Institution has determined ways to define, allocate and maintain all the necessary resources to ensure its smooth and proper functioning, i.e. teaching, research and auxiliary facilities, equipment and software, support facilities (cleaning, transportation, communication) etc. The scope of the IQAS should include a suitable managing and monitoring system to safeguard the infrastructure. Compliance to the internal regulations is also necessary.*

### Working environment

*The Institution ensures -as far as possible- that the working environment has a positive effect on the performance of all members of the academic community (students and staff). Factors that are taken into consideration towards the creation of such a favorable environment are, among others, the sanitary facilities, the lighting/heating/ventilation system, the cleanliness and the overall appearance of the premises, etc. The scope of the IQAS should include an appropriate managing and monitoring system to promote a favorable working environment and to ensure compliance with the existing provisions.*

### Human resources

*The Institution and the academic units are responsible for the human resources development. The subject areas, as well as the competences and tasks of the staff members are defined by the corresponding job descriptions that are established within the operation scope of each academic or administrative unit. These posts are filled following the requirements set by the law, on the basis of transparent, fair and published processes. The continuous training and evaluation of the staff is considered necessary for the enhancement of the performance, which is recorded and monitored as provided in the context of the IQAS.*

*The Institution should acknowledge and provide the necessary resources for the implementation of the IQAS, its enhancement and the provision of services that assist the satisfaction of the quality assurance requirements. Moreover, the Institution (Quality Assurance Unit-QAU) should properly organise the administrative structure and staffing of the IQAS, with a clear allocation of competences and tasks to its staff members.*

## **Institution Compliance**

### **Funding**

The Ionian University's financial planning and financial management system is bound by the prevailing national and sectorial financial environment. Following a ten yearlong national austerity plan, the University is starting to be able to access national funds for recruiting new

academics. The University has also been successful in securing administration staff through the public servants' mobility programme. The Institution is proficient and efficient in securing and spending regional funds from the "General Secretariat for Investments & Development". The financial planning and the operation of the financial management system is described in detail in the quality manual. The Institution maintains a Financial and Logistic Support Unit of Special Account of Research Funds.

## **Infrastructure**

The University has to operate and manage facilities that are spread out in four different islands. Several Departments support the Institution in terms of infrastructure management and maintenance. The Headquarters are in Corfu, where the University is using a number of buildings in the city's historic centre. The distance between the buildings is not long, and although there is not a clear campus, the students can still have access with relative ease to all required facilities. In the other three islands, there are clear campuses. In the case of the island of Kefalonia, there are two departments in different cities (in Argostoli and Lixouri).

The maintenance of the buildings, depending on their whereabouts is either sub-contracted or managed by the Institution's services. The Institution has managed to secure funds (in total €29.2M) for building, renovating and expanding buildings for teaching and accommodation of students in the medium term. Furthermore, considerable investment (in total €16.9M) has been reported for the updating and purchasing of networking and teaching infrastructure as well as for a new information system. The University supports a substantial proportion of its students with accommodation.

Unfortunately, because of COVID-19 traveling restrictions, EEAP was not able to physically visit the facilities.

## **Working environment**

The Institution is striving to achieve a working environment that has a positive effect on the performance of all members of the academic community. Unfortunately, the EEAP was not able to visit the facilities and evidence the working environment. The meetings of the members of the EEAP with academics and students supported the submitted documentary evidence. The staff and students interviewed by the panel appeared to enjoy the working environment albeit in some instances provision of computers and software was tight. The University has a clearly defined green strategy.

## **Human resources**

Discussions with both Academic and Administrative officers highlighted the high level of their satisfaction. The university, as with all other Higher Education Institutes in Greece, relies on the Ministry of Education for opening new academic and administration posts. For almost a decade, the University was not able to open new posts or even replace the vacant ones. The University, during the last two years, has managed to attract new members of staff through a mobility

programme from the public sector. In terms of MODIP and OMEAs, who are responsible for the implementation of the Institution's Quality Assurance System, the human resources available are extensive.

### **Panel Judgement**

<b>Principle 2: Provision &amp; Management of the Necessary Resources</b>	
<b>2.1 Funding</b>	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
<b>2.2 Infrastructure</b>	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
<b>2.3 Working Environment</b>	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
<b>2.4 Human Resources</b>	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

<b>Principle 2: Provision &amp; Management of the Necessary Resources (overall)</b>	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

### **Panel Recommendations**

- To the extent its finances and the applicable legal framework permit the Institution should strive to raise the proportion of staff on permanent contracts compared to those on time-limited contracts in order to enhance continuity of teaching and research.
- The Institution should facilitate and encourage academic staff to be resident on the islands, providing, where possible, temporary weekly accommodation for staff permanently resident away from the island.

## **Principle 3: Establishing Goals for Quality Assurance**

**INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE CLEAR AND EXPLICIT GOALS REGARDING THE ASSURANCE AND CONTINUOUS UPGRADE OF THE QUALITY OF THE OFFERED PROGRAMMES, THE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION ACTIVITIES, AS WELL AS THE SCIENTIFIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES. THESE GOALS MAY BE QUALITATIVE OR QUANTITATIVE AND REFLECT THE INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGY.**

*The Institution's strategy on quality assurance should be translated into time-specific, qualitative and quantitative goals which are regularly monitored, measured and reviewed in the context of the IQAS operation, and following an appropriate procedure.*

*Examples of quality goals:*

- *rise of the average annual graduation rate of the Institution's Undergraduate Programmes to x%;*
- *upgrade of the learning environment through the introduction of digital applications on .....*;
- *improvement of the ratio of scientific publications to teaching staff members to .....*;
- *rise of the total research funding to y%*

*The goals are accompanied by a specific action plan for their achievement, and entail the participation of all stakeholders.*

### **Institution Compliance**

#### Goals and Quality Assurance

The University has established and presented a set of clear goals and how to track these qualities. Specifically, the University has a goal to ensure that 75% of the students graduate within v+2 years (v=the usual length of the degree/programme), and to increase the percentage of students graduating in v years to 62%. In addition, the University has focused on permanent and developing remote teaching programmes. These goals are laudable, and the continuation of remote education options provides a means to increase graduation rates. Notably, MODIP and OMEA have provided well established means (forms and incident documentations, and feedback) for student and alumni feedback at the University and School levels. Further, faculty leaders, students, and alumni have provided strong satisfaction with the programmes and their personal interactions with the instructors. Also, alumni appear to be successful in the workforce and have gone on to post-graduate schools worldwide. In general, the Ionian University is gaining higher reputation, and we noticed much excitement from several Departments and Schools about their achievements. The separation of the Schools across 4 Ionian islands (and 5 cities) did not seem to be a major challenge.

#### Research & Innovation

The University has an impressive number of 18 post-graduate degrees and 37 laboratories, and these are being leveraged to grow research. Further, it is clear that many faculty have excellent research activities of international stature. However, given the young history of the University and the recent integration (since 2018) of academic departments from the former TEI of Ionian

Islands, research is steadily growing and has actually doubled from 2018 to 2019. The Rector also noted recent awards totalling 19M Euros (from the regional and European sources). Notably, the University has presented plans and programs to grow research and innovation following well-established methods. For example: 1) international pursuits of relevant research, 2) interdisciplinary research, 3) recruiting researchers/faculty with strong credentials, and promoting faculty internally, 4) Greece-wide funding growth by 30% to motivate research and innovation, and growth of European funded research by 10%. Challenges related to government and regional funding of research and innovation were noted, but their connectivity and integration with local leaders and innovators seems to grow, providing strength in moving forward. Further, it is clear the administration will focus more on increasing international reputation of its faculty via awards and by hosting workshops, cultural events and exhibitions in areas of strength. It is recommended that the annual evaluations of faculty include referencing, where the type of research output permits, indices like SCOPUS or Clarivate/ISI (widely used University ranking organizations) and Google scholar. It is further recommended that such faculty register to have ORCID numbers and to subsequently register with SCOPUS to ensure proper recording of their work. For faculty engaged in artistic creations, or areas where output is not captured in traditional refereed publications, (see also Principle 6), the Institution should create its own measures to capture the quality and quantity of this output. Initiating annual awards to faculty with top h-indices, top journal and conference awards or artistic output will provide motivation for other faculty to follow and indeed join the University.

#### Administration (funding, human resources, infrastructure management)

The administration seems well organized and excited to pursue the University's goals and plans. The Rector presented specific plans to ensure the quality and modernization of the School teaching and research activities. Specifically, the plan includes:

1. digitization in 4 phases,
2. lifelong learning and technology transfer,
3. enhanced internal evaluation systems and certification,
4. risk assessments and duo secure access to computing systems,
5. continuous interactions with MODIP for quality assurance,
6. continuous update/improvements of services to personnel and students and wide publication of these improvements,
7. office of student advocacy,
8. establishing medical and technical services for student and personnel support,
9. ensuring formalization and continuity of all University services as dictated by local laws and ordinances,
10. effective use of facilities,
11. continuous update of facilities cost of use, and
12. establishment of targeted goals for individual School academic goals and plan for developing these goals.

Among others, the above imply a good understanding of plans that have been well-tested across many Universities to achieve quality and improvements toward specific targets. Indeed, achieving these goals will provide for significant growth in the years to come.

## Resources (funding, human resources, infrastructure)

The administration noted the need for increased didactic and research space as well as the need for consolidating research and innovation in a manner that highlights impact to the regional, national and international constituency.

Current space for 9,600 undergraduate students plus 560 graduate students, and 450 doctoral students is about 33,000 m<sup>2</sup> and is spread across 4 islands (21,000 in Corfu, 5,000 in Zakynthos, 5,900 in Kefalonia, and 1,500 in Lefkada). The plan to construct new buildings will certainly address some of the presented space challenges. Both, students and faculty discussed the need for continuous updates of facilities, particularly VPN access to University computing networks and modernization of computing infrastructure to ensure proper functioning of remote teaching and research activities. In addition, students are inevitably faced with housing access due to the use of local to let properties for tourism. It is therefore important to address this issue at the government level as it is a key aspect of the University's mission to attract and retain top students who will also stay regionally.

## **Panel Judgement**

<b>Principle 3: Establishing Goals for Quality Assurance</b>	
3.1 Study Programmes/ education activities	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
3.2 Research & Innovation	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
3.3 Administration (funding, human resources, infrastructure management)	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
3.4 Resources (funding, human resources, infrastructure)	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

<b>Principle 3: Establishing Goals for Quality Assurance (overall)</b>	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

### **Panel Recommendations**

- Develop year to year improvements in graduation rates, publications, research and outreach activities. These metrics will allow comparative data and will allow for goal setting to achieve improved operation and rankings.
- Internal and external research funding growth is laudable. A plan should be developed on how this growth will be achieved.
- Faculty whose type of research permits should register for ORCID to ensure that SCOPUS, Clarivate/ISI and other platforms properly track their publications.
- Ensure that noted administrative processes relating to metrics, personnel records, assets and infrastructures are tracked and serve to improve growth, rewards and compliance.
- Ensure updated computing facilities are available to students, faculty and staff.
- Increase facility space to support the University's stature and success.

## **Principle 4: Structure, Organisation and Operation of the IQAS**

**INSTITUTIONS SET UP AND ESTABLISH AN INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM, WHICH INCLUDES PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES COVERING ALL AREAS OF ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES AND FUNCTIONS. SPECIAL FOCUS IS GIVEN ON THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING, INCLUDING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT, RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND GOVERNANCE.**

*The key goal of the internal quality assurance system (IQAS) is the development, effective operation and continuous improvement of the whole range of the Institution's activities, and particularly, of teaching, research, innovation, governance and relevant services, according to the international practices - especially those of the European Higher Education Area - and the HAHE principles and guidelines described in these Standards.*

### Structure and organisation

*In each Institution, the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) holds the responsibility for the administration and management of the IQAS. The QAU is set up according to the existing legislative framework and is responsible for:*

- *the development of specialised policy, strategy and relevant processes towards the continuous improvement of the quality of the Institution's work and provisions;*
- *the organisation, operation and continuous improvement of the Institution's internal quality assurance system;*
- *the coordination and support of the evaluation process of the Institution's academic units and other services, and;*
- *the support of the external evaluation and accreditation process of the Institution's programmes and internal quality assurance system in the context of the HAHE principles and guidelines.*

*The Institution's IQAS and its implementation processes are determined by the decisions of the competent bodies, as provided by the law, and are published in the Government Gazette, as well as on the Institution's website. The above are reviewed every six years, at the latest.*

*To achieve the above goals, the QAU collaborates with HAHE, develops and maintains a management information system to store the evaluation data, which are periodically submitted to HAHE, according to the latter's instructions. The QAU is responsible for the systematic monitoring of the evaluation process and for the publication of evaluation-related procedures and their results on the Institution's website.*

*The QAU structure has been approved by the Institution's competent bodies, as provided by the law, while all competences and tasks accruing from this structure are clearly defined.*

### Operation

*The Institution takes action for the design, establishment, implementation, audit and maintenance of the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS), taking into account the Standards' requirements, while making any necessary amendments to ensure fitness to achieve its aims.*

*The above actions include:*

- *provision of all necessary processes and procedures for the successful operation of the IQAS, as well as implementation of the above processes and procedures on all of the Institution's parties involved ;the Institution's areas of activity can constitute the IQAS processes, e.g. teaching, research and innovation, governance, services etc. An IQAS process is an area of activity including data input, data processing and outputs. A procedure defines the way an action is implemented and includes a course of stages or steps, e.g. the curriculum design procedure;*
- *determination of how the IQAS procedures / processes are audited, measured and assessed, and how they interact;*
- *provision of all necessary resources to enable the IQAS function.*

### Documentation

The IQAS documentation includes, among other things, a series of key documents demonstrating its structure and organisation, such as the Quality Manual, which describes how the Standards' requirements are met.

The Annexes of the Quality Manual include:

- the Quality Policy and the Quality Assurance Objectives;
- the necessary written Procedures, along with the entailed forms;
- the necessary Guides, External Documents (e.g. pertinent legislation), as well as any other supporting data;
- the standing organisational structure of the QAU, with a detailed description of the competences, the required qualifications and the goals for each post. The organisational chart is structured in a manner that ensures that the IQAS organisational requirements are fully and properly met.

### **Institution Compliance**

The University has a well-established process for quality evaluation and assurance via MODIP at the Institution level and OMEA at School/Department level. These units were voted by the Ionian University Faculty Assembly on 6 December 2018. Data and input collection processes are in place and faculty as well as students seem to be well aware of the process. The evaluation and quality assurance process are published in the document [ΦΕΚ 1468, Τεύχος Β'/27-4-2018](#) as document entitled “Εγχειρίδιο Ποιότητας Εσωτερικού Συστήματος Διασφάλισης Ποιότητας” ΕΣΔΠ of the Ionian University.

The University has also placed a process to 1) continuously improve and update the Chairs and Directors, 2) create a culture of compliance and continuous improvement, 3) continuous update of processes and data collections.

Indeed, based on previous recommendations, MODIP showed that it established a process for all students to provide web-evaluations of all courses via an electronic platform with logistics for evaluating these inputs. In addition, based on similar recommendations, the University has established a Quality Assurance Policy and all researchers have been asked to establish SCOPUS and Google Scholar registrations. It is recommended that faculty/students/researchers use ORCID where their research type permits to ensure proper referencing and credits to the Ionian University, particularly for SCOPUS. In addition, the University indicates that they have established a record keeping process for the produced intellectual works (viz. dissertations, journal publications) using the Library and Information Center (ΒΙΚΕΠ). The University's report notes that in spite of its new establishment, it is well-ahead of other Greek Universities in recording its accomplishments, particularly those with focus on arts.

Notably, the University has webpages for course descriptions and degree programme studies (diploma Supplement) for all Departments since October 2018. In addition, the academic Departments and programmes are developing initiatives to ensure that all their degrees and alumni are recognized and have established professional placement at the private and public/government sectors.

## **Panel Judgement**

<b>Principle 4: Structure, Organization and Operation of the IQAS</b>	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

## **Panel Recommendations**

- Continue the process of record keeping and ensure that all faculty and administrators are routinely aware of these processes and employ them.
- Continue digitization of all course content and promote hybrid/HyFlex forms of teaching to ensure student flexibility and life-long learning.
- Strive to ensure that all their degrees and alumni have an impact on the private and government sectors.

## **Principle 5: Self-Assessment**

**THE INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM COMPRISES PROCEDURES PROVIDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ANNUAL SELF-ASSESSMENT OF THE INSTITUTION'S ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS, ADDRESSING AREAS OF OVERSIGHTS OR SHORTCOMINGS, AND DEFINING REMEDIAL ACTIONS TOWARDS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE SET GOALS, AND EVENTUAL IMPROVEMENT.**

*The QAU conducts, on an annual basis, a self-assessment of the IQAS, following the written procedure provided for each area of activity, which is implemented by a certain academic or administrative unit, as appropriate. The procedure determines the timing, the participants, the data under consideration, and the expected outcomes. The self-assessment aims at a final estimation of the suitability of the IQAS in force, as well as at basing decisions concerning the necessary remedial or precautionary actions for improvement.*

*The data considered in the context of the self-assessment of a programme may, for example, include:*

- *students performance;*
- *feedback from students / teaching staff;*
- *assessment of learning outcomes;*
- *graduation rates;*
- *feedback from the evaluation of the facilities / learning environment;*
- *report of any remedial or precautionary actions undertaken;*
- *suggestions for improvement.*

*The outcomes of the self-assessment are recorded in internal reports drawn up by the QAU. The reports identify any areas of deviation or non-compliance with the Standards, and are communicated to the interested parties (if appropriate). The Institution's resolutions concerning any modification, compliance, or enhancement of the IQAS operation might include actions related to:*

- *the upgrade of the IQAS and the pertinent processes;*
- *the upgrade of the services offered to the students;*
- *the reallocation of resources;*
- *the introduction of new quality goals, etc.*

*The outcomes of the self-assessment are recorded and, along with the source data, are archived as quality files.*

*A special procedure is followed for the compliance check of newly launched programmes (of all three cycles), or programmes that are to be reviewed shortly, prior to the institutional approval of the programme.*

## **Institution Compliance**

The internal quality assurance system is overseen by MODIP (Μονάδα Διασφάλισης Ποιότητας), an Institution level organ. MODIP operates on the basis of a schedule of processes detailed in the Institution's quality assurance manual (Εγχειρίδιο Ποιότητας Εσωτερικού Συστήματος Διασφάλισης Ποιότητας (ΕΣΔΠ)). MODIP discharges its function in close collaboration with Department level committees known as OMEA (Ομάδα Εσωτερικής Αξιολόγησης). The OMEA committees are normally assembled of 4-5 academics at Professor or Associate Professor level

including normally the President of the Department. The process of self-assessment at the Ionian University normally begins in December with each Department's OMEA collecting data with reference to the preceding academic year. The data covers performance in the broad fields of teaching, research, administration and infrastructure. There is an extensive set of some 54 quality indicators in these fields, including for example the proportion of registered students who are active, the proportion graduating within given number of academic years since registration, research publications at Department and Institution level and so on. The targets are specified numerically, and a timeline is set for their attainment and the body or bodies of the Institution responsible for delivering them are identified.

The annual data returned by each Departmental OMEA is reviewed by MODIP in relation to the targets that were set the preceding year. It is understood that the targets are set in a collaborative manner with stakeholders. Where there is a significant shortfall in the attainment of targets MODIP liaises with the OMEA and the parties concerned to initiate improvements. Where feedback from students is concerned, meetings with student representatives are held to discuss the findings and any remedial actions needed.

The system of self-assessment for quality assurance, presented by MODIP to the panel, and also accessible at <https://modip.ionio.gr/gr/modip/policy/>, is well documented and fit for purpose. It contains both the target setting process and current (2018-19) targets on a range of areas (e.g. research, internationalisation, infrastructure) at Institution level. The use of 2018-19 as base year is appropriate as in 2018 the Institution was enlarged by merging with the TEI of the Ionian islands. Internal and external assessments at Department and Institution level have been conducted and action has been taken where appropriate. The related documents are accessible via the link above. The recommendations from the 2016 External Evaluation have in large measure been implemented but only with reference to the Institution as it was pre the 2018 merger with the TEI. The recommendations will need to be adapted to the merged structure of the Institution, going forward.

The EEAP's meetings with MODIP and OMEA staff showed they are well familiar with the operation of the quality assurance system and motivated to maintain and improve the quality of research, student experience, outreach to the local community and broadly in all areas. There is one persistent area of concern for MODIP as relates to the metrics used for some units such as music, audio-visual arts and language translation. Publications and citations are not as common in these areas as in other academic disciplines and this tends to disadvantage the Institution when staff engaged in these activities are included in average metrics on publications and citations. However, while excluding such staff from average measures may be fairer for the Institution's performance, other measures for the quantity and quality of such output should be instituted as suggested during the meetings. MODIP could in consultation with HAHE arrive at such measures, drawing from measures used elsewhere in these fields including from outside Greece.

In summary, the quality assurance system is well documented, accessible and followed through when it comes to a review and accountability of performance at Department and at Institution level. The system is relatively new, using as base year 2018-19. In view of the merger with the TEI of the Ionian islands in 2018 it is important to monitor the system going forward to ensure it continues to be fit for purpose in the enlarged institutional structure. It is recommended that the set target goals be continuously monitored to ensure staff are motivated to attain them. In many Institutions targets are set at person level, compatible with those at Institution level. Such

person level targets could be adopted by the Institution, perhaps accompanied by a system of rewards or special recognition when exceeded, while where shortfalls are observed help could be offered to enable staff to achieve their full potential.

## **Panel Judgement**

<b>Principle 5: Self-Assessment</b>	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

## **Panel Recommendations**

- Monitor the implementation of the new IQAS covering the expanded Institution and take action to improve it as need be.
- Complement higher level targets with person-level targets for internal use for advice to improve or reward for over-attainment. Person-level attainment targets it is recommended be set annually, as normally done in many institutions abroad.
- Make targets challenging but attainable.

## **Principle 6: Collection of Quality Data: Measuring, Analysis and Improvement**

**INSTITUTIONS ARE FULLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND USE OF INFORMATION IN AN INTEGRATED, FUNCTIONAL AND READILY ACCESSIBLE MANNER, AIMING AT THE EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF THE QUALITY DATA RELATED TO TEACHING, RESEARCH AND OTHER ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES, AS WELL AS OF THOSE RELATED TO THE ADMINISTRATION.**

*The QAU should establish and operate an information system to manage the data required for the implementation of the Internal Quality Assurance System.*

*The QAU measures and monitors the performance of the various activities of the Institution, through appropriate procedures established in the context of the IQAS structure, and assesses their level of effectiveness. The measuring and monitoring is conducted on a basis of indices and data provided by HAHE in the pertinent guidelines and forms, which are part of the National Information System for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NISQA). These measurements may concern: the size of the student body, the size of the teaching and administrative staff, the infrastructure, the structural components of the curricula, students' performance, research activity performance, financial data, feedback on student and faculty satisfaction surveys, data related to the teaching and research activity, services, infrastructure, etc.*

*The QAU makes use of the figures and presents the results for consideration using statistical analysis. Outcomes are displayed through histograms and charts. This sort of information is used by the Institution for decision making, at all levels, pursuing improvement, as well as for setting, monitoring, assessing and reviewing the Institution's strategic and operational goals.*

### **Institution Compliance**

The University's quality assurance unit (MODIP) collects data through the Departmental quality assurance units (OMEA) and reports both internally to the Rector, Assembly and Departments and also formally to the national quality assurance agency HAHE. MODIP has constructed its own Information System (IS) to cover all areas of quality assurance it oversees. The IS uses a template from HAHE, adapted to the University's structure. One special feature of the University is that a substantial number of Departments produce artistic cultural work, and this has necessitated the creation of measures to reflect this output which is not captured in traditional measures such as number of papers in refereed academic journals. Such measures make it possible to capture internally the quantity and quality of artistic output alongside the more traditional academic research output. MODIP monitors developments in quality assurance information systems in other Institutions with a view to maintaining and adapting its own data and measures if need be. It is anticipating to enhance its IS so as to display analyses and graphs of data to make it possible to monitor progression on the quality measures.

The collected data by MODIP and OMEA lead to a number of indicators which are then communicated to Departments. It is the EEAP's understanding that the Departments take action where necessary with the aim of meeting targets. They may also set new targets to improve performance in key areas such as the delivery of teaching, research and support services. The Institution, however, is conscious of the fact that its composition in terms of disciplines is different from that of the majority of Universities in Greece as it includes a higher proportion of artistic subjects. It therefore wishes to develop further indicators (e.g. artistic events or exhibitions staged) in order to better reflect its creative attainments.

The data collection process is annual but where it is deemed necessary review of performance at local level can also happen on a needs basis. Data collection and processing uses the national information system ΟΠΕΣΠ (Ολοκληρωμένο Πληροφοριακό Εθνικό Σύστημα Ποιότητας). While reporting at Institution level on an annual basis may be sufficient, a more frequent review, perhaps on a semester basis or even mid-semester, may be more appropriate for some areas such as teaching, software and laboratory equipment provision, where remedial action would be more urgent if the need arises. While at the formal level the findings from student satisfaction surveys at the end of each semester are reported to Departmental Assemblies, it would be desirable to complete the circle by reporting back by the members of staff delivering each course both to Assembly and to students as to actions taken, if any, in response to student comments of course content and delivery. This would enhance buy-in of the process of student satisfaction surveys by students when they can see the impact of the feedback they give in such surveys.

There is provision within the formal system for collecting data on the proportions of graduates from each Department who are in employment after graduation and the type of employment they have. However, there was no relevant data in these fields at least for 2018-19 in the documents received. While the collection of such data is difficult for most Institutions, as graduates move within and outside the country, it would nevertheless be valuable information to gather. It would help inform on the effectiveness of each degree programme to help graduates into the labour market. MODIP oversees a system whereby those completing their degree programme fill in a 'Graduation Questionnaire' on their overall experience during their studies at the University. This questionnaire could be adapted to also cover employment of graduates, say 6 months or one year post formal graduation to progressively build a profile of graduate destinations both in terms of employment rates and types of employment.

### **Panel Judgement**

<b>Principle 6: Collection of Data: Measuring, Analysis &amp; Improvement</b>	
6.1 Study Programmes / education activities	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
6.2 Research & Innovation	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
6.3 Activities related to the administration (funding, human resources, infrastructure management)	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	
6.4 Human Resources	

Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

<b>Principle 6: Collection of Data: Measuring, Analysis &amp; Improvement (overall)</b>	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

### **Panel Recommendations**

- For certain key, time-sensitive indicators, such as those relating to teaching quality data should be collected at more frequent intervals to ensure remedial action can be taken in time where need be.
- Complete the circle on student satisfaction surveys by teaching staff reporting to the Institution and students on actions taken in response to student surveys.
- Consider the collection of data on graduate placement in jobs or further education a suitable number of months after graduation to use as input in degree programme modifications or new degree programme designs.
- Develop statistical analyses, tables and graphs from the collected data to help monitor progress over time in key areas, including student degree completion, student assessment of degree programmes, research and artistic output.

## **Principle 7: Public Information**

**INSTITUTIONS SHOULD PUBLISH INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR TEACHING AND ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES IN A DIRECT AND ACCESSIBLE MANNER. ALL PERTINENT INFORMATION SHOULD BE UP-TO-DATE, CLEAR AND OBJECTIVE.**

*The QAU publishes data related to IQAS structure, organisation and operation. Furthermore, the QAU publishes data pertinent to the institutional quality policy and objectives, as well as information and data relevant to the Institution's internal and external evaluation. In the context of the self-assessment process, the QAU verifies that adequate information regarding the teaching activities and, particularly, the programmes' profile and the overall institutional activity is publicly available. QAU makes recommendations for improvement, where appropriate.*

### **Institution Compliance**

The Institution has a comprehensive website where important information, including teaching, research, and other academic activities is publicly available. Undergraduate and postgraduate programmes of study, including curricula, course outlines and timetables, as well as, assessment details and criteria, are displayed in the various websites of Schools and Departments. However, this vast amount of information does not appear in a concrete and homogenized way, making it in many cases difficult for navigation and identification of the information the user is looking for.

The website of the University has a special section on the IQAS structure and operation, where sufficient information on the Quality Assurance Policy and related processes is provided. However, only some limited activities are mentioned in the news section, while most of them do not appear there (the informative meetings of MODIP with the various Departments' OMEA, their participation in meetings with HAHE, etc.). Most of the information is available in both the Greek and English language.

The University, following its integration with the Ionian Islands TEI and the reorganization of its structure, should put more effort towards the restructuring of its web presence. The process “Δ.6” in its Quality Assurance Manual needs to be further developed and described, covering all aspects of the needed steps for the provision of public information and the contributions of its different Units and participants. To that end, more quality indicators and measurements should be identified, which will sufficiently reflect the effective implementation of the related processes, as well as the involvement of the required contributors. Upon revising this process, they may consider additional indicators for reviewing the process and presenting the active participation of departments/units in this.

During the interviews, the Panel noticed many different cases, where it was clear the various University entities are organizing and implementing various public events, which normally present their activities and achievements to the public. Such activities must be further encouraged and supported.

## **Panel Judgement**

<b>Principle 7: Public Information</b>	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

## **Panel Recommendations**

- The Quality Assurance process towards the publication of information should be developed further and documented.
- The Institute must specify and implement a well-structured website, based on a University-wide website template following related standards and methodologies
- All information on the website must be offered in at least two different languages. To that end, it is expected that information upon the Department of Translation and Foreign Language might be provided in four different languages (which it does cover).

## **Principle 8: External Evaluation and Accreditation of the IQAS**

**INSTITUTIONS SHOULD BE PERIODICALLY EVALUATED BY COMMITTEES OF EXTERNAL EXPERTS SET BY HAHE, FOR THE PURPOSE OF ACCREDITATION OF THEIR INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS (IQAS). THE PERIODICITY OF THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION IS DETERMINED BY HAHE.**

*External quality assurance, in the case in point external evaluation aiming at accreditation, may act as a means of verification of the effectiveness of the Institution's internal quality assurance, and as a catalyst for improvement, while opening new perspectives. Additionally, it can provide information with a view to public acknowledgement of the positive course of the Institution's activities.*

*The Higher Education Institutions engage in periodic external quality assurance which is conducted taking into consideration any special requirements set by the legislation governing the operation of the Institutions and their academic units.*

*Quality assurance, in this case 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 ensure that the progress made since the last external quality assurance activity is taken into consideration when preparing for the next one.*

### **Institution Compliance**

The EEAP is satisfied that appropriate effort was put, and actions were taken following feedback from all previous Institutional and Departmental external evaluations, and substantial improvement has been achieved. This bodes well that the recommendations of this accreditation will lead to similar improvements.

The merging of the University with the Ionian Islands TEI, which took place in 2018, doubles the academic departments from 6 to 12, with significant differences in approaches and culture, located in 4 different islands and 5 different towns. This level of reorganization has significantly increased the difficulty and complexity of setting up, developing and maintaining a quality assurance system. Under these circumstances, the EEAP is impressed by the significant efforts of all University staff towards realizing and applying the Quality Assurance System to its full extent.

It was evident that MODIP members and the entire University community are well-aware of their role and importance in the IQAS external review and its contribution to the maintenance and permanent improvement of the quality of University services overall. However, the panel noted that the alumni and external stakeholders have yet to get seriously involved in the QA process.

## **Panel Judgement**

<b>Principle 8: External Evaluation &amp; Accreditation of the IQAS</b>	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

## **Panel Recommendations**

- The Institution should strengthen active engagement of all staff members who recently joined the University, following the merging with the Ionian Islands TEI, as well as the alumni and external stakeholders to the evolution of the structure and implementation of the IQAS.
- The Institution is advised to facilitate the establishment of Advisory Boards at both Institution and Department level with representatives from academia, local communities and industry.

## **PART C: CONCLUSIONS**

### **I. Features of Good Practice**

- Well documented system for targets setting including procedures, timelines and allocation of responsibilities for delivery.
- Well-structured response to the recommendations in the previous external evaluation.
- Good use of information systems in support of the IQAS.
- Strong relationships with potential graduate employers for certain Departments.

### **II. Areas of Weakness**

- The IQAS is at an aggregate level and targets are at average level when they concern individuals.
- Targets are not translated below Department level nor are they prioritized by category.
- There is insufficient provision of computing facilities and software for some courses
- Lack of graduate employment data.
- Lack of long-term targets; the focus is on short term incremental improvements.

### **III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions**

- The system for quality assurance is relatively new for the merged Institution structure. It should be monitored for its practicality and effectiveness and evolve as appropriate.
- The average targets at Department level should be supplemented by person level targets tailored to the individual's characteristics; these should be used for advice for improvement or recognition for over-attainment as appropriate.
- Faculty whose type of research output permits it should register to have ORCID numbers and ensure proper recording of their research in international databases.
- Provision of computing facilities including software which can be run remotely (e.g., VPN) should be considered for those courses that require it.
- Institute a system for alumni engagement including collecting graduate data on employment rates and categories.
- The Institution must specify and implement a well-structured website in at least Greek and English (and more languages where needed).
- Degrees, programmes and their content should be continuously reviewed and updated so as to address society's current needs.
- The Institution is advised to facilitate the establishment of Advisory Boards on both Institutional and Departmental level with representatives from academia, local communities and industry.

#### **IV. Summary & Overall Assessment**

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: 1,5,6,8

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: 2,3,4,7

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are: None

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are: None

<b>Overall Judgement</b>	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

## The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname	Signature
<b>1. Professor Emeritus Emmanuel Thanassoulis (Chair)</b> Aston University, Birmingham, United Kingdom	
<b>2. Professor John Volakis</b> Florida International University, Florida, USA	
<b>3. Professor Konstantinos Salonitis</b> Cranfield University, Cranfield, United Kingdom	
<b>4. Dr. Paraskevas Dalianis</b> Uni Systems S.M.S.A., Athens, Greece	