

UNIVERSITY EVALUATION SYSTEMS IN GREECE: ATHENS UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

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1. The National Context: State-University Relationships

Greek universities are constitutionally defined as public institutions and come under the supervision of the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs (MNERA). The government determines their creation, structure, and operations. National legislation determines university budgets, procurement, financial oversight, and employment. Universities are almost exclusively state-funded, through budgets or programmes (*e.g.* specific research programmes), and generally have only negligible funds since no student fees are charged. Private funding is also negligible, and consists primarily of specific donations. Universities have recently been trying to increase their resources mainly through research and participation in competitive EU programmes. Special accounts, created outside the public budget and expenditure controls, provide some degree of flexibility. Other special measures are being created to manage estates and other university property.

Although universities have elected governing bodies, they enjoy very little autonomy. Since the State controls university funding and the flow of funds from the EU to the universities, all specific budget categories must be determined in the state budget. It follows that the state exercises very tight control over such strategic issues as establishing or abolishing faculties and departments, and post-graduate programmes, internal organisational structures for support services and the role, responsibility and functioning of governing bodies and their election. MNERA determines human resource issues, including all human resource policies and management systems, the number of staff posts allocated to individual universities and departments and recruitment regulations, faculty remuneration, staff appointment, promotion, social security, pension etc. University procurement is entirely subject to the law on public procurement. Any payment requires approval by a designated Public Auditor in the Ministry of Finance. Other expenditures are also subject to state financial controls. The Rector's Council can only decide on some miscellaneous items in certain categories. The government determines departmental enrolments after consultation with each university. Students take Pan-Hellenic exams planned and implemented by MNERA but universities do not make student selections or determine their own enrolments. MNERA also approves textbooks distributed to students, for example, and faculty sabbaticals.

2. Structure and Governing Bodies

Universities are structured into different faculties that are in turn subdivided into departments which constitute the basic organisational units; they are mainly responsible for planning and implementing educational programmes and granting diplomas. Each department is allowed to grant its own diploma and has considerable autonomy on educational matters. Departments may be subdivided into

Scientific Sections to better co-ordinate education and research; this subdivision has not been universally implemented.

University administration includes a Rector, supported by the two Vice-Rectors, elected every three years, a Rector's Council, consisting of the Rector and two Vice-Rectors, one student representative and one representative of the administrative staff, the Senate, the highest administrative body of the University, a large group consisting of the Rector and the Vice-Rectors, the Deans of the University Faculties, and Department Heads. Each department is represented by one representative from the teaching staff, the undergraduate students, administrative staff, and post-graduate student body.

Each Faculty consists of several departments administered by a Dean (who serves a three-year term), a Council including the Dean, department heads and an undergraduate student representative from each department, and the General Faculty Assembly includes the General Assembly of the Departments. Small universities, such as the Athens University of Economics and Business, have no faculties.

Each Department is administered by a Department and Deputy Head (or President) elected for two years, the Administrative Council including the Department Head, Section Directors, and representatives of the students and the technical and administrative staff. The General Assembly of the Department consisting of departments' academic staff, and representatives from the student body, the technical staff and the administrative staff.

Where there are Sections, they are administered by a Director (elected for one year) and the General Assembly including the section academic staff and student representatives.

Collective administrative bodies at all levels are elected by academic staff and student representatives, and representatives of the assistant teaching, technical, and administrative staffs. Students have considerable voting power; in specific bodies (*e.g.* the election of Rectors, Vice Rectors, Deans and Heads of the Departments), the student participation rate is 80 per cent that of the academic staff.

3. Academic and Administrative staff

Staff consists of teaching staff, teaching assistants, special technical staff, and administrative staff. The teaching staff includes lecturers, assistant, associate and full professors. Only associate and full professors are elected to permanent (tenured) positions. Special electoral bodies appoint and promote all teaching and research staff. All teaching staff hold a PhD; academic publications is one of the most important criteria for promotion. The teaching assistant staff includes assistant teachers (without a PhD) and postgraduate students on scholarship working on their PhD thesis. Special technical staff provides technical support for education and research (laboratories etc.) Administrative staff are public servants who are usually governed by the laws set by the Ministry of the Presidency; academic and technical staff are subject to laws set by the Ministry of Education.

4. The Evaluation Process

Despite tight government control, no formal mechanism exists for university evaluation as yet. Only informal and unsystematic attempts are made to have the universities, the government or other

external bodies evaluate universities. While no known systematic attempt to document these evaluation procedures exists, those that do exist include the following:

- Some form of informal evaluation conducted by the MNERA designed to distribute funds and teaching positions. This informal evaluation is usually based on simplistic ratios (*e.g.* student numbers, number of teaching staff, expenses/student, square meters of buildings per student etc.) that are neither exact nor sufficient for serious, systematic evaluation. Moreover, because this is an informal evaluation, the ministry is not obliged to follow-up on its results. In addition, the ministry and its decisions influence all the parameters on which these ratios are based (*e.g.* number of students or teaching staff).
- University and departmental reputations are shaped by various external forces including the state itself, market forces, citizens, companies, other universities etc. Reputation acts as a form of quality assessment and gives some type of informal ranking. It reflects the preferences of prospective students taking the Pan-Hellenic entrance exams. In order to participate in these exams, students submit a form stating their departmental preferences. The number of stated preferences and exam performance give an idea of the competitive difficulty of entering a particular department. Statistical data are published and are publicly available.
- The market provides another informal evaluation: companies prefer graduates from particular universities. Since no statistical data for these preferences are available, preferences are more a matter of general feeling.
- Top-level scientists seeking employment also have preferences which constitute another informal measure of university quality. Unfortunately, there is no hard evidence for ranking various departments.

The absence of any formal system or institutionalised external or internal evaluation system goes hand in hand with the absence of impartial, reliable and valid statistical evidence which could serve as the basis for important ministry decisions (allocation of funds). Informal evaluation has very little impact since the numbers of prospective students is higher than final acceptances. Student evaluation has little influence on university performance or on resource allocations.

ATHENS UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS (AUEB)

Introduction

Founded in 1920, AUEB is the second oldest Greek university. It has six undergraduate departments including Management Science and Marketing, Business Administration, Economics, International and European Economic Studies, Informatics, and Statistics. AUEB currently offers five MA and PhD programmes in Economics, Business Administration, Computer Science, and Statistics. Total student enrolment approaches 6 000. Combined teaching staff at all levels is 119, there are some 75 support staff, and an administrative staff of 160 public servants. All teaching staff hold a PhD, mainly from other European countries, although some staff earned PhDs in the United States.

Internal Evaluation

As previously mentioned, no formal, institutionalised external or internal evaluation of universities exists. It would have been interesting, though, to discuss the following formal types of evaluation in the AUEB and some of its departments.

Ad hoc student feedback: In the Department of Management Science and Marketing, an annual series of informal meetings between students and teaching staff helps pinpoint weaknesses in the program, textbooks, and teaching methods. Students raise specific issues and propose specific actions to improve educational quality of education. Although the information is not collected through questionnaires or formal interviews, it nonetheless influences departmental decisions about course changes, teaching assignments, and reading materials.

Teaching load: During the last few years, the AUEB rector has published statistical data on faculty teaching loads and department averages. The results of this evaluation can be used to support administrative decisions on resource allocation to and within departments.

Ad hoc publication of research: Some years ago, in an effort to evaluate the scientific output of the teaching staff, the rector at the time collected and published a special edition listing all scientific publications (*e.g.* in scientific journals, conference proceedings or other publications) for each teaching staff. This was viewed as an informal effort at peer evaluation and may have indirectly affected the reputation of teachers and researchers but little else. Unfortunately, there was no follow-through to this effort.

External Informal Evaluation

Since Greece is a small country, there are relatively few universities offering programmes in each discipline which somewhat simplifies informal external evaluations based largely on general reputation. For example, only four specialised universities offer full Business Administration and Economics programmes and their faculty, programmes, and graduates can be easily ranked by reputation. AUEB is informally reputed to be the best university for economics and business administration. This popularity affects admission standards (*e.g.* grades in the Pan-Hellenic exams) which are the highest among all Economic Universities, academic staff, which is stringently selected and reputedly the best among similar Greek universities. In addition, programmes and pedagogy must be constantly revised and improved to maintain the university's reputation. AUEB implements many new courses or methods before other similar universities adopt them (*e.g.* a forthcoming executive MBA programme and two new Master Degrees in Marketing).

Latest Developments and Concluding Remarks

In sum, no formal internal or external evaluation of university education exists in Greece. However, during the last few months of 1997, some interesting developments took place in this direction. MENRA has announced its determination to fund specific efforts by individual department to introduce their own evaluation systems. At the beginning, this should be strictly a self-evaluation effort including some minimal feedback from peers (*e.g.* the department can use two outside specialists for about two days each) and is still on a voluntary basis. Departments willing to receive funding were required to present a proposal to MNERA by September 1997. MNERA's primary goal, given the politically sensitive issue of university evaluation, is to create a climate for self-evaluation,

and to develop expertise and some self-evaluation mechanisms. The Ministry proposes a series of evaluation indices and other criteria, based mainly on previous recommendations by the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM). This is a much-welcomed initiative that could be the first step towards developing a Pan-Hellenic University evaluation scheme. However, considerable delays occur in ministerial evaluation and approval of research proposals submitted to it.

The issue is sensitive, however any self-evaluation scheme, however worthy, cannot offer much towards the long-term objective, which should be the development an unbiased Pan-Hellenic university evaluation scheme. The system should be administered by some independent body, based on predetermined quantitative and qualitative criteria. Given the political nature of the issue, however, several fundamental questions need to be resolved: Should a formal evaluation be arise from ministerial initiatives? What form of evaluation would best suit the Greek context? How will the needed resources be provided? How can we ensure that the results will be accepted?