ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
HELLENIC REPUBLIC

Accreditation Report
for the Undergraduate Study Programme
(Integrated Master) of:

Architecture
Institution: University of Thessaly
Date: 5 December 2020

Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the Undergraduate Study Programme (Integrated Master) of **Architecture** of the **University of Thessaly** for the purposes of granting accreditation

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PART A: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE REVIEW

I.   The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

The Panel responsible for the Accreditation Review of the Undergraduate Study Programme (Integrated Master) of **Architecture** of the **University of Thessaly** comprised the following five (5) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

1.   **Professor Loukas Kalisperis, (Chair)**

Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania, USA

2.   **Assoc. Professor Marilena Kourniati**

École Nationale Supérieure d' Architecture Paris - Val de Seine, Paris, France

3.   **Professor Marios C. Phocas**

University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus

4.   **Professor Alcibiades Tsolakis**

Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA

5.   **Mr. Nestoras Kanellos**

Technical Chamber of Greece, Larisa, Greece

## II.	Review Procedure and Documentation

The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel reviewed the material submitted by the Department of Architecture of the University of Thessaly (UTH) in advance of its *'virtual visit'* (via tele-conference) and *virtual* briefing. The Director and staff of HAHE briefed the members of the Panels on 30/11/2020 on its mission and standards, as well as the guidelines for the review process and the national framework of the higher education institution in Greece. The Panel met, in private, to discuss the program review report for the Department of Architecture of the University of Thessaly, allocate tasks and list of issues for the site *'virtual visit'*.

The visit was conducted via online conference meetings (Zoom) due to COVID-19 travel restrictions and started on 01 December 2020 and lasted until 03 December 2020. The Panel wrote the report in the following days (December 3-5) though collaborative meetings, held also online via the Zoom platform. The Panel would like to express its appreciation for the efforts that the university, department and HAHE undertook in order for the *'virtual visit'* to be a productive and effective experience. Although the Panel was able to collect enough information for an understanding of the program, the "*virtual visit*" was not as effective and rewarding as an in-situ evaluation.

The Panel met initially with the Department Chair and the Vice Rector of Academic Affairs of the University, on 01 December 2020, for a brief introductory meeting where some initial presentations of the university and the department took place. The Department Chair and the Vice Rector of Academic Affairs gave a short overview of the institution and the department, regarding its history, vision, mission, current status, strengths, and academic profile. Further presentations provided useful information about the department's strengths and areas of concern. The morning meetings continued with an in-depth presentation by representatives of the Internal Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP) and the Internal Evaluation Group (OMEA), followed by comprehensive discussion with all MODIP & OMEA members, during which the Panel received additional information about the program, the various activities of the department regarding the curriculum, faculty and staff, student body, and research activities. The Panel received further documentation and supporting material related to the presentations given by MODIP & OMEA that facilitated their discussions. The Panel reflected on the discussions and prepared for the subsequent sessions of the *'virtual visit'*, during which it met with faculty members and student representatives. During this meeting the Panel was given the opportunity to ask detailed questions in order to better facilitate the Panel's understanding of the curriculum, internal evaluation review process, adequacy of resources and possible areas of strengths weaknesses. The students provided the members of the Panel with valuable information about their study experience, curriculum, and campus facilities. They discussed their priority issues concerning student life, mobility, research, and career opportunities. The students were very hospitable, enthusiastic and helpful. They conducted themselves admirably and were excellent ambassadors of a good educational institution.

The first day of the *'virtual visit'* was concluded with a brief meeting of the Panel in order to evaluate the accomplishments of the day and plan the activities and meetings of the following day.

The second day, 02 December 2020, started with a PowerPoint tour of the facilities and a very brief discussion followed in order to address any Panel members' questions. Additionally, the Panel was introduced, via PowerPoint presentations, to the five individual research laboratories operating within the school by faculty members of its research group and their facilities and research activities. Following the brief virtual tour of the facilities the Panel teleconferenced with graduates of the department order to assess their experience and identify how well their studies are serving them in their current work environment. The second day of the "*virtual visit*" was concluded with a meeting with employers, social partners, and external stakeholders, representing impressive professional organizations, enterprises, and local authorities. During the meetings the Panel was able to hear their experiences either during their studies at the UTH-Architecture and/or their relations with UTH-Architecture, as well as aiming to address the readiness of the graduates for the market and identify areas of cooperation between the department and employers. All participants spoke enthusiastically of the department and their affiliation with it. It was evident that the Institution is held in a very high regard by its Alumni and external stakeholders.

On the third day of the visit, 03 December 2020, the Panel met the faculty working on the Program Review Report, MODIP & OMEA, and the Vice-Rector, in which a quick summary of the visit was discussed. During the meeting the Panel was able to further clarify several key points and engage in a very detailed discussion on the curriculum and facilities. The Panel received additional information about the department, administrative, buildings & resources, library, external relations and the electronic systems for student satisfaction and student records.

The Panel met via tele-conference, for the remainder of the "virtual visit", in order to complete the report and submit it to HAHE on Saturday, 05 December 2020.

III.   Study Programme Profile

The Architecture Engineering program at the University of Thessaly was established in 1999, ten years after the establishment of the University in 1989. This is a 5-year integrated Masters undergraduate program in which students are required to complete a total of 52 courses (38 required and 14 elective) along with the completion of the Diploma Thesis and a Research Undertaking. Most students also elect to complete a Practical Training experience. The program has an equivalency of 300 ECTS not including the Practical Training credits. Students do not identify any concentration areas in which they select their elective courses and or complete their thesis on similar thematic areas. The Department has developed a curriculum, in which the first two years of study are very structured, while in years three and four, students are able to select the topic of Architectural Studios (from a list of 7 or 8 available topic studios for each semester) and elective courses (from a list of 24 available courses for each semester). Course syllabi are available for all courses taught online in the web page of the Department. Students are given the opportunity to evaluate the courses they attend, and their input is considered in adjusting course content and delivery aspects.

Graduates of the program obtain the title of Architecture Engineer and can become members of the Technical Chamber of Greece (TEE). Graduates can be employed in both the private and public sector and most of the graduates have been successfully placed in both sectors after their graduation, in addition to completing post-graduate studies, either in Greece or overseas. Throughout the academic year, seminars and lectures are held with professionals working in the field that provide additional information and exposure to different work environments. The Practical Training, although not required, provides graduates with an opportunity to explore job prospects, gain some work experience and make contacts. The Department supports diverse student educational experiences through the Erasmus+ program, with 127 students participating in this program over the last five years, making it the department with the highest number of participating students within the University.

There are 25 faculty members that support the educational and research activities of the program and most have doctoral degrees from institutions abroad or in Greece. Additionally, there are six *special teaching staff members (ΕΔΙΠ)* members. An issue of impending concern is the ability to replace those that have already or are going to retire in the near future to ensure continuity of the program. Additionally, a point of concern is the disproportionally large number of Full Professors - 15 out of 25 faculty members. The Department has a commendable number of publications and some research activities, both in projects and funds. The Department was evaluated in 2012 through an External Evaluation Committee and most of the recommendations of the report have been addressed or are in the process of been addressed. The Department follows the required procedure for establishing quantitative metrics that define their progress, as well as target goals to be achieved in the near future.

The department has experienced a very large influx of undergraduate students in the last few years, more than doubling their numbers, from 60 incoming students in 1999 to currently more than 120 incoming students (plus an additional 30% of students from transfers and special enrolment cases) without any additional facilities and resources, while the numbers of doctoral students have over the years totalled 48, with 11 concluding their studies.

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

Principle 1: Academic Unit Policy for Quality Assurance

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD APPLY A QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY AS PART OF THEIR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT. THIS POLICY SHOULD EXPAND AND BE AIMED (WITH THE COLLABORATION OF EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS) AT ALL INSTITUTION'S AREAS OF ACTIVITY, AND PARTICULARLY AT THE FULFILMENT OF QUALITY REQUIREMENTS OF UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES. THIS POLICY SHOULD BE PUBLISHED AND IMPLEMENTED BY ALL STAKEHOLDERS.

The quality assurance policy of the academic unit is in line with the Institutional policy on quality, and is included in a published statement that is implemented by all stakeholders. It focuses on the achievement of special objectives related to the quality assurance of study programmes offered by the academic unit.

The quality policy statement of the academic unit includes its commitment to implement a quality policy that will promote the academic profile and orientation of the programme, its purpose and field of study; it will realize the programme's strategic goals and it will determine the means and ways for attaining them; it will implement the appropriate quality procedures, aiming at the programme's continuous improvement.

In particular, in order to carry out this policy, the academic unit commits itself to put into practice quality procedures that will demonstrate:

a) *the suitability of the structure and organization of the curriculum;*
b) *the pursuit of learning outcomes and qualifications in accordance with the European and the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education;*
c) *the promotion of the quality and effectiveness of teaching;*
d) *the appropriateness of the qualifications of the teaching staff;*
e) *the enhancement of the quality and quantity of the research output among faculty members of the academic unit;*
f) *ways for linking teaching and research;*
g) *the level of demand for qualifications acquired by graduates, in the labour market;*
h) *the quality of support services such as the administrative services, the Library, and the student welfare office;*
i) *the conduct of an annual review and an internal audit of the quality assurance system of the undergraduate programme(s) offered, as well as the collaboration of the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) with the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU).*

Study Programme Compliance

The Department of Architecture has established a quality assurance body of faculty members that is responsible for reviewing the quality of the structure and organization of the program of studies, internationalization issues, the teaching and research activities based on quantifiable measures, the services support, the students' participation in evaluation procedures and the operation of the Department, the transparency of activities and decisions, as well as the extroversion of the program and the Department.

The quality assurance body monitors the operation of the program on a regular and annual basis. Furthermore, every approximately 4 years, discussions take place among the faculty on

the development of the program's identity and orientation. In principle, the identity of the program has been defined since its initiation. It refers primarily to the theory and history, new technologies and environmental aspects of the profession and the multidisciplinary nature of architectural education and research. The further development of the program up to now has built upon this identity. Initial revisions in the program of studies were made in 2013, following the external evaluation in 2012. In 2016, the program was further adapted to the 11 points of reference of the EU directive 2005/36/EC article 46, and in 2018, with the Masters integration within the 5 years Diploma. In parallel, the program has been monitored through participation of the Department in the European Association of Architectural Education (EAAE) and the Erasmus program of academic staff and students' mobility. The regulatory framework enables possible significant modifications of the program of studies only after approval by the Ministry of Education; however specific internal regulations of the program of studies introduced in 2018, such as the autonomy of the courses in the 5th year, prerequisites and conditions to be met for eligibility of selection of courses and attendance of the 5th year have influenced positively the pedagogical goals set and the operation of the program.

Although the quality assurance body and the faculty as a whole seemed to support the existing identity of the program as formulated above, the Panel believes that this identity is presently not adequately and convincingly reflected in the structure of the program of studies; main reason is the high number of elective studios and theoretical courses that comprise the main body of the program of studies in the 3rd and 4th year. The lack of any defined directions, especially in these two years with regard to the thematic and structured learning outcomes of the individual semesters, and a lack of a regulated comprehensive design studio in this stage of the program, do not provide for a general and balanced education in Architecture, or enhance the program's identity.

The structure of the Department, the program of studies and the teaching and research activities by the faculty are comprehensively documented on the web sites of the Department. The course instructors' evaluations by the students, in effect on an optional basis, are practically not used by the students; neither do the students participate in the Department Council meetings.

The internationalization of the program through participation in ERASMUS, European networks of education and research, organization of international conferences and workshops in Volos, set-up of common courses with other Universities, as well as the students' and graduates' employment and activities abroad are noted. Equally important is the acknowledgment by the quality assurance body of the faculty research activities, sabbatical leaves and participation in international conferences. Nevertheless, due to economic constraints, presently there is very limited financial support by the University or the government for the faculty's research activities. There is also no mechanism for renewal and development of the faculty body through hiring of new colleagues or external collaborators. In this framework, the quality assurance body has succeeded in extending and adapting the evaluation criteria for promotion of the faculty members to include accomplishments beyond research and also measures of artistic and architectural recognition.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

In achieving a general and balanced education in Architecture, as well as the promotion of the program's identity, the Panel proposes the articulation of defined directions, especially in the 3rd and 4th year, with regard to the thematic and structured learning outcomes of the individual semesters, and the introduction of a regulated comprehensive design studio in this stage of the program. In parallel, the program's identity is expected to be clearly formulated and reflected through specific synergies that need to be created between thematic areas, courses and research activities by the faculty. The Panel proposes that the program to be respectively restructured and the students to be provided with a formalized system for focusing their studies during the last three years of the program. This action will certainly further assist the long-term development of the Department, the institutionalization of its program of studies and the setting up of a viable and commonly shared among the faculty and the University authorities strategic plan that is presently completely missing.

The students should be encouraged or otherwise directed to take use of the evaluation process of the course instructors. Furthermore, Best Teaching Awards should be introduced on an annual basis by the University to promote innovation and quality in teaching.

The linking of teaching and research should be strengthened through specific synergies between thematic areas that need to be formulated in the program of studies, especially in the 3rd and 4th year, and collaborative design-based or multidisciplinary research. Design-based research may be initiated by the faculty and the students already at the Diploma level, whereas multidisciplinary research, through stronger collaborative actions by the faculty members and networking of the individual research labs.

Annual reviews of the program of studies need to be further institutionalized by the Department, as well as external evaluations, organized by the Department itself every 5 years. This will help to constantly revise and improve the profile and mission of the School, as well as to set up long-term development aims and policies at multiple levels of operation.

Principle 2: Design and Approval of Programmes

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD DEVELOP THEIR UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES FOLLOWING A DEFINED WRITTEN PROCESS WHICH WILL INVOLVE THE PARTICIPANTS, INFORMATION SOURCES AND THE APPROVAL COMMITTEES FOR THE PROGRAMME. THE OBJECTIVES, THE EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES, THE INTENDED PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND THE WAYS TO ACHIEVE THEM ARE SET OUT IN THE PROGRAMME DESIGN. THE ABOVE DETAILS AS WELL AS INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAMME'S STRUCTURE ARE PUBLISHED IN THE STUDENT GUIDE.

> *Academic units develop their programmes following a well-defined procedure. The academic profile and orientation of the programme, the objectives, the subject areas, the structure and organisation, the expected learning outcomes and the intended professional qualifications according to the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education are described at this stage. The approval or revision process for programmes includes a check of compliance with the basic requirements described in the Standards, on behalf of the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU).*
>
> *Furthermore, the programme design should take into consideration the following:*
>
> - *the Institutional strategy*
> - *the active participation of students*
> - *the experience of external stakeholders from the labour market*
> - *the smooth progression of students throughout the stages of the programme*
> - *the anticipated student workload according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System*
> - *the option to provide work experience to the students*
> - *the linking of teaching and research*
> - *the relevant regulatory framework and the official procedure for the approval of the programme by the Institution*

Study Programme Compliance

The program is based on solid general theoretical foundations. It takes into account the changing nature of architectural practice, it incorporates a multitude of facets that enrich the relevant discourse and form its identity – Theory, History, Art and the Humanities, building and making from the micro to the macro scale-Design and Technology and Environmental Practices. Its implementation aims at promoting the knowledge and skills necessary for practice, as well as an expanded awareness and understanding of virtual and information technologies as tools for analytical and synthetic environmental design.

The program reflects the interests and specializations of its founding faculty and is in every sense comparable with programs internationally. There seems to be a good synergy between faculty research, creative practice and teaching that needs to be further supported and expanded in the future. The internationalization of the program through Erasmus and through incorporating the teaching of foreign languages in the curriculum is commendable. It delivers on the stated intention of creating an extroverted program and opening the students' horizons to the world. The course syllabi support this direction through both project and bibliography. The alumni with whom we spoke, many of whom work abroad, spoke highly of the value of their experience

noting that in addition to architectural design the program prepared them for other design-related career paths.

The Panel noted the absence of a strategic planning document that would provide the Department with a road map for future, would establish priorities and strategies towards and would help coordinate the efforts towards a renewing the vision of the founding faculty and assuring a sustainable future. The strategic planning process and the resulting road map are even more vital now since the impending retirement of the founding faculty signals significant opportunity as well as risk. It would also be useful in establishing budget items related to technology and facility updates and maintenance and could become a springboard for innovative fundraising initiatives, community outreach and student support.

The Panel thinks that the implementation of the curriculum, the structure of studies, especially in the third and fourth year does not provide an orderly and transition towards the 9th semester and the undertaking of the thesis work. Although the desirable learning outcomes are articulated for each course the curriculum does not combine common student learning outcomes for each semester and each year and does not build on the outcomes of the first two years in comprehensive way. It would be desirable to plan and clearly articulate possible tracks/sequences and combination of courses and adjust the course offerings accordingly. This is especially important since the program is now an Integrated Masters. The 15-page guide to the program and the 618 pages of course descriptions are impressive but cumbersome and difficult to navigate. The equivalent website guide that occupies approximately 150 pages is clearer, but still does not support the idea of a student-centric institution nor does it provide the students with a useful road map to graduation.

The faculty should be commended for addressing the exponential growth of the student body at a time of multiple crises by preserving through personal efforts a program organization that was better suited to the original size and scale of operations. The student number expansion, as well as the impending renewal of faculty in the next few years merits a thoughtful reorganization to meet present and future changes and challenges.

There are procedures and regulations for the revisions of the program and the Panel was made aware that the program has been revised periodically. The reduction of courses from 61 to 52 following the recommendation of the 2012 External Review Committee is one clear example. There is, however, no clearly articulated plan or timetable for revisions and we are not aware of the existence of a standing curriculum committee that would monitor, collect data/evaluate/study and propose revisions and changes

We are not aware of the involvement of outside consultation in any intentional and systematic way. Students have been involved and included in department meetings, but we are not certain of their specific role in curriculum revisions. Additionally, students have not contributed in any significant way by submitting course and faculty evaluations. The Panel understands the difficulties of a task that is aggravated by the increase in student numbers and the fear of losing the personal character of the program in the early years. We would encourage the use of virtual platforms/social media to enhance student participation and engagement.

The student guide is complete and appropriate. It could become much more user friendly and concise by a better use of the Department web site. That could allow the students to access efficiently both the academic and non-academic resources of the Program and the University.

Panel Judgement

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

The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel agrees that this Programme leads to a Level 7 Qualification according to the National & European Qualifications Network (Integrated Master)	YES	NO*
	X	

Panel Recommendations

Appoint a standing faculty curriculum committee with the mandate to articulate a renewed vision of the department and revise the program and provide a five-year plan and design a road map for implementation. This committee should include in an advisory capacity all stakeholders and should have a tight time schedule of meetings and consultations with the aim of a comprehensive proposal to be discussed and approved by the faculty.

The implications of this proposal should go hand in hand with a more general planning exercise that would address the financial impact and the resources needed to maintain the future sustainability of the program.

Principle 3: Student- centered Learning, Teaching and Assessment

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES ARE DELIVERED IN A WAY THAT ENCOURAGES STUDENTS TO TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN CREATING THE LEARNING PROCESS. THE ASSESSMENT METHODS SHOULD REFLECT THIS APPROACH.

Student-centered learning and teaching plays an important role in stimulating students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in the learning process. The above entail continuous consideration of the programme's delivery and the assessment of the related outcomes.

The student-centered learning and teaching process

- *respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths;*
- *considers and uses different modes of delivery, where appropriate;*
- *flexibly uses a variety of pedagogical methods;*
- *regularly evaluates and adjusts the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods aiming at improvement;*
- *regularly evaluates the quality and effectiveness of teaching, as documented especially through student surveys;*
- *reinforces the student's sense of autonomy, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teaching staff;*
- *promotes mutual respect in the student - teacher relationship;*
- *applies appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints.*

 In addition :
- *the academic staff are familiar with the existing examination system and methods and are supported in developing their own skills in this field;*
- *the assessment criteria and methods are published in advance;*
- *the assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary is linked to advice on the learning process;*
- *student assessment is conducted by more than one examiner, where possible;*
- *the regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances;*
- *assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures;*
- *a formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*

Study Programme Compliance

The program curriculum consists of lecture courses, seminars and design studios. During the five-year program, students are required to attend a total of 52 courses, 32 of which are compulsory. The first two years consist of 20 compulsory courses (studios and lectures), while the third and fourth year consist of a range of elective courses (lectures & seminars), required electives and one elective design studio per semester. The last year (integrated master) is mainly devoted to a special research topic and the individual Diploma Project; in both cases, students select a professor or a team of professors as supervisor(s) and decide together the frequency of follow-up meetings.

The design studios promote interdisciplinarity, enable creative use of knowledge and experimental learning paths, whereby students should be able to interact with methods and tools in order to construct knowledge. Students are free to lead individual or group design research. Plagiarism is avoided through use of the online tool Turnitin.

The maximum number of students is 40 per design studios and 50 in lecture courses. The content, skills and methods of delivery and assessment are described in the course guide.

The final jury of the Diploma project is composed of 4 external examiners; the student's supervisor attends the presentation/examination, but the committee of external examiners assigns the grade. All diploma projects are digitized and archived.

Students have commented very positively on the availability of the professors. Despite the significant increase in the number of students entering the program, this is still a small Department where professor-student relationships are interpersonal. Students have a sense of belonging to a community. Students and faculty report that the theoretical and artistic approach and the openness to international trends form the identity of the school.

The Department promotes international collaborations. A large number of students go abroad in the context of Erasmus exchange (127 in the last 5 years) or for a practical training (89 in the last 5 years), and a significant number of graduates go abroad either for postgraduate studies or to work in well-known architecture offices.

The Panel observed also that grade point average of the graduates is excessively high, while a large percentage of students greatly exceed seven years to graduation. There is not a student academic advisor, in order to provide assistance with the progress of the student through the program or other issues. In case of problems, students can contact the curriculum committee. Although there exists a student survey system and students can evaluate the quality of courses through questionnaires either online or in print, students' participation is very low.

The Panel discussed the issue of course evaluations with the students who reported that they would prefer a direct problem-solving discussion during the learning process so that teachers could readjust their courses through this feedback. Students recognize the cultural openness of the Department but underline the absence of courses which specifically prepare for their professional career (materials, project economics, and management etc.), especially since practical training at architectural firms is neither compulsory nor formally valued.

The Panel appreciates the openness and flexibility of the program but observes the absence of a comprehensive structure, which could put forward the identity of the school and facilitate the student orientation. The interest in digital representation and media was a sign of distinction of the Department in its formative years. Currently, the Panel is very concerned with the lack of equipment to keep up with digital technology.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The Panel underlines the need for equipment and tools to allow digital representation and fabrication (3D printing, laser cutting, CNC, LaserCamm).

In order to overcome the lack of participation in evaluation through questionnaires, the Panel suggests that the faculty work with students in implementing their suggestions for a direct problem-solving discussion during the learning process.

The Panel recommends a more comprehensive structure for the program (e.g., thematic paths), which would highlight the character of the Department and would facilitate the focus of students in deciding their choices more consciously. This structure could be based on the interrelations between teaching and research in order to facilitate students in the preparation of their research project in the 9th semester.

The Panel suggests to the Department to consider a period of internship/practical training as part of the curriculum.

Principle 4: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD DEVELOP AND APPLY PUBLISHED REGULATIONS COVERING ALL ASPECTS AND PHASES OF STUDIES (ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION).

Institutions and academic units need to put in place both processes and tools to collect, manage and act on information regarding student progression.

Procedures concerning the award and recognition of higher education degrees, the duration of studies, rules ensuring students progression, terms and conditions for student mobility should be based on the institutional study regulations. Appropriate recognition procedures rely on institutional practice for recognition of credits among various European academic departments and Institutions, in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

Graduation represents the culmination of the students' study period. Students need to receive documentation explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed (Diploma Supplement).

Study Programme Compliance

The Department of Architecture of the University of Thessaly, despite the significant increase in the number of students it accepts, which has more than doubled since its inception, without the Department having control of the number of students, makes a strong effort to maintain the close-knit and supportive atmosphere that characterizes the relations of the academic community seeking mutual support and understanding between members. The first semesters of the program aim at the better integration and acquaintance of the students with the city, as well as at the development of relations between them. The courses are both studio-based and theoretical and often have a group working character. The faculty and program structure offer the students a great deal of flexibility in the curriculum by encouraging their creative pursuits and aiming for the self-determination of their interests. However, there is a risk of losing the students' shared coherent academic experience through the diffusion of the elective courses. It should be noted, however, that there are some safety valves, in order to achieve a control over the path of courses that each student follows in order to obtain the necessary ECTS units.

The Panel did not see evidence of an institutionalized scholarship system, but there is the possibility for some students to participate as support staff in various practical workshops for a symbolic recompense.

The Department provides the students with all the necessary information about the curriculum and the teaching units of the courses. Students are provided with the opportunity and mechanisms to evaluate both the course content, format and organization as well as the instructor. Unfortunately, students participate in very small numbers. There is no participation of student representatives in general assemblies and in general in the formulation of the curriculum and of teaching methods.

On the other hand, there is a great deal of participation in the student mobility programs (ERASMUS) with the result that the school holds the first place among the university faculties despite the fact that there is no additional financial aid. This is due to the high average cumulative score of the students in the department as well as the opportunity given to interrupt the study informally and temporarily after the fourth year. At the same time, however, it was found in the conversation with the students that during their studies, there are no organized educational excursions, even to nearby destinations.

The Department tried to follow the instructions for the clear demarcation of the integrated master's degree in the fifth year, separating it from the other courses and maintaining an autonomous character. However, there is a strong ambiguity about Practical Training (student internship) as part of the formal curriculum. Although, Practical Training does accumulate ECTS units, they do not count as part of the required 300 ECTS for graduation. Given that the architectural offices in Greece are primarily very small, the lack of experience for students makes their participation even more difficult. Also, since no internship is required after graduation before acquiring professional rights, the practical experience during the studies is the only opportunity for the students to make a contact with the professional field.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The Department should explore different models for including a formalized practical training as part of the overall curriculum, as well as assist the students with placement. The curriculum should be enhanced with an educational experience in professional practice.

Principle 5: Teaching Staff

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ASSURE THEMSELVES OF THE QUALIFICATIONS AND COMPETENCE OF THE TEACHING STAFF. THEY SHOULD APPLY FAIR AND TRANSPARENT PROCESSES FOR THE RECRUITMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEACHING STAFF.

> *The Institutions and their academic units have a major responsibility as to the standard of their teaching staff providing them with a supportive environment that promotes the advancement of their scientific work. In particular, the academic unit should:*
>
> - *set up and follow clear, transparent and fair processes for the recruitment of properly qualified staff and offer them conditions of employment that recognize the importance of teaching and research;*
> - *offer opportunities and promote the professional development of the teaching staff;*
> - *encourage scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research;*
> - *encourage innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies;*
> - *promote the increase of the volume and quality of the research output within the academic unit;*
> - *follow quality assurance processes for all staff members (with respect to attendance requirements, performance, self-assessment, training etc.);*
> - *develop policies to attract highly qualified academic staff.*

Study Programme Compliance

The Department is comprised of a significant number of high-quality teaching staff with varied profiles (architecture, art, and other academic disciplines). Their activities and publications are well presented at the Department's website.

The Department has 25 faculty members (15 Professors, 4 Associate Professors and 6 Assistant Professors) and 6 special teaching staff members (ΕΔΙΠ).

Recruitments and promotions of the academic staff follow the criteria and the procedures established by the Greek Ministry and appropriate legislation. The Department has set up and follows transparent processes for the recruitment of qualified faculty; however, currently the renewal of the faculty is very slow. The almost inverted pyramid (15 full professors out of 25 faculty members), the high number of faculty approaching retirement age, as well as the increase in the number of the students is of great concern both now and increasingly in the future. Under these problematic conditions, the faculty members respond with great flexibility and availability. The commitment and collective spirit of the teaching staff contribute to the positive atmosphere of the learning environment although their teaching workload has been significantly increased (from 8h to 12h per week).

Experimental and alternative methods have been developed within the elective design studios. However, the current technological infrastructure does not meet the requirements for technological and digital innovation, despite the fact that the use of digital technology was the Department's distinguishing mark when it was founded.

In general, the members of the teaching staff are solely responsible in defining the content, skills and assessment of their courses resulting in the fact that the consistency of the program, especially during the 3rd and 4th year of studies, is not always very clear.

There are two research laboratories, three research teams and, currently, two active postgraduate programs. Some of the faculty members are involved in research programs but the number of the faculty members who are related to the research laboratories is limited and more generally the relationship between research and undergraduate teaching remains weak.

The Department promotes faculty mobility. The teaching staff has the opportunity for a sabbatical leave every three years or a leave to teach at other institutions via Erasmus+ for limited periods of 1-2 weeks.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The Panel emphasizes the need for renewal of the current teaching staff with appropriate new hires. Additionally, the Department is encouraged to establish frequent self-assessment procedures for its faculty and develop a global strategy for future necessary renewal of the teaching staff.

The Panel suggests a better coordination of the content of elective courses during the 3rd and 4th year of studies.

The Panel recommends that the faculty members strengthen the research-teaching nexus in the undergraduate program while more members of the staff should become involved into the research labs.

Principle 6: Learning Resources and Student Support

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE ADEQUATE FUNDING TO COVER TEACHING AND LEARNING NEEDS. THEY SHOULD –ON THE ONE HAND- PROVIDE SATISFACTORY INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES FOR LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORT AND–ON THE OTHER HAND- FACILITATE DIRECT ACCESS TO THEM BY ESTABLISHING INTERNAL RULES TO THIS END (E.G. LECTURE ROOMS, LABORATORIES, LIBRARIES, NETWORKS, BOARDING, CAREER AND SOCIAL POLICY SERVICES ETC.).

Institutions and their academic units must have sufficient funding and means to support learning and academic activity in general, so that they can offer to students the best possible level of studies. The above means could include facilities such as libraries, study rooms, educational and scientific equipment, information and communications services, support or counselling services.

When allocating the available resources, the needs of all students must be taken into consideration (e.g. whether they are full-time or part-time students, employed or international students, students with disabilities) and the shift towards student-centered learning and the adoption of flexible modes of learning and teaching. Support activities and facilities may be organized in various ways, depending on the institutional context. However, the internal quality assurance ensures that all resources are appropriate, adequate, and accessible, and that students are informed about the services available to them.

In delivering support services the role of support and administrative staff is crucial and therefore they need to be qualified and have opportunities to develop their competences.

Study Programme Compliance

The issue of resources is crucial. The faculty and staff as well as the students of the Department of Architecture must be praised for their resilience and commitment. They have managed to maintain the quality and momentum of the program and its environment, both human and physical, in remarkably good order despite financial and other adversities. At this point of transition, the renewal of the support infrastructure, facilities, technology and student services should be urgently addressed. The Panel understands that the Department depends on the institutional context, University and Ministry. This is the predicament of all state schools around the world. We encourage the Department to consider seeking external funding as a priority at this juncture at the same time as it advocates for additional funding from the State. This outreach activity should be coordinated with the institution and the Department's strategic plan. It should be targeted and based on reasonable financial estimates.

The main teaching facility cannot accommodate the needs of a program that has more than doubled its student numbers. The facility itself needs a radical and possibly costly overhaul to address its serious environmental problems and allow for its sustainable operation in the future. The addition of the adjacent Mechanical engineering building will be an important resource. The Department is commended for securing its future use that will guarantee much needed laboratory space for both teaching and research. This renovated facility would also accommodate an expanded digital fabrication lab as well as the wood and metal shop which is currently housed in containers, albeit nicely transformed, outside the facility.

The IT and digital infrastructure lags far behind the times, especially in the areas of imaging and digital fabrication technologies. Updating is not as expensive a proposition as it was even a few years ago as laser cutters and 3D printers are now available even to the general public and their prices have significantly decreased. One of the Department's graduates who took part in the meeting with the Panel is operating a digital fabrication centre in Volos. She would be a great resource as a consultant or adjunct hire.

In our meeting with the highly experienced, articulate and ready-to-graduate students, we discussed the issue of obtaining software licenses. We understand that obtaining them adds considerable financial hardship to the students. We would encourage the Department as part of its outreach program to reach agreements with software companies that would partially alleviate at least some of these burdens.

The existing facilities are rationally if not economically organized. The location of the library in the centre of town makes immediate access to reference books impossible. A small reference library annex would be desirable. Reinforcing the connection of the Polytechnic campus to the amenities of the city of Volos, which is where all students reside, is highly encouraged. The bicycle lanes recently opened are a great first step.

The University of Thessaly has a Student Welfare Directorate that consists of a Dining Services Department, a Welfare and Social Events Department that is responsible for student accommodation, employment, welfare and athletic events and a Health Care Department.

Information about these services is available through the University of Thessaly website and the Secretariat of the Department of Architecture. There is no in-house staff to address student support services and a great shortage of staff to take care of the even short-term administrative tasks of the Department. This shortage affects the student-centric character of the program.

Panel Judgement

Principle 6: Learning Resources and Student Support	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

If the University hasn't done so already, the Department should advocate and find ways to coordinate a network of mental health professionals that can effectively deal with growing mental health and alcohol and drug abuse problems in student populations.

The Panel encourages the Department as part of its outreach program to reach agreements with software companies that would alleviate at least partially financial burden for students.

The Panel encourages the Department to consider seeking external funding as a priority at the same time as it advocates for additional funding from the State. This outreach activity should

be coordinated with the institution and the Department's strategic plan. It should be targeted and based on reasonable financial estimates.

Principle 7: Information Management

INSTITUTIONS BEAR FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR COLLECTING, ANALYSING AND USING INFORMATION, AIMED AT THE EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT OF UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES OF STUDY AND RELATED ACTIVITIES, IN AN INTEGRATED, EFFECTIVE AND EASILY ACCESSIBLE WAY.

Institutions are expected to establish and operate an information system for the management and monitoring of data concerning students, teaching staff, course structure and organisation, teaching and provision of services to students as well as to the academic community.

Reliable data is essential for accurate information and for decision making, as well as for identifying areas of smooth operation and areas for improvement. Effective procedures for collecting and analysing information on study programmes and other activities feed data into the internal system of quality assurance.

The information gathered depends, to some extent, on the type and mission of the Institution. The following are of interest:

- *key performance indicators*
- *student population profile*
- *student progression, success and drop-out rates*
- *student satisfaction with their programme(s)*
- *availability of learning resources and student support*
- *career paths of graduates*

A number of methods may be used for collecting information. It is important that students and staff are involved in providing and analyzing information and planning follow-up activities.

Study Programme Compliance

The information management of the program of studies and related activities of the students and the faculty in teaching and research takes place at the levels of the Ministry of Education, the University and the Department. In particular, through application of respective information technology services provided by the University (e.g., eUniversity, Open eClass, MS Teams, information system of quality assurance body, students' practice experience), a comprehensive information system of data collection and recording has been developed with regard to the overall operation of the institution. The data refer to the academic faculty, the administration and the students. Further data have been collected by the research financial services and the library. Relevant data are presented on the web sites of the Department, including related announcements, the repository of courses, quotations of the faculty members' and the course instructors' work. The information obtained from the satisfaction surveys by the students and the graduates' databank is limited.

The Department evaluates the data collected and presents the results in quantifiable measures in terms of the program of studies, performance indicators – grades, duration of study – completion and dropout, and comparative conclusions of indicators with previous academic years. The data assist in the preparation of internal evaluation reports and related improvement proposals. The evaluation criteria of the faculty members have been successfully extended and

adapted to include information beyond research accomplishments, such as artistic and architectural recognition measures, which are included in the accomplishments of the faculty members' database.

Panel Judgement

Principle 7: Information Management	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	**X**
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The Panel understands that the faculty has made committed efforts up to achieve active participation of the students in the evaluation of their course instructors. The difficulty of collecting representative quantities of feedback samples by the students should be further addressed though introduction of further incentives and measures that would apply to all students of the University.

The Department should formalize individual efforts by faculty members to organize alumni via platforms of social media, such as *LinkedIn* and others. A representative databank with regard to the career paths of the graduates can only be developed through the setting up of a related monitoring mechanism by the faculty for the systematic collection of data. In this context, the development of an alumni body has also been proposed by the graduates of the program in their meeting with the Panel members.

Principle 8: Public Information

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD PUBLISH INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR TEACHING AND ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES WHICH IS CLEAR, ACCURATE, OBJECTIVE, UP-TO-DATE AND READILY ACCESSIBLE.

Information on Institution's activities is useful for prospective and current students, graduates, other stakeholders and the public.

Therefore, institutions and their academic units provide information about their activities, including the programmes they offer, the intended learning outcomes, the qualifications awarded, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to their students, as well as graduate employment information.

Study Programme Compliance

The main communication forum between the faculty and students is the official website of the school. The Panel, since the review was conducted via tele-conferencing, did not see any evidence of other forms pf publications, such as periodicals, leaflets or posters within the facilities of the department. The website is very well organized, and the information is immediately presented in a simple but very functional mode. The graphic layout with a chronological sequence of announcements offers a historical understanding of the actions of the school. Also complete are the information regarding the program and the CVs of the faculty. There are some minor issues with incomplete up-to-date information as well as some shortcomings regarding the English version of the website.

Panel Judgement

Principle 8: Public Information	
Fully compliant	**X**
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The Panel would recommend that the department enhances its electronic presence with the documentation of the departmental facilities and infrastructure.

Additionally, there does not seem to be any departmental space managed by the students themselves for the presentation of their activities. Similarly, the Panel noticed the absence of the department on social media, while there do not seem to be communication groups of the actions to old graduates or in the local communities. There was also limited information appropriate for prospective or new students of the department. Given the digitization of the works of students as well as research and theses, it would be useful to present them online. The excellent presentation format that was prepared for our review on the topic could be the basis for a publicly available presentation of student/research work.

Principle 9: On-going Monitoring and Periodic Internal Review of Programmes

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE IN PLACE AN INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM FOR THE AUDIT AND ANNUAL INTERNAL REVIEW OF THEIR PROGRAMMES, SO AS TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES SET FOR THEM, THROUGH MONITORING AND AMENDMENTS, WITH A VIEW TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT. ANY ACTIONS TAKEN IN THE ABOVE CONTEXT SHOULD BE COMMUNICATED TO ALL PARTIES CONCERNED.

Regular monitoring, review and revision of study programmes aim to maintain the level of educational provision and to create a supportive and effective learning environment for students.

The above comprise the evaluation of:

- *the content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up to date;*
- *the changing needs of society;*
- *the students' workload, progression and completion;*
- *the effectiveness of the procedures for the assessment of students;*
- *the students' expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme;*
- *the learning environment, support services and their fitness for purpose for the programme*

Programmes are reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders. The information collected is analysed and the programme is adapted to ensure that it is up-to-date. Revised programme specifications are published.

Study Programme Compliance

The Department has in place a process for periodic evaluation of the curriculum through meetings of the General Assembly and impromptu faculty meetings, which ensures that latest research trends and changing needs of the society are discussed. Unfortunately, there is no formal process of consistently and periodically evaluating the program. The last internal evaluation was in 2018 and the previous external evaluation was conducted in 2012. Moreover, there is an annual evaluation process of faculty and course content by the students and an evaluation of the support services and learning environment by the faculty. Students' evaluation of courses and instructors is in place but unfortunately students do not engage in the process.

The data are collected through a series of questionnaires that the Department has developed in cooperation with the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) of the University. The results of these questionnaires are summarized and discussed with the faculty and they are submitted to the QAU. The results for each course evaluated are shared with the faculty member(s) who taught the course and appropriate actions could be initiated to address any issues raised as part of the evaluation. All these efforts result in the development of a loosely defined plan that can be carried out to address any issues and improve the quality of the study program delivered.

The Department also engages in continued communication with graduates. There are initial steps to develop an alumni database and formal, through social media, connections to graduates. This would allow for close relationships with the units they are working and provides an opportunity for the Department to engage with their employers and establish collaborative activities to address professional aspects, community needs or common projects.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The Department should engage in a formal and consistent evaluation process of their program and activities. Additionally, the Department should consider as part of their programmatic evaluation the trends of emerging research as well as the profession and market need in strategically addressing future faculty hires. The concern of upcoming retirements was emphasized during the discussions. The Panel suggests that the Department identifies the emerging areas in the field and attempts to address them with the new hires. The Department should also explore how course offerings are covered or could be covered through cross-listing and offerings with other departments. The Panel is concerned that the department personnel are overextended in multiple duties in order to fulfil the established requirements in an environment of diminished funding.

Principle 10: Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programmes

PROGRAMMES SHOULD REGULARLY UNDERGO EVALUATION BY COMMITTEES OF EXTERNAL EXPERTS SET BY HAHE, AIMING AT ACCREDITATION. THE TERM OF VALIDITY OF THE ACCREDITATION IS DETERMINED BY HAHE.

HAHE is responsible for administrating the programme accreditation process which is realized as an external evaluation procedure, and implemented by a committee of independent experts. HAHE grants accreditation of programmes, with a specific term of validity, following to which revision is required. The accreditation of the quality of the programmes acts as a means of verification of the compliance of the programme with the template's requirements, and as a catalyst for improvement, while opening new perspectives towards the international standing of the awarded degrees.

Both academic units and institutions participate in the regular external quality assurance process, while respecting the requirements of the legislative framework in which they operate.

The quality assurance, in this case the accreditation, is an on-going process that does not end with the external feedback, or report or its follow-up process within the Institution. Therefore, Institutions and their academic units ensure that the progress made since the last external quality assurance activity is taken into consideration when preparing for the next one.

Study Programme Compliance

The Department was evaluated in 2012 by an international external evaluation committee. The Evaluation report included a set of recommendations that the Department has made efforts to address. The recommendations that were implemented include adjustments of the curriculum sequence to accommodate the integrated Master program, by detaching the 5th year of studies and defining the third and fourth years of the curriculum predominantly as topical series of studios and elective courses. The Panel did not see evidence that the concern expressed by the external evaluation, "It is our opinion that this causes compartmentalization deterring integration and subverting combination strategies" has been addressed.

Additionally, the Panel is concerned with the reduction of the number of faculty and lack of continuation of positions vacated due to retirement and loss of substantial adjunct positions. The external evaluation of 2012 expressed concern about this same issue and albeit the department is powerless to affect these decisions, this Panel reiterates the previous comment, "It is our opinion that this goes beyond the limits of bearable budget reductions and it undermines the department's academic performance and integrity." Similarly, the Panel is concerned with the lack of progress, as was identified by the previous report on facilities and especially regarding the library.

There have been no other evaluation efforts outside of the single review sponsored by HAHE. However, the Department implements the procedures set forth by the University Quality Assurance Unit, collects and analyses the required data periodically, and provides their results to the QAU.

All faculty and staff recognize the importance of the external evaluation and value the past and future recommendations. They all believe this helps the Department achieve its goals and

purpose, help them improve, and engage in meaningful discussions about the future of the program and the changing educational demands placed by a diverse set of professional issues. Unfortunately, the department does not have the financial means to implement their own external evaluations process. A possible solution might be the establishment of an advisory professional board whose members volunteer their services for the benefit of the department.

The Panel had the opportunity to interact not only with almost all faculty and staff members but also with current students of the Department as well as graduates. All showed a great level of enthusiasm and professionalism as well as commitment in supporting and aiding the Panel in any manner and request made.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The department should implement their own external evaluations process. A possible solution might be the establishment of an advisory professional board whose members volunteer their services for the benefit of the department.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

- The program is based on solid general theoretical foundations, taking into account the changing nature of architectural practice, incorporating a multitude of facets that enrich the relevant discourse and form its identity – Theory, History, Art and the Humanities-building and making from the micro- to the macro scale-Design and Technology and Environmental Practices.
- The program reflects the interests and specializations of its founding faculty and is in every sense comparable with programs internationally. There seems to be a good synergy between faculty research, creative practice and teaching that needs to be further supported and expanded.
- The faculty should be commended for addressing the exponential growth of the student body at a time of multiple crises by preserving through personal efforts a program organization that was better suited to the original size and scale of operations.
- The effort to maintain the close-knit and supportive atmosphere that characterizes the relations of the academic community seeking mutual support and understanding between members is beneficial to the program.
- The substantial participation in student mobility programs (ERASMUS) with the result that the school holds the first place among the university faculties is also worthwhile.
- Faculty, staff and students should be praised for their resilience and commitment. They have managed to maintain the quality and momentum of the program and its environment, both human and physical, in remarkably good order despite financial and other adversities.
- The evaluation criteria for the faculty members have been successfully extended and adapted to include beyond research accomplishments, such as artistic and architectural recognition measures.
- The website is very well organized, and the information is immediately presented in a simple but very functional mode. The graphic layout with a chronological sequence of announcements offers a historical understanding of the actions of the school.

II. Areas of Weakness

- There is an absence of a strategic planning document that would provide the Department with a road map for future, establish priorities and strategies towards and help coordinate the efforts towards a renewing the vision of the founding faculty and assuring a sustainable future.
- The implementation of the curriculum, especially in the third and fourth year, does not provide an orderly and transition towards the 9th semester and the undertaking of the thesis work.
- The location of the library in the centre of town makes immediate access to reference books impossible.

- Aging support infrastructure, facilities, technology and student services need to be updated.
- There is a lack of an Alumni organization supported by the Department
- The Panel is concerned that the department personnel are overextended in multiple duties in order to fulfil the established requirements in an environment of diminished funding.
- The Panel is concerned with the reduction of number of faculty and lack of continuation of positions vacated due to retirement and loss of substantial adjunct positions.

III.   Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

- The Department should focus their directions, especially in the 3rd and 4th year, with regard to the thematic and structured learning outcomes of the individual semesters, and the introduction of a regulated comprehensive design studio in this stage of the program should be articulated.
- The Department should engage in a formal and consistent evaluation process of its program and activities.
- The program's identity should be clearly formulated and reflected through specific synergies that need to be created between thematic areas, courses and research activities by the faculty.
- Best Teaching Awards should be introduced on an annual basis by the University to promote innovation and quality in teaching.
- The linking of teaching and research should be strengthened through specific synergies between thematic areas that need to be formulated in the program of studies, especially in the 3rd and 4th year, and collaborative design-based or multidisciplinary research, while more members of the staff should become involved into the research labs.
- Annual reviews of the program of studies need to be further institutionalized by the Department, as well as external evaluations, organized even by the Department itself every 5 years.
- Appointment of a faculty curriculum committee with the mandate to articulate a renewed vision of the department and revise the program and provide a five-year plan and design a road map for implementation.
- Consider seeking external funding as a priority at the same time as it advocates for additional funding from the State. This outreach activity should be coordinated with the institution and the Department's strategic plan. It should be targeted and based on reasonable financial estimates.
- The Department should formalize individual efforts by faculty members to organize alumni via platforms of social media, such as LinkedIn and others. A representative databank with regard to the career paths of the graduates can only be developed through the set-up of a related monitoring mechanism by the faculty for the systematic collection of data. In this context, the development of an alumni body has also been proposed by the graduates of the program in their meeting with the Panel members.
- The Department should enhance its electronic presence with the documentation of the departmental facilities and infrastructure, information for prospective/new students, and students' theses.

- The Department should implement its own external evaluations process. A possible solution might be the establishment of an advisory professional board with members who volunteer their services for the benefit of the department.
- The Panel emphasizes the need for renewal of the current teaching staff with appropriate new hires and suggests that the Department identifies the emerging areas in the field and attempts to address them with the new hires. Additionally, the Department is encouraged to establish frequent self-assessment procedures for its faculty and develop a global strategy for future necessary renewal of the teaching staff.
- The Panel underlines the need for equipment and tools to allow digital representation and fabrication (3D printing, laser cutting, CNC, LaserCamm).
- In order to overcome the lack of participation in evaluation through questionnaires, the Panel suggests that the faculty work with students in implementing their suggestions for a direct problem-solving discussion during the learning process.
- The Panel recommends a more comprehensive structure for the program (e.g., thematic paths) which would highlight the character of the Department and would facilitate the focus of students in deciding their choices more consciously. This structure could be based on the interrelations between teaching and research in order to facilitate students in the preparation of their research project in the 9th semester.
- The Panel suggests to the Department to consider a period of internship/practical training as part of the curriculum.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are:

- **Principle 4: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification**
- **Principle 5: Teaching Staff**
- **Principle 8: Public Information**

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are:

- **Principle 1: Academic Unit Policy for Quality Assurance**
- **Principle 2: Design and Approval of Programmes**
- **Principle 3: Student- centered Learning, Teaching and Assessment**
- **Principle 6: Learning Resources and Student Support**
- **Principle 7: Information Management**
- **Principle 9: On-going Monitoring and Periodic Internal Review of Programmes**
- **Principle 10: Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programmes**

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are:

None

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are:

None

Overall Judgement	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	**X**
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel agrees that this Programme leads to a Level 7 Qualification according to the National & European Qualifications Network (Integrated Master)	YES	NO
	X	

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel for the Architecture UGP (Integrated Master) of the University of Thessaly

Name and Surname   **Signature**

1. **Professor Loukas Kalisperis, (Chair),** Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania, USA

2. **Assoc. Professor Marilena Kourniati,** École Nationale Supérieure d' Architecture Paris - Val de Seine, Paris, France

3. **Professor Marios C. Phocas**, University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus

4. **Professor Alcibiades Tsolakis**, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA

5. **Mr. Nestoras Kanellos**, Technical Chamber of Greece, Larissa, Greece