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HELLENIC REPUBLIC
H.Q.A.
 HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE
 AND ACCREDITATION AGENCY

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE

TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF CRETE



European Union
 European Social Fund



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION & RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS, CULTURE & SPORTS
 M A N A G I N G A U T H O R I T Y

Co-financed by Greece and the European Union



EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND

'DEPARTMENT OF ARCHTECTURE OF THE TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF CRETE (CHANIA)'

16/12/2013 to 21/12/2013

The External Evaluation Procedure

PREPARATION

The members of the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) were also briefed by the H.Q.A. regarding the guidelines and procedures related to the External Evaluation process before their Arrival in Athens.

The members of the Evaluating Committee went through the preparatory material that they received prior to their arrival in Chania on the 16.12.2013 for their site visit. The Committee requested, after a thorough examination of the received documents, additional material that was promptly and meticulously responded to in a very satisfactory way!

INITIAL MEETING. H.Q.A. MONDAY DECEMBER 16TH

The MEC had an introductory meeting with Constantin Memos.

Mr Constantin Memos suggested what will be considered very valuable to base our Evaluation on our Individual Professional and Academic Life Experience. We were also encouraged to expand our External Evaluation beyond the School of Architecture to include the entire Polytechnic and by extension the Impact that our Report may have on National Policy regarding the reorganization or developments of institutions of Higher Learning (Universities, Polytechnics, Institutes) in Greece.

The EEC initiated a discussion which articulated the need for the forging of a clear Identity for the School of Architecture and the Polytechnic of Greece which derives from and relates to existing resources and future possible development in Crete. We were asked to consider future developments related to of Agriculture, Commercial Shipping, Tourism, and Cultural Heritage in collaboration with the Local Authorities, etc. The Committee in continuing the discussion with H.Q.A. emphasized the significant role that the Polytechnic of Crete with its School of Architecture could play in the overall development of Higher Education throughout Greece and within the Context of the European Union.

The EEC voices their concern that the Evaluation template and the overall evaluation structure does not seem to take into account the nature and the unique qualities of the School of Architecture and other Applied Art programmes.

The EEC appreciated the fact that they were extended the possibility to adjust the Programme based on on- site conditions and opportunities.

ARRIVAL IN CRETE 16.12.2013

There was an Initial meeting with the Dean and the Top Administrators of the School at which time we were presented with a revised programme, based on our previous requests. However

the Committee made additional requests for elaboration of the schedule whose objectives were for more time to be scheduled for meetings with students and to also have the opportunity to meet with individual groups of faculty. In our goal to communicate with faculty and students we convey the request for additional meeting at the conclusion of our meeting. The dean along with his colleagues embraced with enthusiasm this additional request. The members of the committee were also presented with a package which included in digital form examples of student work, faculty background information data related to the School, a student publication along with cultural information.

17.12.2013 MEETINGS

At an initial meeting with the Rector, the Vice- rector and the President of the Council of the Polytechnic, the following issues were discussed:

Having been given a comprehensive introduction to the Polytechnic regarding its growth and its broader objectives including its strategic Plan and its achievements , the following points were thoroughly discussed through dialogue between the members of the evaluation committee and the rector, the vice rector and the President of the Council:

The future of Crete lies within further development of Agriculture, Upscale Tourism, and the enhancement of its Cultural Heritage. Other challenges to be met with were discussed.

The Rector and his colleagues pointed out for us the overall lack of a clear vision and/or identity for the Institutes of Higher Education in Greece and that this remains a challenge for the Polytechnic of Crete. The further cross fertilization between the different existing Schools and with the existing resources of Crete overall could contribute to the mission and the defining of a clear identity for the Polytechnic. It was stated that there should be further emphasis on the development of Mediterranean regionalism 'Mesogiakotita' and that this could contribute to the 'branding 'of the Polytechnic. It was also emphasized that bioclimatic research, the evaluation of Cultural Heritage along with Advanced Digital Techniques could in fact contribute to the enrichment of the curriculum of the School of Architecture.

The EEC appreciated the clear goals and challenges set out by the Top Administrative officers of the Polytechnic.

In continuation it should be noted that the members of the committee were received with enthusiasm at the School of Architecture building by members of the faculty and who with their students had mounted an exhibit displaying a broad range of the work produced. At the conference room there was an introduction by the Dean while the members of the committee made a brief introduction of their own background. There followed an extensive and detailed presentation by the entire faculty of the school of Architecture at all levels covering the complete curriculum of the School, with extensive power point presentations along with printed materials . All 18 presentations could be characterized as comprehensive and articulate

During the faculty presentations, the members of the committee asked for clarifications and made comments which were responded to by the individual faculty. With the conclusion of the presentation ascertained the willingness of the faculty to engage in further dialogue

concerning the content and the results of their teaching in all areas. The results of this meeting contributed significantly to the members of the committee being able to formulate possible conclusions and to identify challenges that remained to be met.

During this presentation, representatives of the Students Association of the School of Architecture were given the opportunity to voice their concerns and objections to the evaluation process. This was done in a passionate but civilized and polite manner. The members of the committee expressed their willingness to meet with any members of the student body at any time.

18.12.2013

The following day there were individual visits to all of the teaching laboratories where the faculty in charge explained to us in a summary way their academic goals and in most instances presented examples of the work produced. During our visits to the various laboratories we had an opportunity for brief conversation with PhD candidates. The committee was impressed by the advanced and diverse forms of technology available to the students. The committee was given a tour of the physical infrastructure of the School of Architecture which includes in addition to the administrative offices and labs, the library and design studio spaces. As a part of the tour of the physical facilities we had the opportunity to meet with the director of the library and discuss its role within the larger context of the entire Polytechnic and the usefulness of the library and its content for the School of Architecture.

The highlight of the committee's visit to the School of Architecture was as response to its request was the extensive time spent with students and their faculty in the design studios. The members of the committee were welcomed with the outmost warmth, hospitality and openness by both students and faculty. There was extended dialogue between the members of the committee, numerous students and their faculty concerning their work. This dialogue was conducted within an extremely constructive and positive atmosphere.

There followed a meeting with the administrative personnel of the school of architecture , during which time the members of the committee tried to understand the administrative load and role of each member and their future needs . The members of the committee also wanted to hear to what extent the administrative personnel were able to respond to primarily students but also faculty needs.

The members of the committee had an extensive private meeting with the President of the Council, whose comments and concerns which we will articulate below were found to be extraordinarily clear and constructive. The President recognized certain unique aspects of the architectural faculty related to their profession while voicing his concern regarding the extents of their physical presence on campus. The President also voiced the need for all faculty to have an extensive professional background which could include extensive research and the professional practice of architecture. He also stressed the ongoing need for there to be a greater degree of cross fertilization between the different Schools and disciplines in relation to the School of Architecture. He looks forward to the further development of graduate studies

which can generate income and project through the outcome the image of the Polytechnic internationally.

At the committee's request there was an extensive meeting with the academic staff, during which time the essence of diploma projects were reviewed and discussed along with the role that this crucial moments in the curriculum can play in assisting the students to define their future goals while providing a methodology and mirror for the improvement of the overall curriculum.

It should also be noted that during the external evaluation process, there were numerous informal, constructive conversations between all members of the academic staff and the EEC. Furthermore, the committee in visiting venues outside the campus of the Polytechnic was able to see the impact of members of the academic personnel of the School of Architecture on the architectural and cultural past and presence of Crete, and beyond.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. **Mission.** We have reviewed the mission statement of the Internal Evaluation and fully agree with both its content and intent. However we recommend that the mission statement be extended to more clearly identify the goal of preparing students to enter the profession of architecture.
2. **Student relations.** While we were made aware of certain issues related to the degree of communication between faculty and students, this did not in any way hinder our visit or inhibit us in making constructive conclusions. We ascertained during our visit that there is a reasonably positive climate between faculty and students as opposed to what we have seen occurring in other Greek universities. Also it needs to be noted that we did not see any signs of disrespect between faculty, students and administration.
3. **Evaluation process of the School.** Concerning the evaluation process the committee believes that qualitative as opposed to just quantitative criteria need to be established.
4. **Faculty structure and Administration.** We have observed that without exception, the faculty approach their individual courses and activities of the entire School of Architecture with enthusiasm and a sense of commitment. We believe that it is essential that younger faculty who have through the results of their teaching , research and professional practice demonstrated excellent potential, must be further acknowledged through insuring their continued and increased role in the future growth of the school of architecture.

While we consider a positive development the enrichment of the faculty of architecture with the absorption of certain members of the dissolved School of General Education, we believe that the balance between faculty that are qualified to teach subjects related to the profession of architecture and the teaching of other essential disciplines needs to be examined. Furthermore, we see the necessity of the status of the existing part time faculty members been enhanced. We also see the necessity for additional professionals in the architectural field. Both existing and future part time faculty should

be considered with increased benefits and leading to their full integration into the School

We strongly believe that the increase in the number of students without an increase in the number of faculty will impact negatively on the quality of education particularly in curriculum areas related to architectural design.

It is recommended that there be appointed coordinators for each year level to assist in the defining of curriculum content and in the facilitating of further interaction between the different design studios and support courses.

We appreciate the extraordinary support given to us by the Dean of the School and note the enthusiasm he brings to his complex administrative duties. We extend this to his administrative staff who we consider overburdened and which needs to be expanded with additional personnel. In addition we want to praise the exemplary administrative skills of the secretary to the dean. Therefore we recommend that at least one additional permanent position be generated. In so doing her office will be able to provide those essential services to the students along with faculty support.

- 5. Curriculum Challenges.** Having examined the predefined curriculum areas we believe that architectural design should reside at the center of the core curriculum. Other curriculum areas such as the restoration and preservation of historical monuments should stand alone as a concentration within the curriculum. We have also observed that the number of courses along with the attendant time needed for fulfilling their requirements appears to place an excessive burden on the students thus impacting their ability to fulfill the expectations of the architectural design studios. Therefore we recommend that there be an examination on how these support courses can be restructured or edited in a way that their content is relevant to the educating of an architect.

And as previously discussed we have been shown a number of highly developed diploma projects. This fact however raises the issue of why the completion of the diploma projects takes much longer than it should with all the attendant ripple effects on the School administratively and educationally. Therefore we encourage the School to closely re-examine the reasons for this phenomenon and having done so take relevant steps to alleviate the situation.

There needs to be a greater creative dialogue between urban design, city planning and landscape design. Specifically these areas along with building technology, digital media and art need to be more clearly understood as part of the design process in meeting the architectural challenges of the future. The integration and content of these different curriculum areas need to be reflected to an appropriate degree at all design studio levels.

We appreciate and commend the diversity in the diploma projects. Therefore, we encourage that this diversity be expanded into the building type and technology content of the design studio.

There is a need for an increase of individual student work while acknowledging the value of team projects and the restrictions that are generated by limitations in the number of faculty.

- 6. International Outreach.** With the developments of post graduating degrees there should be encouragement for teaching in foreign languages which will enhance the possibility of the students of the School of Architecture to participate dynamically in educational programmes within the European Union. This will result in the possibility of organizing international workshops thus enhancing the role and position of the school of architecture within the European Union and beyond.
- The development of the master programmes will present the opportunity for the generation of specialization in architectural restoration, preservation and reuse with relevance to Crete and its cultural heritage and in particular the historic city of Chania.
- 7. Educational facilities and physical environment.** There need to be a consolidation between all the teaching and administrative spaces of the School of Architecture to the degree that is physically and economically possible along with a visual and functional connection between the existing administrative and laboratory building and the cluster that houses the design studios, amphitheater and library. There need to be a significant increase in studio space where each student should have a dedicated workplace accessible on a 24 hours basis. There also need to be programmed within the strategic plan of the Polytechnic campus housing suitable for students of architecture. The implementation of the above will facilitate the generation of studio culture that does not now exist. The existing advanced technological infrastructure allows the organizing and generation of highly specialized workshops and developmental research on an international level. We consider this essential to the further development of the architectural design output and the forging of the future identity of the School.

SUMMARY VISION

This evaluation is submitted cognizant of the fact that Greece along with a number of other countries within the European Union is undergoing moments of transition. We are also cognizant of the fact the profession of architecture is undergoing significant transition and change globally. We therefore aspire that this evaluation will assist in positioning the School of Architecture within the context of the Polytechnic of Crete as a regional leader and example as to how the traditional title of architect engineer in fact can be redefined to prepare students of architecture to meet the challenges of the future both on a local, national and regional scale. We believe that the School of Architecture has the seeds and the existing resources to further evolve a curriculum which integrates architectural technology art and research which will not only benefit and bring to the fore the rich historic past of Crete but in so doing will also create a firm foundation for the addressing of the future and still unknown architectural challenges. We believe that there is presented to the School of Architecture and by extension to the Polytechnic of Crete an opportunity to establish in the immediate future a unique identity which will distinguish it from the often homogeneous other institutions of Higher Education of Greece .

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