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**Α.Δ.Ι.Π.**  
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 ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ  
 ΣΤΗΝ ΑΝΩΤΑΤΗ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗ

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

## EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

Τμήμα Ποιμαντικής και Κοινωνικής Θεολογίας  
 School of Pastoral and Social Theology

Αριστοτέλειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλονίκης (Α.Π.Θ.)  
 Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

December 2013



### External Evaluation Committee

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the Τμήμα Ποιμαντικής και Κοινωνικής Θεολογίας (School of Pastoral and Social Theology) of the Αριστοτέλειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλονίκης ΑΠΘ (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki) consisted of the following five (5) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by the HQAA in accordance with Law 3374/2005 :

Prof. Dr. Emmanuel Clapsis (President)

Archbishop Iakovos Professor of Orthodox Theology, Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, Brookline, Massachusetts, U.S.A. (Coordinator)

Prof. Dr. Anton C. Vrame

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

Prof. Dr. Assaad Elias Kattan

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

Prof. Dr. Nicolas Prevelakis

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

Prof. Dr. Christopher Veniamin

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

## Introduction

### I. The External Evaluation Procedure

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

The site visit of the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for the School (Τμήμα Ποιμαντικής και Κοινωνικής Θεολογίας) of Pastoral and Social Theology of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (ΑΠΘ) took place from December 12-14, 2013. The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) was received warmly and with gracious hospitality by the members of the School and Administration of the University. We are thankful to the School of Pastoral and Social Theology for their hospitality and spirit of cooperation and fellowship during the site visit.

The Teaching Staff and Administration were open and honest with the EEC. The EEC decided to change the program that the School had planned for us and asked to spend the visit mostly discussing with professors and students, as well as visiting facilities.

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

On Monday, December 9, the EEC was received by Prof. Dr. P. Ypsilandis, representing the HQAA. Because of some confusion about the schedule, this meeting was delayed and the presentation of the background for Evaluation was very brief, although he shared with us electronic copies of the

PowerPoint presentation. This delay caused a challenge to the schedule for the day, pushing meetings later throughout. On Monday, there were scheduled meetings and presentations with the Deputy Rector for Academic Affairs and Personnel, Prof. Dr. Despo Lialiou, who provided the EEC with an overview of the University itself. During that meeting, the EEC was informed about the legal and academic framework of the School within the University. The material of this presentation was provided to the EEC members in the form of powerpoint files (ppt).

On Tuesday, Dec.10, the EEC visited the Library of the Faculty of Theology and met with representatives of the two Schools who share it (School of Theology; School of Pastoral and Social Theology), and was informed on the contribution of the School in its organization (see also [http://www.past.auth.gr/el/faculty\\_library](http://www.past.auth.gr/el/faculty_library)).

On Thursday, December 12, 2013, the EEC was received by the president Prof. Dr. Theodore Yiangou. Rather than relying on lengthy presentations, the EEC asked to have separate conversations with the faculty members and the students.

The EEC started its formal evaluation with an attendance of the Liturgy at the School's chapel, where the EEC had the opportunity to witness the way in which students are trained in Liturgics, Byzantine music, and Homiletics. This training is part of the School's Liturgical Workshop.

On Thursday, the EEC met briefly with all the faculty members of the School and attended a power point presentation of the new program of studies. After the introductions, the EEC split into two groups and attended two undergraduate seminars, at the end of which, EEC members had private conversations with the students (i.e. without any of their professors being present).

The EEC visited the Computer Lab of the School of Pastoral and Social Theology. After that, the EEC visited the Hagiographic Art Studio. The studio had a display of various works of students, mostly holy icons. The professor explained the work of the studio.

The EEC visited the Pedagogical Workshop, and saw undergraduate students practicing their teaching of material from secondary education. There was no need to visit the library again, since it is shared with the School of Theology, which the EEC had visited a few days before.

The EEC then met with all the lecturers of the School, and had a conversation about their views on the curriculum, teaching, research, and faculty development. The faculty members invited the EEC for dinner, during which we had the chance to share our preliminary thoughts.

On Friday 13, in the morning, the EEC met with all Assistant Professors, then with all Associate Professors, in two separate meetings, to discuss the same issues that it had discussed with the lecturers the day before. In the afternoon, the faculty members presented power point presentations of main issues having to do with curriculum, teaching, and research, as well as the website of the School. This presentation ended with a session in which the EEC discussed the internal evaluation report and its impressions and suggestions with all faculty members. The faculty members invited the EEC for dinner, during which we discussed the specifics of our conclusions.

The EEC was able to ask many questions, engage the presenters and others in the room in conversations about that particular aspect of their work, and comment.

#### Documents Received and Reviewed

The EEC received and reviewed:

A complete schedule for the days of the site visit (though the EEC chose to change it)

The 2005-2013 Έκθεση Εσωτερικής Αξιολόγησης dated December, 2013

The 2005-2013 Έκθεση Εσωτερικής Αξιολόγησης- Παράρτημα dated December, 2013

The 2009-2011 Απογραφική Έκθεση (Internal Evaluation Report)

The 2005-2009 Απογραφική Έκθεση (Internal Evaluation Report)

The 2011 Ετήσια Έκθεση Εσωτερικής Αξιολόγησης (Annual Report)

Various documents containing excerpts of faculty meetings

Correspondence between the School and the University about the process of internal evaluation.

The Program of Studies (Οδηγός Σπουδών) 2013-2014 for both graduate and undergraduate studies.

25 power point presentations presenting teaching, research, and curriculum, meant to be presented to us by the faculty members during our visit. The EEC decided to review these documents privately and instead spend the visit days meeting and discussing with faculty members and students.

Sample of books and dissertations.

Access to the School website with all relevant information.

Hard copies of old course evaluations.

The EEC was able to visit the following:

School Offices

Classrooms

Library

Computer Lab

Hagiographic Studio

Chapel

Pedagogical Workshop/Laboratory

## II. The Internal Evaluation Procedure

The documents

Documents were received a little late for adequate study, both from HQAA and the School. Some documents were received only a day or two before the process. All documents should have been available to the EEC at least one month prior to the visit.

The documentation was very complete.

One area in which we would have liked to see more information, and which could be addressed in future self-evaluations by the ΑΔΙΠ is faculty development, that is issues pertaining to the work of the faculty and its promotion and tenure, grievance procedures, anticipated changes in the composition of the faculty (retirements, areas where they need more instructors), and the evaluation of teaching loads and other responsibilities, focusing on issues pertaining to the work of the faculty members, beyond their productivity as instructors and researchers.

It would have been helpful to have a separate room at the School for the EEC for its private discussions in between meetings, and containing notebooks with the minutes of faculty meetings for the last few years (in the

future, this would mean from evaluation process to evaluation process), and syllabi from the entire faculty for all courses.

In light of the financial situation facing the State and University it would have been helpful to have more time to meet also with the finance officers of the School in order to examine their ability to manage and control how funds are allocated and spent, and discuss the budgeting process and priorities.

The EEC Site Visit process was too short. Two days was inadequate to cover all the materials, to meet the various constituencies, and for the EEC to discuss and consider and consult amongst themselves. In future, site visits should probably be around 5 days or more for each Theological School (Τμήμα), especially given the size of each school.

### A. Curriculum

To be filled separately for each undergraduate, graduate and doctoral programme.

The program provides a solid study of theology and places a heavy emphasis on research. This is very clear in reports of doctoral dissertations, the research of the faculty, participation in international conferences, but also in the program of studies, and the quality of the courses offered in these areas.

The aims for the curriculum are quite clear, and the programs of study are clearly defined. The School of Pastoral and Social Theology has completed the reform of its program of studies according to the guidelines of ΑΔΙΠ (on 24 June 2013). The EEC was thus able to evaluate the School's revised program of studies.

The new program has done an admirable job reducing the number of courses by 1/3 without this affecting the quality of the academic outcomes. We see this as an admirable step forward. Based on discussions that we had with both faculty and students, we would suggest slightly reducing the number of theological courses, while at the same time increasing the number of contextual courses and allow students to choose a distinct concentration within the School (see detailed analysis below).

We felt that learning outcomes presented in the program of study are too many and not sufficiently specific (for instance, pp.28-31). For this reason, their attainment cannot easily be measured when seeking to assess the educational efficiency of the program. We would suggest developing a concise list of four or five measurable objectives for each program of studies, together with a concrete procedure to evaluate their attainment.

Concerning undergraduate studies:

The Undergraduate Program focuses on the six main areas of theology, namely the study of Holy Scripture, Patrology, Ecclesiastical History, Dogmatics, Liturgics, and Canon Law.

Reviewing the required courses, the EEC found that the main areas of theology are extensively covered, but would recommend that the curriculum in the School be more intentional in the dialogue of theology and

contemporary issues of humanity and society. This can be accomplished within the existing courses themselves, which could be evaluated by reviewing syllabi, or the addition of specific courses in ethics, topics in pastoral theology (e.g., death and dying), and contemporary social issues.

To the extent that this might be feasible in a context of limited funds, the EEC suggested that the School might want to think about maintaining a core program of mandatory courses in all areas of theological studies for all its students, and then developing specific directions of studies. Each direction of studies would provide different courses that reflect competency in the chosen direction of studies

The Post-graduate Studies at the School of Social and Pastoral Theology are very well organized and confirm the reputation of the School in the area of research. This being said, as in the undergraduate program, the EEC would suggest that the School consider the possibility of having a common core for all students, and several directions of studies. An introduction to the different ways to deal with texts (research methods, semantics, semiotics, etc.), mandatory for every student in the Master's program, can be very useful. Also similarly to the undergraduate program, the EEC would encourage the introduction of more courses in such fields as ethics, social sciences, and pastoral issues, which will help them situate their theological studies within our complex and constantly changing world.

Regarding doctoral studies: The School places emphasis on the study of original sources, historical record, and Patristics. Its record in this respect is impressive. We would perhaps also encourage studies pertaining to other fields that relate aspects of the Church's tradition with cultural, political and economic issues as well as pastoral challenges that the Church encounters in the modern world.

Speaking with the faculty, we got the sense that these are definitely themes of concern in the School, even though they may not be explicitly evident in the titles of their doctoral dissertations. More time to read some of these dissertations would have been needed in order to make a sufficient evaluation of this point.

#### Implementation of stated goals

At the undergraduate level, the implementation of the goals suffers from a)

the large number (250) of admitted students, and b) the fact that a majority of these students have not chosen to study theology and have a limited interest in this field. This being said, discussions with students have revealed that professors are successful in creating interest after a few months of study.

As stated earlier, the listed “learning outcomes” of the undergraduate program are too many, and there is no presentation of the specific link between each one of them and the curriculum. A separation of core and concentrations might allow the School to design different learning outcomes for each concentration and design electives targeting them specifically.

The School of Pastoral and Social Theology has developed a tuition-based program of undergraduate studies entitled “Studies in Orthodox Theology,” in English, which has been approved by the University and is waiting approval from the ΑΔΙΠ. This program targets specifically students from non-Greek Orthodox countries and beyond. The EEC sees this as a very encouraging step forward. The EEC also noted that this undergraduate program requires the students to take 5 courses per semester (a smaller number than in the Greek program), in accordance with the most common practice in American universities. The School might want to consider applying this approach to its Greek program as well, especially if it is considering decreasing the overall number of offered courses even further in the future.

The EEC judges that the School’s English program provides solid grounds in the history of the faith and all aspects of Orthodox theology. At the same time, and especially given that this program aims at international students, more attention should be paid to other (non-Orthodox) Christian traditions, the ways in which Orthodoxy interacts with them, as well as to broader contemporary issues, by increasing the percentage of courses that address these themes.

In parallel with its Undergraduate Program, the School has developed programs which aim at the development of specific skills, such as chanting, hagiography, pastoral and social work, and religious tourism (see specific reference to the chapel and the hagiographic studio below). The EEC sees these programs as particularly important, especially given the challenges presented by the Greek economy, as they are aimed at enabling graduates to apply the knowledge that they have gained from their theological studies in a way that is beneficial both to them and society.

At the master’s level, the same comments apply, though the situation at the master’s program seems to be much better, because the number of students

is considerably smaller – and their interest in the field greater.

The School is planning the addition of a master’s program in English (entitled “Studies in Orthodox Theology”), for which tuition will be required. The EEC sees this as an important and positive addition to the School’s curriculum, which has the potential of attracting students from abroad and contributing to the spreading of Orthodox Theology worldwide. Similarly to the undergraduate program, the EEC urges the School to give emphasis to contextual and pastoral issues, as well as to a dialogue between Orthodox theology and different religious and cultural traditions within our rapidly changing, pluralistic, world.

Based on the few syllabi that we reviewed and the conversations that we held with some students as well as with some professors, we noted that there is an uneven quantity of required reading in some undergraduate as well as post graduate courses. The faculty needs to identify collectively the minimum required readings for each course based on the assumption that post graduate courses will be more demanding.

Doctoral research is definitely an area of strength in this department. Based on the documents that we reviewed, it seems that all that is required for entrance in the doctoral program is completion of the post-graduate degree, with no minimum grade prescribed. If this is the case, the EEC wonders whether requiring a minimum grade might improve the quality of the doctoral program even more.

#### Attainment of Stated Goals:

##### Undergraduate Studies:

Grades (the average of which has not changed much in the last five years) are the main way of assessing results. This being said, the fact that the goals listed are so many and broad makes their assessment difficult. Systematic data collection seems to be developing, and the School is making impressive efforts in this direction.

One of the School’s objectives is to prepare graduates who would work in secondary education, the Church, or in broader society. Given the decrease in the number of jobs available in the public sector and the Church, and the high percentage of unemployment among theology graduates, further thought is needed to better address the professional aspirations of the students within the current context.

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

The School has been proactive in the development of interdisciplinary programs, in collaboration with other departments. The EEC sees these as important endeavors and encourages the development of additional interdisciplinary programs, focusing on such topics as theology and social work, theology and education, or theology and art conservation.

Regarding master's studies, the students have to attend courses that involve writing papers for three semesters. The last semester is dedicated to the completion of the master's thesis. As with the undergraduate program, there seems to be too many mandatory courses and not enough electives and/or concentrations.

As regards doctoral studies, the students are encouraged to do research in various areas of study. Most doctoral theses deal with historical research, sources, and Patristics, and the record of the School in this area is very strong.

Overall, the Department has done an impressive job revising its curriculum, reducing the number of required courses, and increasing the number of electives. All these changes are headed in the right direction and should yield results in the coming years.

Systematic data collection, a specific plan for how these would be used, the design of specific procedures for data evaluation, and consultation with the relevant partners (Church, civil society, alumni) are all suggestions for improvement.

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

## B. Teaching

The EEC was able to attend a few classes of undergraduate and graduate programs, observing lectures and seminars. The Committee was also able to discuss the experiences of the students with the students themselves, without the presence of a faculty member. One of the presentations by the faculty discussed the teaching methodologies used in classes. The committee was also able to look at syllabi and the course information from the MODIP system of the University.

The faculty members repeatedly discussed that the number of undergraduate students is too large, and the faculty members did not have adequate support to manage such numbers, e.g. evaluating 150 final examinations. Also, the lecture halls are frequently not large enough to accommodate all students registered for classes. As such, many classes are taught by lectures with little time for questions and discussions because the class is too large. Many class sessions involve the use of PowerPoint presentations. Classes often use Blackboard containing additional readings and experiences (the EEC did not have the time to investigate this). Lecturing often leads to an instructional style of over the transmission of information from teacher to student. Students commented that the goals of a class are often the rote learning and repetition of the content and conclusions of the assigned readings and lectures from their professors.

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

The quality of education at any institution can only be significantly improved by the writing of more research papers, supervised by an experienced member of the faculty. The degree to which this can be implemented depends upon the student/instructor ratio. Of course, good lectures are also effective.

Adding PowerPoint presentations to classes certainly adds to the nature of a lecture, providing opportunities for a visual presentation of main points, examples of texts, images, short videos, and given the high quality of the WI-FI network in classes, access to information only available on the internet. Because most classrooms are “smart classrooms,” with fixed projectors and cables for easy connection, taking advantage of the capability of this technology is very positive. On the other hand, merely reading the content of Powerpoint slides to students as a lecture reinforces the passive nature of learning in the classrooms and the repetition of presented information as the main purpose of learning.

According to the information on MODIP, many courses report one method of examination of a student, often an oral examination. In discussions with faculty members – especially junior faculty – they mentioned that they strive to use multiple means of assessment – papers, exams, projects, and an oral exam. More thorough descriptions on MODIP would be helpful here. In addition, members of the faculty could begin to become better skilled in “embedded assessment strategies” for their courses.

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

In this area, the EEC found unevenness in the information provided to students about courses. In some cases the syllabus was quite complete, providing week to week information about course content, assignments, etc. In other cases the syllabus was very vague, providing very general learning outcomes, such as teamwork and thinking critically, or a schedule covering 5 or more weeks of content in just a few sentences. In some cases the readings assigned were enormous, more than probably can be accomplished realistically, while in others the readings assigned were too few. Students mentioned that their teachers do not always follow the syllabus, diverting

from the planned material, not completing the course content, but yet they are still held responsible for all course content, whether it was presented in class or not.

Of special note is the experience of non-Orthodox Christian students in an Orthodox Christian School of Theology. Through ERASMUS, the School is steadily increasing the numbers of foreign students and non-Orthodox foreign students. This is an excellent way for the sources of the Orthodox Church to be shared and studied in an academically rigorous environment. That many students come from abroad to study in the School of Pastoral Theology is a positive development and should be encouraged. One student reported to us that her experience was quite enriching as she studied the sources of the early Church. This points to an instructional matter that the faculty members should discuss and address, that is, the manner of presentation of information about other confessions and religions. In a multi-confessional and multi-religious environment, each confession/religion ought to be presented as accurately as possible and according to its current self-understanding, not only through the critical perspective of the other, and dogmatic developments therein should be understood within the broader framework of their historical and cultural setting. While points of comparison and disagreement are possible, showing respect for the other and their views is central to the academic environment.

In discussions with the faculty members, they expressed their good relationships with students and their ability and attempts to stay connected with them via email, office hours, lists, social networks (Facebook) and face-to-face discussions. One of the ongoing discussions currently taking place in the wider academic world, about which the EEC did not have time to engage the faculty about was the question of privacy and the appropriateness of using social media, especially Facebook with students. While on the one hand social media often fosters good connections between people, on the other hand, a “line can be crossed” between faculty and students about personal privacy and appropriateness. This is a global discussion and the School and University might consider developing policies about the use of social media between faculty members and students.

Students are asked to evaluate their courses. The EEC had the opportunity to review the questionnaire being used and the responses. The faculty reported that the response rate is still very low. One challenge has been the transition from a manual, “paper and pencil system” to the electronic system. Methods to create incentives for increased student participation should be

investigated and considered for future implementation. The EEC heard that students were afraid of the old system, that faculty members might grade the student respondent harshly based on their responses in the manual system. Emphasizing with students the importance of these course evaluations, their anonymity, and that the faculty uses this data for self-evaluation and development will over time build more trust in the system. In addition, the EEC learned that only a few faculty members had adequate technological background to prepare some reports. The faculty needs training and support in the use of the electronic evaluation systems and the data collection methods being used by the University.

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

Last, the EEC often heard from both students and faculty members that the majority of students in the School of Pastoral and Social Theology did not select this School as their field, and only matriculated there because of their score on the National Entrance Exams. The faculty members expressed their frustrations striving to teach students who may not be ready for a university level education. These “borderline students” often require remedial assistance, in writing, study skills, etc. The University as a whole or the faculty in particular could consider the establishment of Centers for Writing or Centers of Basic Studies to support or prepare these “borderline” students.

Assessing and evaluating the outcomes of the undergraduate program as well as of each of the offered courses is handicapped by the fact that class attendance is not required at ΑΠΘ. Requiring students to attend classes and limiting the annual number of incoming students could significantly improve the quality of offered education, though we understand that this may be difficult. Due to the financial crisis and the stated fact that many students cannot come to Thessaloniki, the School may want to think of developing a distance learning program through the internet for those students who are unable to attend class in person but would like to benefit from the classroom experience.

It is worth noting that the School in its presentation and discussions appears very aware of these challenges. They are already working to address many of these issues.

### C. Research

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

Research is one of the strengths of the School, as noted before, especially in such areas as Patristics and historical studies.

The information provided had detailed listings, from peer-reviewed journals to books, and monographs. It shows very positive developments and confirms the School's reputation for being a strong center of Orthodox research. One only has to list the St Demetrios and St Gregory Palamas' Center, the ΚΕΕΠ, the Σεμινάριο Ορθοδόξου Ερμηνευτικής Θεολογίας, the Κέντρο Αποστόλου Παύλου, the Studium Historicum. These hold regular conferences (ex. on Constantine the Great and his Age, in December 2013).

The numbers provided and the bibliographies in the report show that the professors are very productive and engaged in research. Their participation in international conferences and engagement with international scholars is impressive.

The School has also developed the E-journal Cosmos (vol.1 in 2012), though the EEC could not see its published material on the website (<http://www.past.auth.gr/el/journal>)

The School is outward looking and concerned to engage in positive dialogue with the broader international theological community, by organizing both national and international conferences, and has a record in inviting eminent specialists. One such example, worthy of note, is the *Exegeticum* Seminar in Orthodox Hermeneutical Theology, in which not a few world class specialists in biblical studies have participated, including J. Moltmann, J. Jeremias, W. Meeks, J. W. van Henten, E. Pentiuic, D. Zeller and E. Tov.

One of the challenges of the School is that many of its members are publishing primarily in the Greek language and in Greece, which because of language barriers, may restrict the international impact of the School and keep the level of discourse internal to Greece. Though it is also worth noting

that many faculty members have a strong presence in international journals and international research programs and associations. The focus on studying and publishing primary sources, emphasized by the School, does not seem to be sufficiently reflected through reliable and internationally recognized text-editions. The faculty is aware of this challenge, and we have seen substantial efforts to expand the scope of publications in English and German, especially in recent years. Such a widening of the scope would be expected to have a positive impact on the quality of research and the impact of the faculty. Furthermore, finding ways to develop good translations of the works and publications of the faculty would help considerably.

Funding of research and travel to academic conferences is always a challenge, given the dire economic context, and given that faculty development budgets have been slashed globally. The School expects that tuition from its two English programs (undergraduate and graduate) might help in this respect.

Balancing expectations between teaching and research needs review with possible clarifications in the expectations of a faculty member's teaching load versus the scholarly productions (articles, books published, etc.) to create a reasonable and appropriate balance between the two. This concern is particularly important in light of the current financial difficulties and lack of administrative personnel, which lead faculty to spend a considerable amount of time in administrative work.

#### D. All Other Services

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

##### Library

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

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

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

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

#### Chapel

The EEC visited the School Chapel and learned about its history and function. The Chapel is a central place of gathering for students and the SOT community on a regular basis. By means of its carefully planned architecture, including such elements as a lowered icon screen, which opens up the altar area to the people, it facilitates a better and deeper understanding of the history and meaning of Orthodox worship.

It is also a private place of prayer and worship, providing connection between faith and scholarship. It is also a space for learning.

#### Computer Lab

The computer lab had more than 10 computers. It was very sophisticated and up to date. The space was pleasant and welcoming. The students are thus exposed to doing research electronically, as well as to using electronic technology in teaching, in conjunction with the pedagogical studio (see below). The EEC found that the School is very committed to digital technology. The EEC encourages the School to integrate electronic resources in all courses and to use its technological facilities to support distance learning for those students who cannot attend classes for financial reasons.

Unfortunately, short of attending the lab for an entire day, it is very difficult for

the EEC to properly evaluate how it operates on an everyday basis, how well it is attended, and the full range of assistance, which it provides to the students.

#### Hagiographic Studio

The hagiographic studio was very impressive. It balanced a holistic approach to learning as well as maintaining and enhancing the religious heritage.

#### Pedagogical Workshop

The pedagogical workshop was small (though the faculty reassured us that it is adequate for the practice of the students, which happens in teams) but very up to date, with computers for multiple users. It is in continual use. One of the suggestions of the EEC is that this lab, and the faculty that supports training for students, could be used to enhance teaching of the (junior) faculty as well. As for the computer lab, given the limited time that the EEC was able to spend in this workshop, it is difficult to properly evaluate its everyday operation and judge how crowded the room is.

The building itself had some deficiencies: older, bars on windows, cleanliness, and a working environment needs attention.

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

#### Collaboration with social, cultural and production organizations

The School of Pastoral and Social Theology is involved in various international collaborations in terms of research. In terms of teaching, it is currently preparing to launch a master’s program in English for international students, and is also hosting European students who are coming through the

Erasmus program. It has developed international exchange programs, such as the one with Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Brookline MA, USA. It is in constant dialogue with Mount Athos, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and the Church more broadly.

The EEC suggested that the School of Pastoral and Social Theology could develop a more thorough and systematic dialogue with

- a) the Church at large, civil society, and alumni, in the context of assessing the professional opportunities of its future graduates and using this information to implement future curricular changes.
- b) other disciplines, to promote a more thorough engagement with social theory in the context of contemporary society and develop interdisciplinary research.

It is worth noting, in this respect, that the School has taken important initiatives, which demonstrate its openness to both the Church and civil society at large, especially at the level of professors. It has organized both national and international conferences, held guest lectures from important (both Orthodox and non-Orthodox) theologians and Church leaders, as well as interdisciplinary conferences on such topics as Bio-Ethics and environmental issues, with the participation of representatives of non-theological disciplines (including physics and biology). While the EEC sees these as a proof of the School's openness to the world, it encourages it to ensure that this dialogue is properly reflected in the curriculum, integrated in the philosophy and content of its courses, and made more explicit.

Given the differentiation between the two Schools – Theology and Pastoral – it would be interesting to explore common events and activities, especially building on the distinct strengths of the two faculties for common research. Interdisciplinarity is an increasing development in the academic arena and in serious academic research. Perhaps the development of a “committee on collaboration” could be explored comprised of members of the two faculties (and possibly with other Schools with similar themes, e.g., Philosophy) to work on such matters. The EEC was informed that such possibilities were quite difficult to accomplish under older laws governing the University, but that the newer laws have facilitated such avenues of collaboration.

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

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

The School of Pastoral and Social Theology provided us with a 6-page strategic plan, confirming the energy of the faculty, and its desire to be proactive. As presented, the plan remains a little broad, and does not provide a timetable or discuss possible issues of funding, though the School hopes that tuition from its English programs will help address this issue.

As said throughout this report, the “feedback loops” would benefit from being more concrete and systematic, and this should appear in the strategic plan. The School would also benefit by a more systematic review of the policies and procedures related to its aim and scope, faculty review issues, and overall direction of the programs. The same is true of the “feedback loop” between students and faculty, from syllabus to classroom and examination to outcome and assessment.

#### F. Final Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC

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

The School is facing many challenges as it moves into the future. The School does appear willing to face them honestly and with creativity. Its challenge is to do this while maintaining its research record, and to balance the demands of its undergraduate students (who are not always committed to the subject matter and are facing decreasing professional opportunities) with the interest of the faculty in specialized research.

Given these challenges, the EEC was impressed by the commitment and dedication of the faculty both in terms of their present situation and their future.

The Committee also applauds the tremendous effort made by the administration, faculty and staff of the School of Pastoral and Social Theology in preparing for its very first external evaluation. The structures and procedures already established bode well for the future.

The EEC wishes to stress the importance of documented dialogue among the various constituencies related to all academic matters and decisions, which provide evidence of collegiality in the way that the School operates.

Our main suggestions to the School would be to:

1. Consider decreasing the number of mandatory courses and design three separate concentrations, both at the undergraduate and the graduate level.
2. Think of courses in contemporary social theory and pastoral psychology as a way to open the interests of the school even more to the demands of contemporary society.
3. Present the goals, methods for their implementation, and assessment of results in a more systematic way, and use these to inform future changes. In particular, use student evaluations and feedback surveys from graduating seniors, graduate students, and alumni in a more systematic way. The EEC recognizes the difficulty of developing a culture of data collection and acknowledges the substantial progress achieved. This being said, given the complexity of the process, it may be easier for this collection to be done at the University level.
4. Engage in a more thorough dialogue with outside partners (Church, civil society, alumni).
5. Develop an even closer dialogue and cooperation with other disciplines, which could potentially lead even to interdisciplinary programs in the future.
6. Consider the creation of a series with international standards aiming at editing and commenting on primary sources.
7. Explore the possibility of distance learning for those students who, for financial reasons, are unable to attend classes.

The faculty has increased work due to the recent reductions in administrative personnel. In light of these, and given the very large number of students at the undergraduate level (as stressed above), the EEC would recommend a reduction of the number of students admitted.

Last, the School should, as quickly as possible, work with the University's efforts to create an Alumni Association. Maintaining contact with alumni would, over time, provide many benefits to the School. First, alumni can provide feedback about their experiences of the curriculum and degree programs as noted earlier in this report. Second, alumni can become a

network for supporting current students and new graduates, from career advisement to job searches. Third, alumni can be cultivated to support the School financially, by involving them in the life of the School and offering them the opportunity to donate small grants, full scholarships and substantial endowments.

The Members of the Committee

**ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY OF THESSALONIKI  
SCHOOL OF PASTORAL & SOCIAL THEOLOGY**

Name and Surname

Signature

**Prof. Emmanuel Clapsis**

Hellenic College Holy Cross, Brookline, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

**Prof. Dr. Elias Assaad Kattan**

Centre of Religious Studies, University of Münster, Münster, Germany

**Dr. Nicolas Prevelakis**

Harvard's Center for Hellenic Studies, Harvard University,  
Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

**Prof. Christopher Veniamin**

Saint Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary, South Canaan,  
Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

**Prof. Anton Vrame**

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, Brookline,  
Massachusetts, U.S.A.