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ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΑΝΩΤΑΤΗ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗ

HELLENIC REPUBLIC
H Q A
HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE
AND ACCREDITATION AGENCY

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

Agricultural University of Athens

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Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση
Ευρωπαϊκό Κοινωνικό Ταμείο

Επιχειρησιακό Πρόγραμμα
Ανάπτυξη Ανθρώπινου Δυναμικού,
Εκπαίδευση και Διά Βίου Μάθηση

Με τη συγχρηματοδότηση της Ελλάδας και της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης



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1. EXTERNAL EVALUATION COMMITTEE

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the University/Technological Education Institution named ...Agricultural University of Athens... comprised the following five (5) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry kept by the HQA in accordance with Law 3374/2005 and Law 4009/2011:

1. Professor Spiros N. Agathos _____(Coordinator)
Université Catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium _____

2. Professor and Associate Dean Tala Awada _____
University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE, U.S.A. _____

3. Professor Sophia Kathariou _____
North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC, U.S.A. _____

4. Professor Sevastianos Roussos _____
Aix-Marseille Université, Marseille, France _____

N.B. The length of text in each box is free. Questions included in each box are not exclusive nor should they always be answered separately; the Committee's reply to those questions is meant to provide a general outline of issues that need to be addressed.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 The External Evaluation Procedure

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) visited the HQAA headquarters for an orientation session on Monday May 16, 2016 to review the evaluation process, before they were escorted to the Agricultural University of Athens (AUA) for the review process, which was conducted over 5 consecutive days (May 16-20). The on-site visit included meetings with the administrative team including the Rector, the members of the Quality Assurance Unit (ΜΟΔΙΠ), Associate Rectors, unit heads and members of the Institution Council (Συμβούλιο Ιδρύματος). The EEC also met with representatives from the faculty, postdoctoral fellows, staff, students (undergraduate, MS, and PhD) and other stakeholders. The AUA administration arranged for visits to several departments and laboratories across campus, including Aquaculture, Biotechnology, Entomology, Oenology, Human Nutrition, Dairy Science and Soil Science, as well as multiple facilities including the Library, Greenhouses, Cafeteria, Gym, Museum, and the off-site Field Research Facility in Kopaida.

The EEC was highly impressed by the positive and warm welcome and assistance as well as the overall environment at the AUA. The dedication of the AUA academic leadership, faculty and staff to continue to provide quality research and education is commendable despite the current challenges and severe budget cuts at this and other Greek Universities. The AUA worked hard in preparing the Self Evaluation Report (SER), financial reports, information on students and programs and other materials, including several effective presentations. The AUA leadership accommodated all requests from the EEC and provided information as needed. The EEC wishes to express its thanks and appreciation to AUA for the cooperation and professionalism that was shown by students, academic staff, faculty, the academic leadership team and the Rector. The EEC was equally impressed by the positive attitude, dedication and enthusiasm of faculty despite all the economic challenges that the country and AUA are going through.

The EEC Report is based on information shared through the SER prepared in 2013 and updated in 2015, discussions with relevant stakeholders, presentations, site visits, as well as other documents submitted during the visit.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&2.1):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	√
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

2.2 The Self-Evaluation Procedure

The EEC reviewed and evaluated the SER and other materials provided by the AUA. The SER contained important information about university functions and performance. The documents were adequate, and provided an accurate description of the AUA. The report included statistics on departments, faculty, scholarly output, research grants, performance, students (newly enrolled, active and graduating), relations with the private sector, and university engagement and outreach.

While the documents were adequate, the EEC would have liked to see more emphasis on development of a more integrated and cohesive mission for AUA and a more systems-oriented approach to the development of institution goals and strategic plans for each of the two recently formed Schools: School of Food, Biotechnology and Development which comprises three departments (Biotechnology, Food Science & Human Nutrition, and Agricultural Economics & Rural Development); and School of Agricultural Production, Infrastructure and Environment which also comprises three departments (Crop Science, Animal Science & Aquaculture, and Natural Resources Management & Agricultural Engineering).

AUA needs to continue to work on establishing well-defined institutional goals, measurable outcomes and impact-oriented implementation plans, as well as a clear timetable. In this process, a closer cooperation between the AUA leadership team (Rector and Deputy Rectors, Senate) and the Institution Council (Συμβούλιο Ιδρύματος) is urged.

The EEC understands that some of the difficulties stem from the ever-changing legislative policy and laws concerning Universities, and the current economic crisis in the country. Rigid and unpredictable government policies interfere with and prevent the efficient operation of AUA, as is the case with the other Institutions of Higher Education (AEI). That said, there are still many opportunities for the development of integrated mission and strategic plans across AUA that set research priorities for teaching, engagement and entrepreneurship to meet current and emerging needs in agriculture and natural resources. These goals must also incorporate well-defined strategies for setting partnerships and collaborations that engage AUA stakeholders, as well as the public and private sectors.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&2.2):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	√
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

3. PROFILE OF THE INSTITUTION UNDER EVALUATION

3.1 Institutional Governance, Leadership & Strategy

Please comment on:

3.1.1 Vision, mission and goals of the Institution

The main mission of the AUA as posted on its webpage (www.aua.gr) is to offer high-level undergraduate and postgraduate education and research in the Agricultural Sciences, and its vision is to achieve educational and research excellence so as to occupy a dynamic position in the international academic environment.

AUA's goal is to be the main source and provider of science-based information and a primary responder to the needs of the Greek economy and society. The EEC is highly supportive of the AUA mission and recognizes the vital role that AUA can play nationally and internationally to promote economic development, agriculture and natural resources sustainability in the face of projected population growth and food insecurity. The EEC would have liked to see a clearer systems-based implementation plan that focuses on the three pillars of AUA: research, teaching and societal engagement ('extension' or 'outreach') as well as its integration to better position itself as a leader in the country, the region and internationally. The AUA has the potential to play a vital role in reviving the Greek economy through its mission and through training students to be more engaged and develop entrepreneurial skills critical for their future success.

AUA is well positioned to be a leader in the country and constitutes a vital entity to assist Greece with economic recovery through carefully selective scientific discoveries, education, partnerships and engagement with other academic and outside institutions and with its stakeholders in the public and private sector.

AUA has in place several action plans to advance its mission and goals including a newsletter and international and national collaborations on research, teaching and engagement. However, there is still great potential for significant growth in these areas. The EEC recommends that AUA works towards development and implementation of well-defined outcomes and impact-oriented strategic plans. The EEC also recommends that AUA further develops transparent communication strategies among entities within AUA as well as services and administrative structure for extension and outreach activities with stakeholders in the private sector; that it encourages and rewards team-building activities; that it provides more flexibility for students in choosing classes/orientations; and that it effectively mentors students to be more entrepreneurial, and motivates them to realize their career goals.

The EEC strongly encourages the Rector and his team to work closely with the Quality Assurance team and Institution Council (Συμβούλιο Ιδρύματος) to address these issues. The Institution Council consists of faculty (internal and external) plus representatives of the private and public sectors, and has worked hard to develop a list of short and long-term priorities for the AUA. It is therefore critical to continue to communicate and coordinate efforts with these entities to come up with clear implementation plans.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.1.1):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	√
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

3.1.2 Organizational Development Strategy

- Effectiveness of administrative officials
The EEC had multiple, substantive interactions with the AUA administration (Rector and Deputy Rectors) throughout its site visit. The administrative team was forthcoming with information on AUA's current situation, the challenges it is facing and, to some extent, planning for the future. There is a collaborative and positive working climate among the administrative team members and, overall, they seem to be effective in their interactions with the different Schools, the faculty members, students and support staff.
- Existence of effective operation regulations
The essence of organizational structure (Οργανισμός) and operating procedures (Εσωτερικός Κανονισμός) is found in proposals made thanks to the initiative of the Institution Council, which, however, had not been ratified by the time of the external review.
- Specific goals and timetables
The EEC recognizes the AUA administration's proactive role in setting the goals and efforts to move the institution into the future. These are mentioned in section 3.1.1 Vision, mission and goals of the Institution
- Measures taken to reach goals
These are given in sections 3.1.3 Academic Development Strategy and 3.1.4 Research Strategy

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.1.2):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	√
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

3.1.3 Academic Development Strategy

The EEC would have liked to see more emphasis on development of a more integrated and cohesive mission for AUA and a more systems-oriented approach to the development of institution goals and strategic plans with a well-defined implementation roadmap and measurable outcomes, for each of the two recently formed Schools: School of Food, Biotechnology and Development which comprises three departments (Biotechnology, Food Science & Human Nutrition, and Agricultural Economics & Rural Development); and School of Agricultural Production, Infrastructure and Environment

which also comprises three departments (Crop Science, Animal Science & Aquaculture, and Natural Resources Management & Agricultural Engineering).

The response of the AUA administration to Schools and Departments is judged as adequate, given the regular interactions between the Schools and the leadership team (Rector and Deputy Rectors)

The AUA administration can benefit from strengthening communication with faculties and external partners as well as its Institution Council, an under-utilized resource.

The goals and timetables in pursuing the academic development of Schools and Departments within them are set and appear feasible, e.g. in staffing with new faculty members given the continuing decrease in their numbers through retirement etc. However, these issues depend almost totally on central government policies and the overall problem in Greek higher education is the slowness or even non-responsiveness of the Ministry of Education to such requests.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.1.3):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	√
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

3.1.4 Research Strategy

The AUA is a leader in research in the area of Agriculture and Natural Resources Sciences. They have demonstrated a great effort to continue to promote strategies focused on disciplinary and interdisciplinary research. They have been successful in securing programs and grants from the local and EU sources. However, institutional funding from the Greek government has fallen to its minimum and local and EU funding opportunities have dropped and have become more competitive. This will have an impact on research expenditures and scholarly output.

The AUA provides services to the faculty in terms of management of funds and assistance with project development and identification of partners. There is however a gap in communication between administration and faculty with regard to these services, especially in helping faculty members identify new and promising funding opportunities and assisting with grant writing and submission. AUA has to develop better and effective communication tools and continue to promote interdisciplinary research and partnership within AUA and with other universities and other actors within Greece and beyond.

Several laboratories are conducting exciting and innovative research despite the funding environment in the country. AUA however has a serious need for ‘branding’ its research specificities in a way that would make it unique and recognizable in the higher education landscape in Europe and the Mediterranean.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.1.4):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	√
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

3.1.5 Financial Strategy

The general financial strategy and management of national and international funds are well presented for the last 5 years. With the Greek financial crisis, government support diminished by 75%, with negative impacts on educational activities. Contracts for a significant number of lecturers were not renewed, and the teaching load has been increasing for existing faculty. International funds (EU projects, Erasmus, etc.) were used for research and for academic training course for Erasmus students and academics.

The regular budget is essentially allocated for the academic activities and the maintenance of the AUA property (gardens, greenhouses, buildings, security).

A part of the budget was used to insulate buildings (“Economy of Energy”) and to restore a building for social activities for students and academic staff. Also, the Agriculture Museum and a congress amphitheater were constructed as Cultural and Congress Center. Daily more than 100 persons from primary and secondary schools are visiting the museum and the AUA campus. Different congresses, technical seminars etc. are organized in the new amphitheater, as well cultural activities, e.g. music and theater performances.

- Organisation and strategy of the Special Account for Research Funds (SARF)

There is a commission managing the Special Account for Research Funds (SARF). The commission has defined the organisation plan and 19 persons overall are working over the last 3 years within SARF. The funds were essentially of public origin (56%) followed by the private sector (28%) during 2009. Little by little the private sector is now the one who contributes more than 51% of the total funds for 2016. The EU contribution was maintained constant, around 10% during the last 6 years. The number of contracted persons is increasing in the last years and represents more than 66% of the total. The total annual amount is around 10.000.000 euros and in 2015 contributed to finance the following items: salary of 500 young researchers, laboratory equipment and supplies. It has also contributed to provide awards for students, congress participation, international mobility (Erasmus+), social and cultural events, e.g. music and theater performances.

- Organisation and strategy of the University Property Development and Management Company

There is an effort to increase the income from external funds both for research and academic activities in order to enhance the quality and the content of different services.

- Existence of a Quality System for Financial Management (e.g. ISO), computerisation management and Budget monitoring (Regular Budget, Public Investments Programme, SARF Budget, etc.)

No ISO system exists for the management, but the ISO 9001:2015 is in preparation.

A major part of the budget is dedicated to maintaining the academic activities. Also significant efforts were made in order to increase the external incoming funds, particularly from the private sector. The construction of the Agricultural Museum as well as of the new amphitheater will contribute best towards the external visibility of the AUA as well as help to organise national and international congresses and seminars by academic departments. These activities are important not only for the students but also for the academic staff and the extension and outreach activities of AUA.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.1.5):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	√
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

3.1.6 Building and Grounds Infrastructure Strategy

- Strategy key points

The number of entering students in the AUA has been strongly increasing these last years. Time to graduation is expected to be 5 years, but in reality the average is 7 and now approaching 8 years. The classrooms, laboratories and amphitheaters were established for a much smaller number of students. With the increasing number of students the current situation is worrisome both for the students and also for the academic staff, particularly for teaching of laboratory exercises and practicums. The laboratories are always full and due to understaffing the same instructors have to organise three or more sessions on the same topic during the day.

There are pre-industrial facilities in the area of food science (oenology, milk factory), an important element in forging liaisons with these industries that represent a strong sector of the Greek economy.

The university has a well-defined infrastructure strategy to ensure that buildings and grounds are adequately maintained. Measures include the availability of staff for grounds management and building maintenance. The campus is adequately secured in the evenings, with guards available throughout the night for individuals who need access to the buildings and grounds for their research.

The grounds are especially attractive because of the obvious attention to green space, ornamental plants, greenhouses and orchards that are maintained in excellent condition.

The presence of a nicely kept library, well-organized dining and exercise facilities are advantages of the campus. A new student center is almost completed, and will also be an asset for the campus. The museum of the AUA and adjacent amphitheatre are excellent facilities that serve important outreach functions.

Issues that need attention include the following:

The campus is physically divided in two parts, separated by Iera Odos, a thoroughfare on which traffic is frequently heavy and fast. The AUA is encouraged to continue its efforts to promote safety for pedestrians (students, faculty, staff) crossing Iera Odos.

Certain lab and classroom facilities may have limited accessibility to physically handicapped individuals.

It was noted that large equipment was permanently placed in the hallways of certain labs; this can create challenges in case of emergencies.

Continuing attention is needed for lab safety both in teaching and research labs. For instance, gas cylinders in labs need to be always secured.

Graffiti continues to create aesthetic challenges on several locations.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.1.6):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	√
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating:

All these activities are well constructed but it is necessary to establish annual or pluri-annual timetables with the announcement of international meetings. The Agricultural Museum as well the neighboring amphitheater will be used by the different national Agricultural societies (Apiculture, Entomology, Horticulture, Oleiculture, Viticulture, Oenology, Food Microbiology, Soil Science etc.)

3.1.7 Environmental Strategy

Recycling of a range of materials (paper, plastic, electronics) appears to be emphasized on campus.

Hazardous waste is managed by outside contractors.

The rector and other administrators indicated keen attention to energy saving strategies

Issues that need attention include the following:

Additional recycling containers in areas highly visited on campus will further promote the recycling effort. It was common to see containers for garbage also containing multiple items (water bottles, cans etc.) that would normally be recyclable.

Student groups can be encouraged to develop and maintain a student garden for vegetables or flowers, with the proceeds offered to students, charities or for fund-raising. Faculty can serve as consultants for such a student garden.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.1.7):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	√
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

3.1.8 Social Strategy

The institution has nicely developed the use and dissemination of research programs and discoveries for the benefit of society and the economy. With the Agriculture Museum and the congress amphitheater, the University receives school visits (especially primary schools) on a daily basis and various seminars and congresses are organised practically every month on the AUA campus. The institution has developed a joint project with the “Elpida” association for handicapped children and offers access and use of the greenhouse infrastructure for ten children including the educator. Also, AUA offers life-long education summer courses for professionals in the area of apiculture, sericulture (silkworms) and other sectors. The experimental fields (e.g. Kopaida, Spata) offer opportunities to transfer technology from the laboratory to the field in the area of cereal crops, leguminous plants and viticulture.

Often the graduates of AUA are working in the private sector and these organizations receive each year students for the Practical Exercise (diploma works, internships), or develop and finance research projects.

The municipality of Nikaia as well as the Attiki region have often financed local projects on topics of environment protection.

The key geographical location of AUA’s gardens and orchards offers a unique green area in the center of the city of Athens with high biodiversity, especially in butterflies, insects and birds.

- As the oldest agricultural university in Greece AUA has numerous alumni. It has developed an agronomist community that maintains good links with the AUA. Some of the alumni are involved in the Institution Council of the university.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.1.8):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	√
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating:

The social strategy of the AUA is clear and well established (Agriculture Museum, Congress Center with large amphitheater, summer schools for the professional sectors, experimental fields for cereals and vineyards (e.g. Kopaida, Spata).

3.1.9 Internationalization Strategy

The EEC considers global engagement important for AUA's mission and key for solving current and emerging issues in agriculture and natural resources. AUA has established several solid collaborations and established MOUs with international entities and universities abroad through the efforts of its faculty and administration. These include but are not limited to collaborations with various academic institutions in the USA, Europe and elsewhere. Especially noteworthy are current efforts with Rutgers University in the USA to develop a comprehensive extension/engagement program to deliver science-based nutrition and health information, and to train stakeholders.

AUA also leads and participates in EU grants with partners across Europe. The Erasmus program is well-established and highly successful. However, it is underfunded and does not meet the increasing demands for students who wish to participate in this program. The EEC recommends that the AUA continues to promote its efforts to increase its international engagement and identify alternative sources of funding to support international research partnerships and study-abroad programs.

Additionally, the EEC strongly encourages AUA to invest in developing summer schools to cater to students from abroad. It is also recommended that AUA offer certain undergraduate and postgraduate courses in English to attract Erasmus or other international students interested in student exchange programs.

Finally, the EEC considers AUA to be uniquely positioned to deliver online courses and distance education (e-learning) courses and certification programs to students around the world in areas of global interest such as Mediterranean nutrition and diet, Mediterranean ecosystems, history of nutrition and agriculture, etc. Such activities can increase the international presence of AUA and also provide future sources of revenue to AUA.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.1.9):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	√
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

3.1.10 Student Welfare Strategy

AUA recognizes the importance of students' welfare and continues to find ways to improve conditions on campus. They have a well-run cafeteria, a gym that caters to the needs of students, a meeting space in the library for students to conduct roundtable discussions and collaborate on class projects, and a new student recreational center is under development.

AUA has invested in promoting cultural (e.g., theatre and music) and athletic involvement of students through team sports. Teams have won several trophies and awards over the years. Handicap access continues to be a work-in-progress; it is not easy for students with special needs to access older buildings. That said, the EEC commends the AUA for its outreach program to promote horticulture and plant care among schoolchildren with special needs through its greenhouse program.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.1.10):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	√
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

3.2 Strategy for Study Programmes

3.2.1 Programmes of Undergraduate Studies (first cycle)

Please comment on:

- the main strengths and weaknesses of the Programmes

The University has set high standards in its undergraduate education with both theoretical and technological training. Modern educational technology based on e-platforms and interactive blackboards is present on campus. Many instructors make their course material available to the students electronically. There is an increasing tendency towards more interdisciplinary courses.

Main strengths of the programs

(i) regular upgrading and updating of the curricula to reflect the advancement of each discipline and evolving international trends. AUA's Internal Evaluation Report documents the changes adopted or proposed by each Department as a result of the external evaluations by HQA.

(ii) a strong connection of teaching with research (resulting in high quality of student training; laboratory courses take advantage of the AUA's research capabilities and infrastructure.

(iii) a student-centred education, with visits to places of professional practice (field trips) and internships in areas of primary and secondary production

(iv) new action lines such as the development of a Teaching Support Office and the enhancement of the fledgling institution of Educational Counsel are expected to bring about a continuous improvement of the teaching capacities of the faculty members

(v) systematic use of student feedback from course evaluations to improve teaching and learning outcomes of the courses

(vi) social relevance and business orientation of the educational component as seen from the participation of industry professionals both in and in practical training

The main weaknesses include:

(i) a much higher number of undergraduate student intake compared to the numbers that are requested by the University

(ii) an increasing student: faculty ratio not only because of point (a) above, but also because of non-replacement of faculty members leaving due to retirement or for other reasons

(iii) a low number of teaching support staff, which often needs to be supplemented by doctoral candidates (without pay), for the increasing numbers of undergraduates

(iv) a low number of administrative staff for the increasing number of undergraduates

(v) inadequacy of the available infrastructures (laboratory space and equipment) for the hands-on training of students because of increased student numbers and progressive obsolescence of equipment

(vi) lack of funds for modernizing teaching laboratories

(vii) lack of adequate safety measures and, more importantly, absence of a culture of 'safety first' in undergraduate laboratories, meaning that they constitute 'an accident waiting to happen'

(viii) prerequisites are instituted for some but not all undergraduate orientations. Therefore, students postpone several courses to latter years of study and the average time to graduation is 7 years, not to mention the diminishing learning outcomes and other operational problems

- the basic obligations of students, e.g. attendance of lectures, course requirements, etc.

Students are required to successfully complete the courses prescribed by the undergraduate curricula, which include required courses and electives. Each course represents a number of ECTS credits and the total number needed for an undergraduate degree (of Agronomist with a given orientation) is 300 ECTS. The normal period necessary to complete the degree requirements is 5 academic years (=10 semesters).

- the way the Central Administration of the Institution deals with any remarks and recommendations that the external experts pointed out in the External Evaluation of Academic Units

The six academic Departments have taken into account their External Evaluations and made significant efforts to address the issues raised in the reports. Many recommendations are implemented but some are difficult to deal with because of the existing legal/institutional constraints, including the extremely tight grip of the Ministry of Education on higher education institutions (HEI). Furthermore, the financial crisis in Greece has provoked a significant drop in the University's operational budget.

Do you wish to make any comment on a point not included above?

Every effort must be made to continue critical evaluations of the curricula on an annual basis.

The University should be able to have a say on the number of admitted students in order to improve the logistics of student training and reduce the number of stagnant students. Moreover, the legal/institutional framework should become more flexible so as to allow the AUA to generate revenue from tuition-based programmes for international students at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels

Although the programs of study in the various departments have been updated and designed to cater to student needs and meet the EU requirements, the EEC would like to see more flexibility in the undergraduate programs and incorporation of skills related to agribusiness management and entrepreneurship. These skills were clearly underdeveloped in most students that the EEC met with, and the EEC considers these skills critical for the future success of the students as professionals. The AUA is uniquely positioned to train students to promote critical thinking and entrepreneurial skills through some of its existing offerings, including those in oenology and viticulture, apiculture, marketing, agro-economics, nutrition, dairy and animal sciences, aquaculture, land management and agriculture.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&3.2.1):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	√
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

3.2.2 Programmes of Postgraduate Studies (second cycle)

The AUA offers quality disciplinary postgraduate programs in each of its Schools as well as a number of interdisciplinary programs across two or more departments within each of the schools. Students are well trained and have the opportunity to study abroad.

The EEC identified the increasing need to train students and build on their academic background to develop additional hard and soft skills (e.g., entrepreneurship, leadership, and communication) to make them competitive not only in academia but alternative job markets as well.

AUA has several projects and grants with national and international institutions. The EEC recommends that AUA builds upon this and develops courses in English to attract and train

international students, and increase engagement of Greek students with their international counterparts.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (& 3.2.2):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	√
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

3.2.3 Programmes of Doctoral Studies (third cycle)

Please comment on:

Each of the Schools at AUA offers a programme for Doctoral Studies. The conditions for obtaining a PhD conform to those defined by the European System of Higher Education. A PhD student must obtain 180 ECTS during a minimal period of 6 semesters. A certain number of these ECTS are obtained through a series of courses, which in some cases are the same as those for the MSc degree. The Ph.D. students can choose their courses among those delivered in the different MSc programmes within AUA.

The PhD students receive 120 ECTS credits for completing their doctoral dissertation. In some cases the student is expected to have published or submitted at least one peer-reviewed journal paper. The EEC suggests that the list of eligible scientific journals is clearly defined in order to avoid publications in ambiguous journals. The external evaluations of the different PhD programmes are generally positive and point out the high quality of AUA's PhD candidates but it would also be desirable for AUA to support PhD students' research and professional development via more structured activities such as workshops, publications and conferences.

The EEC regrets the fact that, as in other Greek Universities, the PhD students at AUA do not, generally, receive stipends or other remuneration. Their teaching, albeit often required, does not get any recognition. Student comments in interviews indicated that in several cases students must search for and even procure themselves consumables and supplies needed for their doctoral work.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (& 3.2.3):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	√
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

3.3 Profile of the Institution under evaluation - Conclusions and recommendations

*Please complete the following sections regarding the overall **profile of the Institution under evaluation**:*

- *Underline specific positive points:*

The EEC recognizes and commends the efforts of the AUA administration for positively responding to recommendations from previous external reviews. Faculty and staff showed a positive and collegial attitude and were receptive to EEC comments.

The EEC commends the administration for having an open-door policy with students and faculty and for promoting dialogue to resolve issues. That said, communication must remain a priority with efforts for continuous improvement.

The EEC was impressed by the high quality of education and faculty research. Infrastructure was adequate in most labs. AUA is well positioned to lead Greece and provide vision for the future of agriculture and natural resources in the country.

Faculty are qualified, enthusiastic and motivated to do their best even under financial uncertainties in the country. They are dedicated to the AUA and its mission. Faculty have developed partnerships with colleagues within AUA and other institutions and with the private sector to secure resources to support their research and scholarly output.

Undergraduate students indicated that after initial adjustment (1 or 2 years) they become satisfied with the program. This is encouraging especially since less than 20% of students enrolled had listed AUA as their first option. It is critical for faculty to develop innovative motivation tools and programs, e.g., a one week “career experience” laboratory mandatory for undergraduate students. This would include laboratory tours, meeting representatives from the public and private sectors, and interacting with entrepreneurs from a wide range of initiatives including agroecology, agro- and eco-tourism, and nutrition. This would highlight the relevance of the education and skills that AUA offers and break the faculty-student barrier early on.

The programs of study in the various departments have been updated and designed to cater to student needs and meet the EU requirements.

Administration financial support to faculty and students has diminished in response to budget cuts. AUA continues to look for and secure funding from alternative sources like EU projects, public and private sector collaborations. The EEC encourages AUA to continue to seek funding and to make it a priority to invest in improving infrastructure and support for student research.

Laboratories are well equipped in general. However, the EEC strongly encourages AUA to optimize the allocation of resources, consider development of core facilities and service-providing centers to generate additional revenue to support labs and personnel.

Student services are good and the EEC commends AUA for its continuing effort to improve the welfare of its students.

- *Underline specific negative points:*

The university needs to continue to develop an integrative Strategic Plan at the University, School and Department levels. The goals and objectives need to be outcome and impact-oriented with clear time tables.

The programmatic, research and education rationale for bringing specific Departments under a specific School was not made clear to the EEC. AUA has to clearly integrate Departments in Schools to optimize programs and increase collaboration and impact. There is an institutional effort to increase interdepartmental collaborations manifested in research teams and joint graduate programs. The EEC encourages the various entities to further strengthen existing collaborations and foster new ones. The EEC would like to see collaborations and program flexibility extend to the undergraduate programs. In this respect, and in accordance with a similar trend internationally, it is important to adapt the curriculum which is perceived as being still dominated by agronomy subjects.

There is a strong need to increase communication among administration, faculty and students.

AUA is the face of Agriculture and Natural Resources in Greece, and its webpage needs to reflect this. The EEC strongly recommends that AUA works on improving its webpage in both Greek and English in its effort to increase national and international exposure and recognition. The webpage can highlight programs and career paths, faculty talents, scholarly output, conferences etc.

The doubling of student numbers at AUA (from ~ 500 to 1000 students in the past 5 years) is highly problematic. Without increase in state support, it will negatively impact quality of education and research, especially since materials and supplies are not adequate to run several of the labs. The EEC is also concerned that this increase compromises student safety in laboratories.

There is no formal transparent policy for improving faculty skills and promoting professional development.

The EEC was not aware of a formal committee charged with relations between AUA and the public.

- *Make your suggestions for further development of the positive points:*

The EEC encourages AUA to continue to adopt and develop clear integrated strategic plans and procedures at the University, School, and Department levels. We strongly encourage AUA to work closely with the Council and Quality Assurance committee to address priorities at the institutional level. We also suggest that AUA makes communication, both internal and external, a priority. These are critical steps towards making AUA a true leader in Greece and for enhancing research, teaching and engagement missions at AUA.

Continue to build on current efforts with Rutgers University to establish a strong extension-engagement program centered at AUA and the research field facilities.

EEC commends the AUA for its continuous efforts to seek external grants and projects and we encourage the University to explore and partner with new public and private entities in Greece to support its education, research, engagement and entrepreneurship priorities. This process requires effective coordination at the Department, School, and Institution levels.

- *Make your suggestions on needed steps for improvement:*

A systems approach to set priorities is needed for the Institution. This requires close partnerships with the University Council and the Quality Assurance Committee to set the motion for a forward-looking, impact and outcome-oriented strategic vision and implementation plan.

Focus on improving communication and dissemination of information on all university activities, including improvements to the webpage (see previous section), improvement of faculty webpages,

and highlighting programs, breadth of careers that students can pursue, faculty scholarship and discoveries, etc.

Work on motivating students early on, develop the “career experience” lab, improve and promote entrepreneurial skills in students.

The EEC would like to see more flexibility in the program and incorporation of skills related to agribusiness and entrepreneurship. These skills were clearly underdeveloped in most students that the EEC met with, and the EEC considers these skills critical for the future success of students. The AUA is uniquely positioned to train students to promote critical thinking and entrepreneurial skills through some of its existing programs, such as oenology and viticulture, apiculture, marketing, agro-economics, nutrition, dairy and animal sciences, aquaculture, land management and agriculture, and several others.

Develop strong partnerships with private sector, and seek research and outreach collaborations.

Support students via scholarships and stipends, and also continue to encourage and provide support for student exchange programs (e.g., Erasmus+)

4. INTERNAL SYSTEM OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

4.1 Quality Assurance (QA) Policy and Strategy

The AUA has recently gone through major academic and structural changes reflected by the formation of the two Schools and revising its education programs to meet the QA requirements. The Rector and various representatives, including the Institution Council, are encouraged to continue to work and define a clear path towards moving forward research, teaching, outreach, social engagement, and partnership with stakeholders on national and international levels.

AUA is in the process of developing a list of measurable objectives, outcomes, impacts and implementation, and is engaging the university community in the discussion. It is important to have strong participation by the various units and stakeholders. AUA has taken positive steps in this direction and we encourage the Rector and his team to continue with their efforts on this front and increase communication with faculty, students and other stakeholders.

Finally, we encourage AUA to develop metrics and a strong tool for data collection in order to evaluate the success of their research, teaching and engagement efforts.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&4.1):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	√
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

4.2 Design, approval, monitoring and evaluation of the study programmes and degrees awarded

AUA has taken strong and positive steps to implement changes recommended by the QA for individual Departments and Schools. Departments have re-evaluated their programs and reduced the number of credits needed for students to receive a Bachelor of Science degree, to be in compliance with EU policies. They have also revised, consolidated, created or eliminated majors. Additionally, cross-departmental programs and classes have been created to increase efficiency and collaborations.

We recommend that the QA committee at AUA continues with its role in overseeing programs and evaluating their success. Also, we recommend that the committee develops and communicates with students, staff and faculty a clear policy on how AUA implements program reviews and responds to student concerns regarding faculty performance. Interviews with students indicated that students were unclear about the value of faculty evaluation and whether or how AUA responds to negative reviews by students.

Students were in general supportive of the efforts of their faculty and praised the open door policy. However, students are not formally involved in the policies and strategies of Quality Assurance nor do they take part in most other decision-making bodies of the University despite the provisions of the current legal framework. They appeared to be prevented to participate by the political fragmentation and adherence to party politics on campus. Faculty, on the other hand, would like to see more students taking advantage of the mentoring programs the AUA provides to its students to guide them through the university process and help them develop professionally. The EEC believes that creating the “career experience” week, as well as overall improving communication and transparency may alleviate some of these issues.

EEC commends AUA for its increasing emphasis on global engagement and international programs and their efforts to strengthen existing collaborations and foster new ones with institutions abroad.

EEC encourages the AUA to improve public engagement and engagement with the private sector.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&4.2):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	√
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

4.3 Teaching and learning - Assessment by students

Please comment on:

- whether multiple and coherent learning paths are provided according to the needs of students in the Institution's Departments / Faculties
- how proper guidance and support is offered to students by the Departments / Faculties' teaching staff
- whether students are informed clearly and in detail regarding the strategy of evaluation that is implemented for their programme of study, the exams or other methods of assessment they will be subjected to, what is expected of them and which criteria will be applied for the evaluation of their performance
- whether there is a formal procedure for addressing complaints and objections by students in the Departments / Faculties of the Institution

Do you wish to make any comment on a point not included above?

A general plan is in place regarding the delivery of course material to students. Routine guidance and support is offered through materials placed on electronic classroom platforms, and teaching staff work closely with students in lab classes for which attendance is mandatory. The AUA indicates that some preparedness is in place to assist students with learning disabilities or facing other special challenges, on a case-by-case, *ad hoc* basis.

Doctoral students participate as teaching assistants in lab classes. Doctoral students also offer guidance to undergraduate students undertaking their praktiki ergasia (internship) at the laboratory.

Faculty have clear plans for evaluation of student performance. In most cases evaluations are based on a single exam at the end of the semester. However, mid-term assessments (proodos) were also employed in some classes.

The AUA has a well-defined plan for student assessments of the effectiveness of individual courses and instructors based on student evaluations. Evaluations are completed by students in hard copy and then scanned and analyzed by a dedicated analyst. The results are made available in various formats to the instructor, the Department Head and other administrators of the academic program. The evaluation form provides space for students to also articulate any special comments related to the class, positive or negative. The EEC was not made aware of other procedures for addressing class-related complaints and objections by students nor about the follow-up actions after these evaluations.

Issues that need attention include the following:

The recent steep increase in student numbers has made it difficult or impossible for students in certain lab classes to have any hands-on lab involvement. Lab exercises for such over-subscribed labs are therefore limited to demonstrations or the drafting of a paper related to the procedures and tasks that would be involved. The EEC recognizes that this issue is beyond control of the faculty. Nonetheless, this is an important issue worthy of continuing attention by each Department during the allocation of space and teaching staff for large lab courses.

Students repeatedly expressed the wish to have more information about the disposition of their evaluations. A strategy that may be helpful can include an anonymous mid-semester evaluation administered by the instructor and utilized by the instructor exclusively to identify issues that may

especially help or hinder student learning, followed by communication of relevant findings to the students.

A random examination of Student Organization pamphlets available during the EEC visit revealed potential challenges related to several academic issues such as faculty accessibility and availability of class materials on the internet. However, some of these claims are to be viewed with skepticism as they reflect the positions of the students' political factions. The EEC was not able to identify systemic malfunctions of the system during the meeting with the undergraduate students. Nonetheless, the Department heads and other AUA academic administrators are encouraged to carefully monitor unmet student needs as might be revealed by recurring trends from student evaluations and to initiate a process to open channels of communication with all students, e.g. by electronic communications directed to the entire student body.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&4.3):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	√
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

Justify your rating:

4.4 Admission of students, progression and recognition of studies

Student admission into AUA is performed by the state based on scores in the National Exams. Therefore there is little flexibility with regards to undergraduate student admission to the various programs at AUA. Students admitted annually into AUA has doubled in the past 5 years (total ~ 1000 students). This has created major challenges related to laboratory space, delivery of practical hands-on experience / internships, supervision of undergraduate theses, etc. These challenges have been intensified by budget cuts and decrease in faculty numbers due to retirements and departure of faculty. This situation is not sustainable and will eventually have a strongly negative impact on the quality of education at AUA and research output.

AUA has successfully changed the total number of credits required for a Bachelor of Science to comply with EU requirements. AUA requires internship experience or a practicum. Students have the option to seek internships in the public or private sector. We encourage AUA to continue to improve its efforts in matching students' interests with internships. The Rector leads an annual trip across Greece for senior students that emphasizes hands-on learning. This trip also exposes students to the various agriculture sectors in the country.

Learning objectives and a checklist are developed for each major and are shared with students in the various Departments.

The EEC recommends that AUA incorporates student evaluations of faculty to make improvements to the corresponding programs.

<i>Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&4.4):</i>	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	√
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

4.5 Quality Assurance as regards the teaching staff

Faculty and teaching staff have opportunities to develop professionally and improve their performance, but there is no unified strategy or coordinated effort across campus.

Departments that were visited by the EEC demonstrated a diverse array of methods and approaches to delivering classroom materials in terms of method and content. Student feedback to faculty varies among units.

AUA would benefit from cross-campus, unified and transparent guidelines and procedures with regard to instructor evaluation.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&4.5):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	√
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

4.6 Learning resources and student support

Despite the financial challenges, the EEC was impressed with the commitment, dedication and support of staff and faculty to assist students and communicate up-to-date, science-based education programs using various technologies.

Lectures and notes are available and for the most part posted online.

The library is well equipped with books and other materials to assist students, and the EEC was impressed by the development of the work area for students' collaboration within the library as well as the new student center under completion. AUA is investing as well in additional infrastructure to promote collaborations among students and between students and faculty. These are positive steps to keep students and faculty engaged and well informed.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&4.6):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	√
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

4.7 Information Systems for Recording and Analysing Data and Indicators

AUA collects institutional and academic data on faculty and students, including student evaluations of faculty and classes. AUA uses these data to improve the educational experience of the students and the effectiveness of the program of studies. The EEC is not aware of any additional efforts by the University to using software or other methods to extract further insights from these collected data. Such efforts may prove useful in gauging the efficiency of attaining institutional goals pertaining to research, teaching and social engagement.

The university uses electronic and paper-based tools to gather information. The EEC recommends that AUA concentrate on electronic means to collect research, teaching and engagement-related data and extract information that would permit the development of mission-related measurable outcomes.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&4.7):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	√
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

4.8 Dissemination of information to stakeholders

Faculty disseminate their research findings through refereed publications, reports, book chapters, short communications, conferences, invited seminars, personal communication, classroom learning, etc.

Additionally, there is a serious effort on behalf of AUA to become the main source of science-based information for institutions and public or private sector organizations in Greece. To this end, AUA has created an attractive and informative magazine that highlights the work of its faculty and programs. Also, a communications specialist has been identified who specializes in campus announcements and development of short communications.

Departments on campus have developed their own webpage. Some of these webpages are excellent while several others need work. The EEC recommends that AUA makes a special investment to improve the English language section of the webpage. The EEC also recommends that the webpage highlights students, careers, internships (inside and outside), and accomplishment of students and faculty.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&4.8):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	√
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

4.9 Continuous monitoring and periodic review of the study programmes

Faculties, Schools and Administration at AUA have responded positively to program reviews and are undertaking various steps to respond to the recommendations of review teams and QA.

They have successfully reduced the number of programs and have changed the total number of credits required to comply with national and European standards. The EEC encourages AUA to continue to move forward with its efforts to become a leader in the area of Agriculture and Natural Resources in Greece and pursue internal outcome-oriented evaluations of its diverse departments. In addition, the EEC is satisfied that the University is committed to the periodic review and update of its programs.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&4.9):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	√
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

4.10 Periodic external evaluation

AUA follows the procedures for evaluation established by QA

Evaluation of individual Schools and Departments has occurred in the past 5 years. AUA shared with the EEC major recommendations that emerged from the external review of individual units and shown evidence of positive change in response to suggestions from the external departmental evaluation committees. Most important were the reduction in the number of offered programs and the number of modules required to complete a degree, as well as increased engagement with private and global partners.

We encourage the AUA administration to continue to develop a unified outcome-oriented strategic plan across campus and monitor and assess its implementation.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&4.10):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	√
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

4.11 Internal System of Quality Assurance – Conclusions and recommendations

Please complete the following sections regarding the *internal system of quality assurance*:

- *Underline specific positive points:*

AUA has the potential to be a leader in the area of Agriculture and Natural Resources education, research and public engagement in Greece and beyond by adhering to strict QA procedures.

It offers a positive and collegial work environment; the challenge is to engage students to embrace the change and the new quality culture of AUA.

As an institution, AUA follows QA recommendations and has taken positive steps to implement change.

- *Underline specific negative points:*

There does not exist an outcome-oriented strategic plan that unifies the institution and differentiates it from its counterparts in Greece.

Effective communication between the various entities within AUA can be improved significantly.

- *Make your suggestions for further development of the positive points:*

Develop a unified strategic plan for the institution

Develop more effective assessment tools for faculty and students

Provide incentives for faculty and students to encourage engagement activities

Develop better partnerships with the private and public sectors of Greece and take advantage of the unique insights and capabilities of the Institution Council (Συμβούλιο Ιδρύματος).

- *Make your suggestions on needed steps for improvement:*

Develop goals and objectives that focus on concrete outcomes and can be measured and assessed

Improve communication between the diverse entities within the institution

Improve the webpage of AUA to serve students and stakeholders. Newly admitted students appeared to not be aware of the value of the degree obtained from AUA. Examples of jobs and success stories would be very helpful.

Invest in partnerships with the public and private sectors of Greece and beyond.

Invest further in public engagement and outreach activities

Work on branding of the institution.

Work on innovative strategies to deliver courses, improve class attendance and attract international students.

5. OPERATION OF THE CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE INSTITUTION

5.1 Central Administration Services of the Institution

Please comment on:

- The operation of the central administration services of the Institution in regard to the:

Special Account for Research Funds (SARF)

Financial services

Supplies department

Technical services

IT services

Student support services

Employment and Career Centre (ECC)

Public/ International relations department

Foreign language services

Social and cultural activities

Halls of residence and refectory services

Institution's library

The Special Account for Research Funds (SARF) is represented by a committee established by AUA to develop the fiscal strategy for AUA operations. The committee consists of a number of members and manages a budget of approx. 10 million euros. The amount of state funds has decreased from 56% to 33% of this amount, while private sources of funding have increased correspondingly in recent years and European Union funds have been relatively stable at approx. 14%. Funds have been distributed among different departments based on Department size and needs. Funds have been utilized to support a large number of new researchers, purchase new equipment and supplies for lab facilities. In addition, funds have been utilized for travel support of students and new faculty to present at conferences and participate in Erasmus, support of new faculty, and for cultural events at AUA.

A help desk for new proposals is in place at SARF. However, faculty expressed numerous concerns about the inadequacy of support in grant proposal preparation. SARF is a critical entity for AUA as it manages the sole reliable source of funds, and the EEC recommends that concerted efforts be urgently made to enhance faculty support so that they become more competitive in attracting external funding.

AUA-wide technical services for general repairs and maintenance are severely limited. There is dire need for staff that can address day-to-day maintenance needs. The EEC was informed that a position for one electrician has been approved. However, this will not address existing needs for such a large institution. Lack of adequate staff for repairs and maintenance leads to malfunctioning facilities and much waste of resources.

The IT services at AUA were deemed excellent; highly trained IT staff are in place to work closely with faculty, staff and students in curriculum functions, library services etc. However, the number of IT staff is small considering the steep increase in student numbers. In addition, computers in library and other common areas need a plan for regular updates and replacement.

An Employment and Career Centre (ECC) is in place, but appears under-staffed considering the large number of students at AUA.

Assistance for student mobility (e.g. via Erasmus) is available in the AUA. A number of agreements with institutions abroad are in place. The program has room for improvement so that Erasmus and other mobility programs are further strengthened.

The social and cultural activities of AUA are well defined and developed, with announcements for a number of upcoming cultural events placed at highly visible places on campus.

Residence halls for AUA students are not available on campus, but AUA has established relationships with other universities in the area to facilitate the procurement of housing by AUA students. The cafeteria is available at highly competitive prices (not exceeding 4 euros /meal) for students and others at AUA. The cafeteria facilities have been recently renovated and appear attractive and well-functioning.

AUA's library is especially well maintained with several dedicated staff. Well-maintained study halls are also available for students and others. However, library hours are relatively short with the facility closing in the afternoon and being closed during the week ends.

Please decide in respect to the specific evaluation area (&5.1):

	Tick
Worthy of merit	√
Positive evaluation	
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

5.2 Operation of the Central Administration of the Institution – Conclusions and recommendations

Please complete the following sections regarding the operation of the Institution's central administration :

- *Underline specific positive points:*

The EEC commends the central AUA administration, for its openness towards faculty, students and staff and its seriousness towards advancing the institution

- *Underline specific negative points:*

The EEC observed the need for the administration to help improve students' engagement and participation.

Students largely did not show enthusiasm with regard to their future and the relevance of their degree outside the traditional job market.

- *Make your suggestions for further development of the positive points:*

We recommend improvement of the administration's efforts towards communication, training and engagement of the undergraduate student body and emphasis on mentoring and developing of critical thinking and entrepreneurial skills.

- *Make your suggestions on needed steps for improvement:*

Improve communication of the institution with the public at large, through social media, digital outlets, publications and webpage. Use these outlets to highlight not only faculty and university accomplishment but also students' success stories and opportunities of work outside the research or academic world.

The AUA leadership needs to decide firmly to supplement its income using innovative strategies, for instance offering international short courses in Mediterranean agriculture and diet, online courses, etc.

Overall, we encourage the Rector and his team to continue with their efforts to increase communication with faculty, students and other stakeholders.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In connection with the

- general operation of the Institution
- development of the Institution to this date and its present situation
- Institution's readiness and capability to change/improve
- Internal system of Quality Assurance of the Institution

Please complete the following sections:

AUA has been held back since the advent of Greece's economic crisis due to significant budget cuts, however the current system is not sustainable for much longer. Agriculture is at the epicentre of the Greek economy, and can play a vital role in reviving the economy through education, research, extension and engagement activities. Equally important are the global issues that AUA is uniquely suited to address in the southern Mediterranean area, including food security and food safety, human health under projected population increase, dwindling natural resources, conservation, and climate variability and change. Therefore, AUA has to continue to take important steps in further developing its strategic and implementation plans to capitalize on its strength in addressing important agro-food, environmental and sustainability-related issues. Several labs can serve as the foundation of entrepreneurship programs and summer schools. It is imperative that the Greek government invests in this institution and for AUA to channel and support strategic investments to promote progress and economic growth and sustainable development in the agro-food sector.

Continue to build on current extension and engagement efforts (e.g., partnership with Rutgers University) to build a strong extension – engagement program centered at AUA and its research field facility.

The EEC commends AUA for its continuous efforts to seek external grants and projects and we encourage the University to explore and partner with new public and private entities in Greece to support its education, research, engagement and entrepreneurship priorities. This process requires serious coordination at the Department, School, and Institution levels.

Communication is a priority for AUA, through publications, website, newsletters, announcements, etc.

- *Underline specific positive points:*

The EEC commends the AUA for keeping a positive attitude and maintaining enthusiasm despite the severe budget cuts to the institution.

AUA continues to offer high quality undergraduate and postgraduate programs to its student body.

AUA is committed to competitive research and extension activities in both scientifically and economically important areas, notably in agriculture, food science and natural resource management.

- *Underline specific negative points:*

Aging faculty and uncertainty about future hirings for their replacement

A lack of qualified technical personnel both for laboratory support and for buildings and grounds maintenance

The internationalization of AUA is hampered by the existing legal and institutional framework that make it impossible to teach existing courses of the curriculum in English. This drawback can be partially overcome by offering thematic ‘summer schools’ in English.

- *Make your suggestions for further development of the positive points:*

Promote initiatives that further motivate students and strengthen their professional preparedness, e.g. via workshops and other exposures on career paths in agribusiness management and entrepreneurial skill development.

Further promote an outward-looking attitude and enhanced collaborations with national and international institutions in order to reinforce the research profile and competitiveness of the University.

- *Make your suggestions on needed steps for improvement:*

Articulate a coherent, integrated and measurable goal-oriented strategic plan for the next decade in close collaboration with the Institution Council.

Ensure the application of Quality Assurance procedures on all operations and units of the University.

6.1 Final decision of the EEC

Please decide in respect to the overall Institutional evaluation:

	Tick
Worthy of merit	
Positive evaluation	√
Partially positive evaluation	
Negative evaluation	

The Members of the Committee

AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS

Name and Surname

Signature

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