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HELLENIC REPUBLIC
H.Q.A.A.
HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY
FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

DEPARTMENT OF NURSING

ALEXANDER TEI OF THESSALONIKI

Version 1.0

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External Evaluation Committee

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the Department of Nursing of the Alexandreio Technological Education Institution of Thessaloniki consisted of the following three (3) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by the HQAA in accordance with Law 3374/2005 :

1. Professor Alex Molassiotis (Chair of the committee)
Professor of Cancer & Supportive Care
School of Nursing, Midwifery & Social Work, University of Manchester, UK

2. Dr Vasilios Raftopoulos
Assistant Professor of Nursing
Cyprus University of Technology, Nursing Department, Cyprus

3. Dr Gabriele Karanis
Doctor of Orthopaedics and Traumatology
Centre of Orthopaedics and Traumatology,
Prefectural Hospital Mechernich, Germany

N.B. The structure of the “Template” proposed for the External Evaluation Report mirrors the requirements of Law 3374/2005 and corresponds overall to the structure of the Internal Evaluation Report submitted by the Department.

The length of text in each box is free. Questions included in each box are not exclusive nor should they always be answered separately; they are meant to provide a general outline of matters that should be addressed by the Committee when formulating its comments.

Introduction

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) welcomes the opportunity to participate in this evaluation instigated by the Ministry of Education of the Government of Greece. The EEC was warmly welcomed by the Alexander TEI of Thessaloniki (ATEITHES) Department of Nursing who facilitated in an excellent way the efficient functioning of the EEC. The Alexander TEITHES Department of Nursing contributed whole-heartedly to the evaluation process with professionalism, honesty and enthusiasm and the EEC thanks them for their positive attitude and collaboration. The EEC felt well-equipped to address the tasks assigned by the H.Q.Q.A. and was able to complete the review effectively and efficiently. The conclusions described below were reached unanimously.

Description of the Nursing Department of Alexander TEI of Thessaloniki

The Department of Nursing is one of the six departments of the Faculty of Health and Welfare Professions (SEYP) of Alexander TEITHES (ATEITHESS). The Department was established in 1973 under the auspices of post-secondary technological education (KATEE). In 1984, it was upgraded and included into the higher education system (TEI). Finally, according to Law 2916/2001, all TEI departments are part of the official Greek tertiary education system (ATEI). From 1997 to 2011, 2,960 students have graduated and 1,364 are actively studying at the Department. The ATEITHES Department of Nursing is sharing rooms within a 2-storey building with the Departments of Aesthetics, Physiotherapy and Medical Technologists. The ATEI campus is situated in the suburb of Sindos, Thessaloniki, roughly 17 km from the city centre. Regular public transport is available.

The ATEITHESS Department of Nursing is comprised of 3 Professors, 1 Associate Professor, 3 Assistant Professors (1 part-time) and 7 clinical lecturers. Of the 3 professors, one is nurse, one is a law graduate and one is a psychologist. All the lecturers are nurses. Additionally, there are 84 clinical collaborators and the whole team is supported by 3 administrative staff. The bachelor’s programme at ATEITHESS Nursing Department is comprised of 7 semesters of theoretical and clinical work and 1 semester in which a clinical placement and a dissertation are completed. The Department enrolls approximately 300 students into its undergraduate programme each year and has approximately 1200 students enrolled across the 8 semesters of the programme. At the end of this course a graduate is

eligible to apply to the Hellenic Nursing Association for accreditation in order to be able to practice as a licensed nurse in clinical, community and other healthcare settings.

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.
- Groups of teaching and administrative staff and students interviewed
- Facilities visited by the External Evaluation Committee.

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) has visited:

1. The main campus of ATEITHESS
2. The libraries of ATEITHESS
3. Other facilities such as the doctor's office, gym and restaurant of the ATEITHESS
4. The Papageorgiou Hospital of Thessaloniki and the Hospital of Ag. Pavlos.

The External Evaluation Committee has met:

- 1) The Academic staff of the ATEITHESS Nursing Department (the internal evaluation group, the elected academic and scientific staff)
- 2) A group of undergraduate students from ATEITHESS Nursing Department and three groups of students who developed their own committees (student research committee, voluntary committee, and 'crisis' team)
- 3) A group of clinical tutors/collaborators
- 4) The administrative team of the Nursing Department
- 5) The Director of Nursing, Supervisors and clinical staff in both hospitals mentioned above
- 6) Members of the Erasmus Programme in the ATEITHESS
- 7) ERASMUS students
- 8) Students who were in clinical placements and clinical practice.

The reports and the documents provided by the ATEITHESS Department that had been reviewed by the EEC were the following:

1. The internal evaluation report of the Nursing Department
2. Samples of internal students satisfaction survey
3. Copies of the presentations given by the lecturers
4. The ATEITHESS Nursing student handbook
5. The Handbook/evaluation of ATEITHESS Nursing Students' clinical practice in the hospital setting (8th semester)
6. Samples of dissertations of undergraduate students
7. Samples of examination papers from various semesters

8. The curriculum of the undergraduate studies.

In more detail, the groups of teaching and administrative staff and students interviewed by the EEC comprised the following:

- 1) The Academic staff of the ATEITHESS Nursing Department (the internal evaluation group, the elected academic staff, scientific)
- 2) Laboratory associates from ATEITHESS
- 3) Special technical staff members
- 4) A group of undergraduate nursing students of ATEITHESS (20 students)
- 5) A group of Erasmus students (8 students)
- 6) A group of nursing students in clinical practice (29 students)
- 7) A group of nursing students in clinical placement in two hospitals (5 students)

The facilities visited by the External Evaluation Committee are mentioned above.

We did not have the opportunity to meet with the President of ATEITHESS or other senior TEI members, as during the EEC's visit there were student demonstrations at the site and made visit to the central administration buildings impossible.

The site visit was very well organized and highly professional. Faculty members were very friendly and they facilitated the external evaluation committee's work by establishing a constructive dialogue and providing information and data, wherever possible. Faculty members provided all the necessary information and answered all our questions with openness and respect.

The faculty members appeared interested in our feedback in relation to improving their programme. In conclusion the attitude and behaviour of the staff was professional, respectful and above all seemed entirely genuine making EEC feel that their demanding job and time invested in the external evaluation was valuable. In general, the EEC notes that the department should be congratulated for its eagerness to fully participate in the process of the external evaluation by offering unrestricted access to people, locations and documents as well as making necessary arrangements to ensure the EEC's hospitality which impressed the committee.

II. The Internal Evaluation Procedure

Please comment on:

- Appropriateness of sources and documentation used
- Quality and completeness of evidence reviewed and provided
- To what extent have the objectives of the internal evaluation process been met by the Department?

All the documentation provided by the ATEITHESS Nursing Department was relevant.

Quality of the documentation was adequate and the evidence was up to date and fully informative. The objectives of the internal evaluation have been met by the Nursing Department of ATEITHESS and the EEC recognizes that a great effort was put into the process. The internal evaluation report had originally been completed some years ago, but up to date information was provided in the latest document we received and during the site visit.

A. Curriculum

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

APPROACH

- What are the goals and objectives of the Curriculum? What is the plan for achieving them?
- How were the objectives decided? Which factors were taken into account? Were they set against appropriate standards? Did the unit consult other stakeholders?
- Is the curriculum consistent with the objectives of the Curriculum and the requirements of the society?
- How was the curriculum decided? Were all constituents of the Department, including students and other stakeholders, consulted?
- Has the unit set a procedure for the revision of the curriculum?

There is only an undergraduate programme in the Department of Nursing. The goals of the current undergraduate Curriculum as mentioned in the internal report of the ATEITHESS are the followings:

1. the promotion of nursing science and scientific knowledge
2. to help students to develop skills that are essential for the provision of the nursing care (through seminars, training in the laboratories, clinical practice)
3. prepare students for a career in nursing in various settings (e.g. community and hospital sector)
4. the education of general nurses who will be confident to provide, protect, maintain and care for individuals/groups.

The Faculty has a curriculum committee which reviews and revises the curriculum, according to the current global trends and the EU directions for nursing education. The proposals of this committee are reviewed and approved by the departmental management committee ('sinelefsi') in which students are represented. The committee also invariably uses the input of other stakeholders including the clinical staff and the senior management of the local health care settings.

The objectives are clearly stated in the internal evaluation report of the ATEITHESS Nursing Department. The EEC agrees that these:

1. Are adequate for a Bachelor degree in nursing
2. Prepare students to become professional nurses and provide services to various settings
3. Are nursing oriented.

In general the curriculum meets the criteria of the European Directive for nursing education. The adoption of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) makes the programme flexible, by resulting in the international academic and vocational recognition of the qualifications awarded by the ATEITHESS Nursing Department. Furthermore according to the curriculum the ATEITHESS Nursing Department offers a variety of elective modules that cover many nursing topics.

IMPLEMENTATION

- How effectively is the Department's goal implemented by the curriculum?
- How does the curriculum compare with appropriate, universally accepted standards for the specific area of study?
- Is the structure of the curriculum rational and clearly articulated?
- Is the curriculum coherent and functional?
- Is the material for each course appropriate and the time offered sufficient?
- Does the Department have the necessary resources and appropriately qualified and trained staff to implement the curriculum?

The ATEITHESS Nursing Department's goals are implemented appropriately by the curriculum in accordance with the international nursing standards. The curriculum is clearly articulated and its structure is functional, combining well nursing theory and nursing practice. The EEC welcomes the highly nursing-centric nature of the curriculum and congratulates the Faculty members for achieving such an attractive programme of studies in line with the international trends for nursing education. The EEC is making some minor recommendations related to the curriculum at the end of this report.

The EEC welcomes the emphasis of the department to the research methods module that incorporates both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The EEC has been impressed by the unique student-led initiative of a 'research team' involved in the research agenda of some members of the academic staff. From the discussion with the students who participate to this team it is clear that they are highly motivated and interested in promoting research.

EEC believes that in some cases resources are not adequate. The small number of faculty members of the ATEITHESS Nursing Department combined with the need to employ 84 external clinical collaborators in any given time who are not directly involved with the management of the programme, heavily impacts on the delivery and quality of the programme. However EEC would like to recognize the commitment, time and effort made by the academic staff which partly compensates for the above.

All staff are qualified to implement the curriculum effectively. However, there are 10 members with PhD and the remaining four are PhD candidates who hold a master's qualification. This indicates their commitment to the advancement of nursing education and practice. The current PhD candidates in the Department should be encouraged to complete their dissertations at the earliest opportunity and any new appointments, in line with legislation, should have a PhD as a minimum qualification.

The students have commented about the need for a clearer linkage between the theory and the clinical practice as in cases there were discrepancies observed or communicated. The students have pointed out the gap between theoretical evidence based practice and the current practice in the hospitals.

RESULTS

- How well is the implementation achieving the Department's predefined goals and objectives?
- If not, why is it so? How is this problem dealt with?
- Does the Department understand why and how it achieved or failed to achieve these results?

The EEC believes that the current undergraduate curriculum is sufficient in achieving the department's goals and objectives. This was verified by the students who expressed how much they are enjoying the course and how much they are learning despite the resource limitations outlined above. The ATEITHESS Nursing Department evaluates its goals with the students and the other stakeholders and discusses issues with them in an effort to improve them. However the EEC has not identified any formal process that explains the factors that influence the decision of the Department to revise the curriculum (for example societal needs or demographic trends). The quality of the students training is evident from the discussion with them although there is some area for improvement.

In the Department, there is not a specific follow-up process for ATEITHESS Nursing Department graduates' career development and employment status. However, the department has recently made some efforts to rectify this situation by using IT technologies, i.e. departmental website and the use of facebook.

IMPROVEMENT

- Does the Department know how the Curriculum should be improved?
- Which improvements does the Department plan to introduce?

During the meetings with the faculty members as well as it is stated in the internal evaluation report, the ATEITHESS Nursing Department has identified several areas in which

it would like to improve the curriculum. The current curriculum is relatively new and it is the by-product of internal evaluations and consultations with academic staff and students.

B. Teaching

APPROACH:

- Does the Department have a defined pedagogic policy with regard to teaching approach and methodology?

The EEC could not identify a defined or specific pedagogic policy or framework with regards to the teaching approaches and methodology used in the ATEITHESS Nursing Department.

Please comment on :

- Teaching methods used

The EEC believes that there are various methods of teaching including lectures, discussions, and interactive skills workshops. This varied methodology covers learning objectives in all domains (cognitive, psychomotor and affective). There is, however, a significant over-reliance on face -to- face lectures. The ECC acknowledges that the significantly high number of student intake prohibits the regular use of more interactive teaching methods. The Faculty is currently considering the use of e-learning methods and already provides some e-class support through the website of the Department. It is noted with concern that student attendance to the theoretical lessons is not compulsory due to the legislation enacted.

- Teaching staff/student ratio

Based on the number of permanent staff and current student numbers, the elected staff/student ratio is 1:97, although this significantly changes if the external collaborators (84) are being taken into account. This number fluctuates significantly depending on how many external collaborators are employed each year and their full-time equivalent hours (there was a compulsory reduction of external staff in 2011 by the Ministry of Education), some of whom have full-time hours. While there will always be a need to bring in a taught programme specialists for teaching, the ratio and numbers presented in the previous sentence are unacceptably high and clearly show the inadequacy of the number of elected staff members in the Department.

Discussions with the students and our own observation of clinical placements indicated that some clinical placements are oversubscribed and this needs to be attended to appropriately. The ratio of 1:10 for the clinical practice is excellent with all students well

supported by both a nursing mentor within the ATEITHESS Nursing Department and the hospital nurses, although we have been informed of groups of up to 16 students in practice and up to 20 in clinical labs. The ideal classroom ratio should be around 1:20 for quality teaching and learning in a programme of the nature of nursing. Discussions with students have also highlighted that in some cases there is no adequate time in clinical placements to practice nursing skills.

A significant problem in the ATEITHESS Nursing Department, impeding on quality education and creating notable difficulties is the student transfers to this department from other nursing departments in the country. This phenomenon is not unique to the ATEITHESS Nursing Department, but creates more acute problems here than in periphery nursing departments and needs to be significantly decreased, unless elected staff members are substantially increased.

A particular mention needs to be directed towards the significant number of external clinical collaborators, an important but under-resourced asset of the Department. This group of external staff provides much of the clinical teaching within the Department as well as clinical supervision. However, their needs are not always supported adequately. Through discussions with representatives of this group of hourly-paid staff (some of whom have full-time hours) the EEC came to understand problems with support when they start their teaching year, their working conditions, problems with remuneration and long delays in salary payments, lack of adequate and dedicated office space, lack of coordination and a number of other work pressures. This excellent and highly dedicated human resource should be supported more, involved more actively in the teaching and learning initiatives and decisions of the Department, and there should be more opportunities for continuing professional development for them.

- Teacher/student collaboration

EEC's observations and discussions with staff and students in clinical practice indicated the availability of clinical mentors which is an excellent resource linking academic work and clinical practice. However, there are only 2 staff members allocated as mentors for the students to provide mostly pastoral care, and this number is insufficient for managing an extremely high number of students, defeating the purpose of this important and necessary scheme. It was evident in meetings that staff-students' relationships are respectful, promoting a professional and effective learning environment.

Attendance at clinical placements is exemplary. The staff of the ATEITHESS Nursing Department recognize that low student attendance at theory classes is due to several reasons (legislation, lack of space). The EEC has discussed that issue with a group of students and found that a proportion of the students support the compulsory attendance of the theory classes. Non compulsory attendance supported by the current legislation prohibits regular attendance of lectures. More effective use of the Blackboard could address and improve on

these issues, and provide more opportunities for interactive learning.

The EEC has also explored with teaching staff how teaching and attendance to practical labs is accommodated for students who are working, and the EEC was assured that this is attended to and the staff are flexible, discussing the situation with individual students.

The use of e-learning resources and more flexibility in the use of labs attendance time can address any issues with students who concurrently also work.

- Adequacy of means and resources

The EEC believes that resources are particularly inadequate. Overall the teaching buildings are not fit for purpose with undersized classrooms and inflexible seating arrangements which do not enable small group discussion work effectively. There is access for disabled individuals. Office accommodation is basic but adequate. In clinical practice areas students did not have dedicated student space to study but they did have locker rooms.

- Use of information technologies

As stated earlier there is an electronic/digital platform for e-learning and study skills support. The availability of Blackboard is very positive, but this is currently under-utilised (if used at all). Students do have access to the World Wide Web both in campus and from their own homes. The e-class support needs to be further expanded.

- System of written exams

The examination system determined by the Ministry of Education across the board heavily relies on written memory exams (i.e. at the end of the semester). The view of the EEC is that this does not fully promote the principles of adult education and does not allow for critical thinking to develop. The over-reliance on written exams should be significantly reduced and the use of critical assignments and case studies should be encouraged more. These methods should be incorporated in the curriculum as early as possible to allow students to develop their critical skills. Other, less passive learning methods, need to be embraced and encouraged (e.g. critical case reviews or reflective diaries and teaching methods that enable reflective and evidence-based learning).

The EEC had the opportunity to look at exam scripts and marks. While marks correctly represented the answers on the scripts, many questions the EEC felt were superficial and lacked depth and the students responded very briefly. Different ways of assessing students should be considered, particularly those that are enhancing critical thinking.

The EEC also had the opportunity to look at copies of dissertations. There is a list of assessment criteria that has been developed more recently, and this is a very positive step for quality assurance purposes. However, this list should be improved by including items around

the quality of the work, not only about practical aspects of the dissertation as it currently stands. Even though this list exists, the marks are not always reflective of what is written in the dissertation, with a tendency to allocate very high marks in most of the dissertations. The latter is an issue that needs re-thinking from the staff members and marks needs to be much more widely spread. The dissertations also lacked critical analysis. Students have further communicated problems with examinations, ie. lack of time or the degree of difficulty of questions, and such problems, if they exist, need to be discussed with the faculty members and addressed appropriately. Assessments and exams create a significant workload to the (small number of) faculty staff and at times it seems unmanageable; this is an area that needs more effective management and more manpower to be involved with.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Quality of teaching procedures

Internal evaluations indicate that, overall, students are satisfied with the teaching procedures.

- Quality and adequacy of teaching materials and resources.

The EEC visited the ATEITHESS library and found the resources to be excellent, with electronic access to a large number of journals. The EEC also reviewed textbooks and teaching materials used in courses and found these to be relevant and appropriate. However, there was a limited number of titles in hard copies and some were outdated. Overall, the students reported that they were satisfied with the use of the existing electronic literature databases. The EUDOXOS system is welcomed by the students, as it facilitates the process of obtaining books more quickly and gives them the opportunity to select their preferred titles. Software for detecting plagiarism is missing, but the library is planning to obtain such software in the near future.

The libraries and the department lack student space for 'silent' work and for small group work. This is an issue already considered by the library staff and may be attended to in the near future.

- Linking of research with teaching

The ATEITHESS Nursing Department invariably applies research findings to teaching and affirms the importance of this link with effective nursing care. Students make an effort to apply these linkages in their dissertations, although in the dissertation samples that EEC has reviewed as part of the evaluation process this is not always evident. There is a need for more emphasis on evidence-based nursing and linking research and practice more effectively in

the teaching of theory. Evidence based nursing should be a part of all nursing subjects taught in the programme.

- Mobility of academic staff and students

EEC believes that the ATEITHESS Nursing Department has an impressive external profile. The ATEITHESS Nursing Department values and takes part in European exchange programmes such as ERASMUS, which provide important learning and development opportunities for both staff and students. Students reported rewarding exchange visits to Germany, Finland and Spain. Staff encourage the students to participate to these activities. Developing a module in a foreign language for the needs of foreign Erasmus students coming to ATEITHESS Nursing Department is something already in the planning process and the EEC feels this is an excellent pilot project that will enhance the ERASMUS programme mobility and quality.

- Evaluation by the students of (a) the teaching and (b) the course content and study material/resources?

The academic teaching is evaluated by the students every year through the use of a structured questionnaires developed by the ATEITHESS. The anonymous questionnaires from each course are analyzed by the administrative staff of the Department. Results of this analysis (over 4,000 questionnaires) indicated that students are overall satisfied with the teaching, course content and some study materials. However, low scores were received in relation to tutorial support, up to date materials and linkages between related taught subjects. Currently there is no formal way of addressing the comments raised by the students nor there is an action plan (other than informal changes), and this should be addressed more formally in the future alongside consultation with the students.

RESULTS

- Efficacy of teaching

The EEC concluded that the ATEITHESS Nursing Department academic staff and clinical collaborators are very effective teachers of nursing theory and practice. This was documented in the evaluative surveys of courses and staff, and was communicated to the EEC by the majority of nursing students. The goals and objectives of the curriculum are met effectively and efficiently.

- Discrepancies in the success/failure percentages between courses and how they are justified

Careful efforts have been undertaken to document student progress. Minor discrepancies in the success/failure percentages between modules were evident. However, the faculty is currently exploring ways to improve success rates across all modules. Marks, particularly in the dissertations, as mentioned earlier, are probably in the higher quartiles of the range and this needs some adjustment down.

- Differences between students and the time to graduation and final degree grades

Completion time should be a minimum of 4 years and most students graduate from the course within this time frame, with the department's average time being an acceptable 5.5 years.

- Whether the ATEITHESS Nursing Department understands the reasons of such positive and negative results

The ATEITHESS Nursing Department has discussed with the EEC their concerns regarding legislation constraints, curriculum influences and their effects on student progress and completion. Also, the staff has discussed with the EEC their marking approach in relation to competitiveness with other nursing departments in the country, although this should not be a consideration in the marking process.

IMPROVEMENT

- Does the Department propose methods and ways for improvement?

An ongoing documented monitoring process for the continuous improvement of the quality of education in the department is lacking. The ATEITHESS Nursing Department acknowledges the need to make more use of e-learning and learning support platforms. This will provide students with greater flexibility in their learning and could improve student participation in theory learning.

- What initiatives does it take in this direction?

None discussed with the EEC.

C. Research

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

APPROACH

- What is the Department's policy and main objective in research?

The EEC would like to recognise the staff efforts to pursue research in health related areas. Despite a considerable number of publications being produced on an annual basis ATEITHESS Nursing Department's policy and main objectives for research seem to depend on highly individual interests of each staff member. The Nursing Department does not currently have a formal departmental research structure or strategy but it recognizes the need to develop one and they are in the process of establishing a research strategy.

- Has the Department set internal standards for assessing research?

The EEC did not identify any internal standards, described through collective agreement/action for assessing either the quality of research projects or their alignment with nursing and other disciplines.

IMPLEMENTATION

- How does the Department promote and support research?
- Quality and adequacy of research infrastructure and support.
- Scientific publications.
- Research projects.
- Research collaborations.
- Research funding

In general there is no unique and special research agenda and policy in the ATEITHESS Nursing Department. However, there is the A.T.E.I.'s Research Committee and the Ministry of Education which guide and fund some research activities within the institution.

- How does the Department promote and support research?

The ATEITHESS Nursing Department promotes and supports research among students through offering research methods classes, membership in the A.T.E.I. library and current information and support offered in the Department's website, study guide, posters in the boards and class rooms and flyers.

Research skills are taught in lessons such as Biostatistics in the 4th semester, research methodology in nursing in the 5th semester, and seminars in writing an academic essay in the 7th semester. During their final year the students are required to write a final thesis which is compulsory for all students – there is a period of one year allowed to complete it and also there is a possibility to prolong this for a further year in case of extenuating circumstances. The thesis topic is agreed with a faculty member and the realization of the project is supervised by the members of the permanent internal and external teaching staff. The thesis

should represent scientific knowledge in health and diseases, clinical methods and the student's research skills. The thesis' contents should be based on reproducible and reliable data including avoiding plagiarism. The work assists the student into identifying important clinical problems and unanswered questions in the nursing field. Motivation for having interest in participating actively in improving and developing the nursing science and technological knowledge should be developed as a result. The thesis that have been evaluated by the EEC show that the topics are not always related to the nursing field, some are not of the expected high quality, and there were some examples that were not adequately evaluated by the academic staff – especially including plagiarism control. Some reasons can be seen in the followings: the academic staff do not have the time to evaluate the significant amount of theses, there is lack of standardized processes and unified staff training. Regular internal trainings and seminars should be held within the Department's staff informing each other about their actual research projects and exchanging and updating research methods. There is a need to enhance teaching of research methods and make more active use of such knowledge in the dissertations, so as the output can be more competitive and of high quality.

The students' interest in research activities is promoted by the international exchange and collaborations which the Nursing Department has established. Besides international employment opportunities and networking, such exchanges make clear how important evidence-based and reproducible methods are. Students who were interviewed by the EEC members showed a high level of motivation and awareness about these topics.

The students communicated a strong interest in post-graduate careers and PhD-qualifications (communicated by one-third of the students asked) which is encouraging for the future of nursing leadership, and this is also supported by the students' initiative to organise a "Students' Research Team". There are some excellent external seminars on research methodology organised by the Department for both staff and students, with the aim of encouraging students and staff to actively participate in research projects and write scientific papers (i.e. training in statistics, SPSS data entry, data analysis and research methodology).

- Quality and adequacy of research infrastructure and support.

There is limited research infrastructure. Adequate room capacity in the form of nursing research laboratories does not exist and sufficient and suitable equipment is missing because of lack of funding. However, the Department has proposals and already applied for the establishment of new research laboratories in the future and to extend the shared use of existing facilities and instruments with other units within the institution, for example with the Department of Medical Laboratory Studies.

There is limited time for the staff to carry out research due to heavy teaching and course administrative duties. There is an urgent need to raise the Department's staff research profile with higher quality and internationally competitive research output. Clear indications of such

quality includes publications in international journals with impact factor, competitive grant income, active international research collaborations, multidisciplinary and multicentre research. The focus should be heavily on quality rather than quantity. The already planned postgraduate programme in the Department and a doctoral training programme in the future can be significant driving forces of research quality. The department has an informal ad-hoc ethics committee for the research that is conducted by the members of the academic staff although there is a need for a formal and independent ethics committee in concordance with international standards.

- Scientific publications.

Generally, while the quantity of publications is adequate, the quality is not comparable to other institutions nationally and abroad, and this is an area that needs a careful and an urgent planning. However the publication rate in books, journals and conference proceedings is adequate, although quality should prevail over quantity.

The majority of the research conducted in the department is published in national journals that in some cases are not indexed in international databases. Some of the members of the academic staff are self motivated and they publish their work in international journals and should be congratulated for that. Publishing the Department's nursing-relevant research results in international competitive journals should be a priority. A wider range of dissemination approaches of research findings should also be encouraged as well as more multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary collaboration.

- Research projects
- Research funding

The Nursing Department has currently submitted two proposals for research cooperation through programmes of Lifelong Learning titled "Perioperative Nursing" and "Clinical evidence-based Nursing Practice". Applications for funding have been made for several other research projects. The success rate for grant applications is low and needs to be enhanced significantly. To do so there is an urgent need for a focused research strategy and planning, more formal and continuing training, and wider collaborations. Also the topics should reflect the current needs of the profession and be of wider interest.

The Department has participated or has been the leader in 14 research activities or research programmes during the last five years, for example the research programme of Archimidis and Thalys. The amount of research income of these projects is variable and probably low.

- Research collaborations.

The Nursing Department's academic staff have developed several research collaborations:

- 2 research collaborations with other academic units within the ATEITHESS
- 8 research collaborations with other institutions in Greece,
- 12 research collaborations with other academic units internationally.
- Organized the First International Congress on Nursing, Education, Research and Practice in 2009 through which 11 international collaborations have been established.

The EEC however is not clear how active or well organized and productive are these collaborations and whether they are utilized to their full potential. A more strategic approach for collaborations should be considered and research collaborations with local hospitals should be enhanced.

During the EEC's visit to the Papageorgiou General Hospital in Thessaloniki it was evident that research collaboration with the Nursing Department had not been discussed before but the two parties were eager to explore that more formally as a priority.

In conclusion the potential for research success exists, particularly with the forthcoming Master's level postgraduate programme, but limitations in funding, limited involvement of wider collaborators and lack of strategic planning are major inhibiting factors.

RESULTS

- How successfully were the Department's research objectives implemented?
- Scientific publications.
- Research projects.
- Research collaborations.
- Efficacy of research work. Applied results. Patents etc.
- Is the Department's research acknowledged and visible outside the Department?
- Rewards and awards.

Generally research activities in the ATEITHES Department are not successfully met. Some of the reasons include the following:

1. Lack of financial support and funding for equipment, building facilities and personnel.
2. Lack of protected additional time for research activities in addition to the heavy workload including teaching, clinical supervision, thesis supervision, administrative work and individual studies.
3. Limited 'intelligence gathering' to inform the academic staff and the students about funding opportunities.
4. Lack of a specific research policy and research programme in the Nursing Department.
5. Limited number of permanent staff.
6. Lack of research expertise to enhance research i.e. statistics, health economics, trial designs etc.

The members of the Faculty attend regularly scientific national and international congresses and workshops. Externally funded research is minimal but the EEC recognises the wider funding constraints and staff time limitations to put forward grant proposals.

In conclusion although external research collaborations and the dissemination of the staff's research outcome depend mainly on the individual efforts of the academics themselves the EEC finds the number of collaborations and publications adequate. However quality as mentioned before needs to prevail over quantity. Also the large number of submitted research projects – including international ones- show the high degree of motivation, innovation and potential of the academic personnel – limited by the lack of funding, time and manpower.

A reward for a paper titled “Quality of life in chronic diseases” in a Congress in Italy in 2007 and another one for a poster in the Panhellenic Psychiatric Congress in 2010 have been granted in members of the Nursing Department.

The overall positive outward profile of the Nursing Department, while commendable, needs to

- extend beyond conferences and study days,
- strategically develop more active, efficient and internationally recognized research projects
- develop more multi-disciplinary collaborations within and outside the institution
- seek more national and international research funding.

IMPROVEMENT

- Improvements in research proposed by the Department, if necessary.
- Initiatives in this direction undertaken by the Department.

Both the EEC and the Department recognize the urgent need to develop a strategic research plan with short-, medium- and long-term goals. Desired outcomes include external research funding, the setting up of well equipped research labs, the contribution of academic staff in research across the Department, setting up PhD and independent postgraduate programmes and establishing a Departmental Research and Ethics Committee. The familiarization of students with research methodologies from as early as possible in the curriculum through to postgraduate level education should be a priority of the Department's research education strategy. Research collaboration with partner hospitals should be discussed and formalised. Such research collaboration can be a great asset for the Department of Nursing. The planned postgraduate (Master's level) programme can become a significant asset for the promotion and maintenance of high quality research activity within the Department and should be further encouraged.

D. All Other Services

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

APPROACH

- How does the Department view the various services provided to the members of the academic community (teaching staff, students).
- Does the Department have a policy to simplify administrative procedures? Are most procedures processed electronically?
- Does the Department have a policy to increase student presence on Campus?

The ATEITHESS Nursing Department uses all the available institutional resources in an effective and efficient way. According to the Internal Evaluation Report, the EEC's observations and the comments of the students and the academic staff, the facilities of ATEITHESS Nursing Department (e.g. offices, classrooms, laboratories, meeting rooms) are inadequate. All the members of the Department are very concerned about the lack of adequate space for the students, the staff and the infrastructure. The EEC shares this concern. The elected academic staff as well as the external clinical collaborators and the instructors lack of private office space and share the same space with many other persons. The EEC has visited a small reading room in the area of the Nursing Department but did not see a counselling or a debriefing space for the students. The EEC acknowledges the need for private office space for staff to meet and support the students.

Many of the administrative procedures have been simplified recently and now include electronic processing but there is still room for continuous quality improvement. The EEC welcomes the very well structured website of the Department that is continuously supported and updated by the Head of the Department and some of the members of the academic staff. Furthermore the wide use of facebook motivates the students to use electronic information.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Organization and infrastructure of the Department's administration (e.g. secretariat of the Department)
- Form and function of academic services and infrastructure for students (e.g. library, PCs and free internet access, student counseling, athletic- cultural activity etc.).

The Secretariat of the ATEITHESS Nursing Department is staffed by 3 persons who provide administrative services to 14 faculty members, 84 clinical instructors and 1,364 active students. The Secretariat is making a great effort to cover the needs of all the members of the ATEITHESS Nursing Department. The EEC concluded that secretariat support in the ATEITHESS Nursing Department is adequate but staff members are overloaded.

PC labs, library, medical office, ERASMUS exchange services and dining facilities of the ATEITHESS Nursing Department are adequate although there is room for improvement. The EEC did not visit the athletic facilities of the ATEITEHSS, the day nursery for the staff's

children and the counseling services.

The EEC considers that the library facilities are adequately established but there is a need to enrich the catalogue with nursing journals, books and other educational electronic material. Students' access to the library, PCs and free internet is considered to be satisfactory with some improvements necessary. The EEC welcomes the use of Wi-Fi technology for the free internet access of the students in the area of the Department. The staff of the library is exemplary and very supportive to the students and to the academic staff. The EEC welcomes the new and forthcoming funding for the Library (EU funds), as communicated to us, which will improve its services and the access to more international databases in the near future.

The library has very good access to electronic journals with a range of search databases. In general the library's qualified librarians, infrastructure and equipment provide an excellent foundation for teaching and research activities (16 staff members, computers and 40 reading-room seats). However, more space for silent reading and archiving more books and journals is required, although plans for these were communicated to the EEC.

RESULTS

- Are administrative and other services adequate and functional?
- How does the Department view the particular results?

Based on both the faculty's and students' comments the administrative and other services are adequate and functional.

IMPROVEMENTS

- Has the Department identified ways and methods to improve the services provided?
- Initiatives undertaken in this direction.

The work of the administrative staff is vital for the effective functioning of the ATEITHESS Nursing Department. Overall the EEC is impressed with the professionalism and the "customer friendly" attitude of the Secretariat of the ATEITHESS Nursing Department. Despite the efforts of the academic staff and effective support from the existing administrative staff there is an urgent need for further electronic management and digitalization of all the administrative processes. The administrative staff seem self-motivated and are making efforts to improve all the processes under the financial and law restrictions present.

Collaboration with social, cultural and production organizations

Please, comment on quality, originality and significance of the Department's initiatives.

The ATEITHESS Nursing Department makes an effort to develop a network with social, cultural and other organizations. According to the internal evaluation report such forms of cooperation are being developed in the context of the students' Practical Placement and also in the context of some tutorials. Two student-led and -developed committees are particularly commendable in this area, including the committee on voluntarism and the first aid ('crisis') committee, which significantly promote social and cultural activities. The ATEITHESS Nursing Department plans to activate the First Aid lab whereby there will be additional cooperation with the local authorities, the industrial workforce of the area, and the National Centre for Emergency Care (EKAB). The Department is planning the implementation of some projects that will promote the cooperation of the Department with various Municipalities by giving an emphasis to the high risk and vulnerable populations. Social responsibility activities, however, need to be further developed, including an appropriate strategy for this. Wider community activities, currently absent, should be established as part of the curriculum too in a more formal basis and incorporated in the curriculum (or extra-curricular activities).

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.

- Please, comment on the Department's Potential inhibiting factors at State, Institutional and Departmental level and Proposals on ways to overcome the above inhibiting factors.
- Short-, medium- and long-term goals.
- Plan and actions for improvement by the Department/Academic Unit
- Long-term actions proposed by the Department.

The EEC concludes that the rigid rules governing ATEI education in Greece do not contribute to high quality education and limit the autonomy, creativity, enthusiasm and outcomes of the ATEI. More flexibility should be allowed to the departments (in general) to run their own programmes. A number of other rigid regulations further constrain innovation and development in the department as outlined in the following:

At State level:

1. Absence of self reliant postgraduate and doctoral programmes in Nursing in ATEI. Particularly the ATEITHESS does not have a PhD programme, is not involved with another University department to co-run a PhD programme and do not have a Master's level postgraduate programme. However, the Department is planning to start a Master's programme (subject to Ministry approval) and this is a highly desirable and important step

2. Very small numbers of permanent faculty nursing staff
3. Excessive number of visiting/external staff in relation to the number of permanent staff
4. Inadequate facilities and premises, particularly with lecture rooms and labs
3. Lack of adequate research infrastructure
4. Limited external research funding
5. Constantly changing legislature (attendance, assessment)
6. Inefficient allocation of educational funding
7. (Inappropriate) legal obligation for the academic staff to teach for a high number of hours per week, at the expense of carrying out other academic activities, such as research and professional development.

At Institutional and Departmental level:

1. Overloaded administrative staff
2. Lack of structured research Strategic plan and dedicated time for research
3. Lack of efficient use of an electronic platform for teaching and learning (although such a platform does exist)
4. Increased bureaucracy imposed by the institutional framework
5. Insufficient number of technical and assistant staff to support the learning processes and research activities (research laboratories, clinical areas, auxiliary areas)
6. Absence of direct entry into postgraduate and doctoral studies.
 - Proposals on ways to overcome the above inhibiting factors
 - Short-, medium- and long-term goals
 - Plan and actions for improvement by the Department/Academic Unit
 - Long-term actions proposed by the Department

The ATEITHESS Nursing Department has provided a list of desired actions that would enhance the quality of the current programme. These include:

-Development of an autonomous postgraduate course in Diabetes Care. The department has the capacity and manpower to develop this to a successful programme of Master's level education. The EEC is highly supportive of this.

-Continue to improve the curriculum and programme according to national laws and the latest nursing perspectives.

-Further development of a Lifelong Learning Institute at ATEITHESS for registered nurses and external collaborators, with regular seminars, vocational training, workshops and a 'journal club'.

-Approval by the Ministry of Education of a research laboratory, which the EEC also strongly supports.

-Development of continuing training programmes for students.

-Continuation of the ERASMUS and LEONARDO programmes.

-Creation of 2 labs, one for diabetes and one for metabolic diseases and first aid.
 -Continue to develop their international cooperation.
 -Development of a new nursing/health care journal. For this latter point, the EEC questions whether there is an actual need for it, and the Department should re-consider the necessity of such an activity.

As a general comment, the EEC strongly supports one-level nursing education at Universities only, in line with international nursing education. The EEC believes, however, that further action should be taken by the Department of Nursing prior to changing/transferring to a University, if this will be a possibility in the future. More specifically, increasing the number of faculty members with PhDs, significantly enhancing the research profile and research quality of the department, as discussed earlier, involving staff with experience in supervising doctoral students to completion and a stronger national and international departmental nursing profile are essential prerequisites for 'change' at University level.

F. Final Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC

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

Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC on:

- The development of the Department to this date and its present situation, including explicit comments on good practices and weaknesses identified through the External Evaluation process and recommendations for improvement
- The Department's readiness and capability to change/improve
- The Department's quality assurance.

The EEC has been very impressed with the excellent calibre and motivation of the ATEITHESS Nursing Department staff's performance, enthusiasm and commitment across teaching and learning, and continuous professional development. Equally the EEC was impressed with the dedication, sensitivity and clear focus of the nursing students. The teaching element of the Department is of high quality and it produces knowledgeable and skilled nurses.

In particular, the EEC would like to highlight the following positive aspects:

1. The enthusiastic and dedicated staff that provide a nurse-centred education programme and meets EU regulations for nursing education
2. Positive staff-student relationships based on trust, professionalism and respect, support

and nurturance, cooperation, enthusiasm and determination, despite the current financial economic climate

3. The dedicated academic staff
4. The recognition and appreciation of the students towards the efforts made by their teachers in spite of the limited resources and support in general
5. The steps, albeit small, made thus far to develop e-class and enable students to access e-resources
6. The outward external profile of the Department (which can be further enhanced)
7. Maintaining a high standard of clinical education at placements for which the department should be congratulated

The EEC found a high level of consistency between the internal evaluation report, the ATEITHESS discussions, the various visits and other ATEITHESS Department meetings, as well as the meetings with the nursing students, over the time of the evaluation period.

The ATEITHESS Nursing Department's readiness and capability to change/improve demonstrates their resilience and veracity. The ATEITHESS Nursing Department is working extremely hard to progress the discipline of nursing and influence nursing care provision in Greece.

We would like to thank the ATEITHESS Nursing Department for their contribution to this evaluation and wish them well in their future development as a nursing academic discipline.

Accordingly, having completed this review and given due consideration to the findings, the EEC recommends the following for the attention and action of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health (where relevant). To note that suggestions for improvement have been made throughout this report.

It is recommended that:

At State and/or Institutional level:

- 1. There is immediate recruitment of full-time faculty staff members alongside an immediate decrease in the annual intake of students.**
- 2. The inadequate facilities should be addressed as a matter of urgency.**
- 3. Develop consistent education legislation that does not impinge on students' attendance and assessment.**
- 4. Budget constraints on staffing are addressed as a matter of urgency.**
 - 4.1 Academic staff and student teaching-ratios must be set at safe quality teaching provision levels as a minimum of 1:20 and nursing academics must be employed to achieve this, with a PhD as a minimum qualification.

4.2 The Administration of ATEITHESS must support the Secretariat staff in personal career development so that they can fulfill their mission to provide high quality services to the students and the academic staff.

4.3 The external collaborators are decreased as the number of faculty staff members increases. Some of these external staff should be supported so in the medium term can meet criteria for becoming elected members of staff. This team is a great asset to the Department of Nursing.

At Departmental level:

5. Minor amendments in the Curriculum be made to ensure the following suggestions are considered in the next curriculum review and/or addressed.

5.1 Balance between qualitative and quantitative research methodologies must be included within all research modules as well as mixed method approaches.

5.2 Research module should be expanded.

5.3 Consider combining modules of Pathology and Pathological Nursing or Surgery & Surgical Nursing.

5.4 Changes in some module names to reflect current trends (ie. Nosocomial infections to become Healthcare-associated Infections; Geriatric Nursing to Nursing care of older people, etc.).

5.5 Last year seminars need to be enhanced and their aims and structure to be reconsidered.

5.6 Evidence-based practice needs to be a framework across nursing modules and be taught sufficiently.

5.7 Cardiology Nursing and Women's Health/Maternity Nursing to become a compulsory module rather than elective.

6. It appears there is no formal process of consultation with other stakeholders, although such discussions may have taken place on an informal basis due to the excellent relations the department has demonstrated with the various stakeholders, including clinical staff and students. This needs to be formalised and clear contractual arrangements be developed.

7. An electronic/digital platform for learning and study skills support to be further developed and utilised.

The Blackboard platform (or a similar one) needs further development and better utilization to allow students to have a more interactive approach to their learning.

8. Develop a departmental research strategy and improve the quality of the research output. This should be an urgent priority for the Department

and significantly improve on the quality of the research output.

- 9. Make better use of existing and new collaborations with national and international institutions, focussing on joint research and scholarly activities. To this extent, the EEC strongly supports the development of the Master's level postgraduate programme planned by the Department.**
- 10. The ATEITHESS Nursing Department should establish a Human Research Ethics Committee as a priority for the oversight and decision-making of all research in the Department.**
- 11. If external clinical collaborators will continue to be a significant staffing part of the Department, their ongoing support and attention to their needs is of paramount importance.**
- 12. Establish and develop, as necessary, formal and transparent quality assurance processes both in terms of teaching and research.** This should include the student evaluations, student written feedback, but also other means of quality assurance, such as peer review of teaching, in-house teaching seminars for the staff, marking reflecting established and transparent criteria of quality, etc.