



NATIONAL AND KAPODISTRIAN UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS
SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY ♦ FACULTY OF ENGLISH STUDIES
PROGRAMME OF STUDIES REFORM PROJECT (PEDYAS)

PEDYAS PROJECT EVALUATOR FORM

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| <i>Note: Please attach CV in English <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> or Greek <input type="checkbox"/> and check in the appropriate box.</i> | |
| Your comments about the curriculum reform | |
| The rationale and the changes introduced to the curriculum: | <p>The changes introduced to the curriculum and the programme of studies in general are very positive, especially when viewed in terms of the well documented rationale introduced by the curriculum planners of the PEDYAS project and when assessed in relation to the EU recommendations concerning higher education in Europe; that is, the reorganization of programmes of study at institutions of higher learning so as to offer three (3) years of general undergraduate studies in one's chosen area and two (2) years of specialized studies. Knowing what the curriculum of the Faculty of English Studies at the UOA was like before this recent reform, I was particularly interested in the way it has been re-planned and re-designed so as to offer the Greek undergraduate students language and literacy development training, introductory studies in Anglophone (rather than just British or American) literature and culture, in linguistics and language studies, as well as in practical teacher training, and all in four (4) years of study. My Department requires that teacher training is offered after the compulsory four years of undergraduate study, during two additional years of specialization. This is some ways actually disadvantages Portuguese over other EU students. I plan to present the impressive Pre-service EFL Teacher Education and Training programme of Athens to my own Faculty and propose we follow the footsteps of Athens because what they have done in this area is notable and quite inspiring.</p> <p>A comparison between the new and the old curriculum of the Language and Linguistics Dept reveals that there has been a significant reduction of linguistics courses at the Basic Studies Level. Though the rationale for this alteration is well explained, it is somewhat disappointing that a well-developed English linguistics programme that Athens had –unlike many other English Depts in EU universities– was amended and more literature courses are now offered instead. Moreover, at the Basic Studies Level, which includes Introduction to Linguistics I and II, a course in Phonetics and Phonology is also offered as a core course and it makes one wonder how useful such a course is for students who will be teachers of English. Why not a course such as 'Theories of grammar' or 'English language in use'? This aspect of the curriculum may be reconsidered in the future.</p> |

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| <p>How the curriculum compares to those of other similar English Studies Faculties in Europe (excluding the UK):</p> | <p>The curriculum of the Faculty of English at the UOA provides opportunities for interdisciplinary studies, like many other European English Departments or Faculties. Unlike most other English Departments, however – including my own at the University of Lisbon – the curriculum in Athens gives greater emphasis on English linguistics and this I believe is very positive. Students need to become very aware of how the English language operates since most of them, as in the case of English majors in Portugal, will end up teaching English as a foreign language. The linguistics programme at the Faculty of English in the UOA is impressive as it covers all levels of analysis and seems to introduce undergraduate students to various approaches of linguistic analysis.</p> |
| <p>A component of the curriculum that impressed you positively and/or negatively:</p> | <p>The new language programme and specifically the course which deals with a genres based approach to language learning impressed me immensely – positively, that is; not only for the theoretical basis on which it has been built, but also because of its syllabus design and the activities constructed for the realization of the syllabus. This course is unique in many respects, and I feel that it deserves international recognition. I therefore urge the colleagues involved to publish further on their fascinating programme.</p> <p>However, what impressed me even more is the course aiming at the development of students’ academic literacy. The rationale for this course is theoretically informed and its theoretical basis finds fertile ground in the well-planned pedagogic practices which are founded on recent research on literacy approaches to language learning. In fact, I shall discuss the possibility for collaboration with my Faculty because I believe that such a course would be very well placed in our curriculum and it would have a lot to offer to our students.</p> |
| <p>An aspect of the reformed curriculum that might be reinforced or altered in the future:</p> | <p>Perhaps some of the very interesting activities carried out as part of the language studies and the teacher training programme could be introduced to other more ‘theoretical’ courses in which students who are not native speakers of the language need practical, hands-on work to allow them to develop their literacies and critical faculties further.</p> |
| <p>Your comments about the various actions of the PEDYAS project</p> | |
| <p>During my visit to the University of Athens and my virtual visits to the Faculty website, I have become acquainted with the various academic activities that the PEDYAS project has supported and/or initiated and have also been impressed by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) the quality of the speakers it has been able to bring to undergraduates through their participation at the various events that the Faculty organized b) the quantity and quality of educational materials produced in regular print and digitally c) the new publications it is launching (I am referring to the new e-journals, <i>Synthesis</i> and <i>Directions</i>) and the old ones which it has been able to support (I am referring to a-formes, the first-rate creative writing journal of the Faculty) d) the quantity and quality of self-study materials produced and selected list of links for students to use in their effort to improve their linguistic competence and language awareness | |

e) the number of people that the project brought to the Faculty so that they could work as support staff in order to carry out activities that could not possibly have been done by those who do not have the special skills required for each of the activities accomplished.

Your comments regarding the Centre for Self-access Learning

I shall begin by saying that I envy Athens for having managed to recruit the staff which developed it and to secure the grant to create it. This new asset of the Faculty could develop into one of the most important sites for new ways of learning and experiencing knowledge. At the moment, it seems to me that it is being used less as a site of organized autonomous learning and more as a support educational resource room and a space in which students can use computers to work and ‘play’. However, I am sure that future planning will turn it into a facility for education towards the future. This is what the project committee foresees and hopefully they will have the necessary funds to realize their future plans and goals.

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| How it has been organised | Overall, this is a well-organized Self-Access Learning Centre with a computer lab function, serving students’ needs for language and ICT development. Due to the fact that the Centre’s equipment has only recently arrived, the Centre’s various functions are yet in their initial phase of development. There is however a lot of enthusiasm by both students and involved staff and the quantity as well as the quality of developed educational materials and applications is impressive. |
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| Its function | I have remarked on the function of the SAL above but look forward to its additional functions as a virtual campus of English Studies with materials developed by the members on staff and through collaboration with other European universities. |
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Your comments regarding the Faculty portal

A. The quality of the website’s design

Downloading speed: The code selected for the construction of the website is Flash and the first time one enters the website s/he is asked to download Flash in his/her computer. Apart from that, and despite the fact that the website includes a lot of pictures and movement, its downloading speed is satisfactory in dial-up connection, good in ISDN and very fast in ADSL.

Page design: Not falling into any “flashy” trap, the page manages to impress. The colours selected are easy to eye nuances of grey and blue and the menu is self-guiding through panes on the left and on the right side of the page.

Ease of navigation: The website is quite easy to use. There are clearly visible links in supporting pages linking back to the home page. The links are all active.

Use of multimedia: Photos are used only when needed and a very nice animation ‘floats’ the submenus while selected.

Browser compatibility: The format on the page is standard and readable with any browser.

Manner of presentation: The pages are not verbose, no colour exaggeration, no overwhelming photos. The page redirection is smooth and the action is not time-consuming. Explanations are sufficiently short.

Maintenance: Although there is no date on the page informing the reader when the website was last updated, I was informed by the website committee that the information contained is updated: A running banner in the middle of the homepage informs the viewer

for forthcoming events; there are recent announcements on the Greek announcement board; and the Conferences and Events sections include information on recently held and forthcoming events.

Further information: There are helpful headings and subheadings.

2. The quality of the website contents

Efficiency of the website:

The content of the website is comprehensive, straightforward and in simple language. Visitors can find the information they seek in a few clicks. The only “deadblock” I found was in the e-class description (in the English website) where the visitor is linked to a Greek page. I was informed, however, that this is a problem of the asynchronous e-learning platform developed by the University of Athens which is only in Greek.

Information quality:

The quality of information provided is quite impressive. By visiting the website, the viewer can get an overview of the Faculty’s various activities and programmes for both undergraduate and postgraduate studies. Texts are self-explanatory and descriptive and they cover a wide range of topics. It is clear that a lot of effort has been put to preparing this text and to updating it.

Links to special applications:

It seems that the Faculty of English Studies has made good use of ICT services provided by the University of Athens and has successfully incorporated them in its website.

- The e-Secretariat (<http://my-studies.uoa.gr>) enables the students of the Faculty to connect through the Faculty website and do important for them administrative work (register for classes, view their grades etc).
- The e-class (<http://eclass.uoa.gr/modules/auth/listtomeis.php?fc=12>) is an asynchronous e-learning platform developed by the University of Athens to support traditional educational processes of teaching and learning with multi-media content and educational software. The e-class link in the website leads the viewer to a collection of 22 e-classes on a variety of subjects from both literature and linguistics. These include useful documents and supplementary materials for various courses offered by Faculty members.

The portal of the Faculty of English Studies:

Although in its first steps, the portal of the Faculty of English Studies is quite impressive for the quality of information it contains and its high aesthetics. In fact, it is rather rare to come across academic websites which are so well organized and managed by individual Faculties.

3. Overall evaluation

Overall, this is an excellent website with high quality graphics, good navigation mechanisms which make it easy to use, sophisticated manner of information display and detailed presentation of the Faculty’s activities.

Overall assessment of what has been achieved

What has been achieved in the last five years in Athens is truly remarkable and I am truly astonished by the positive results, which have without doubt required so much hard work and commitment first of all by the members of the committee and secondly by the other members of the two Departments of the Faculty who must have contributed to the outcomes of such an amazingly ambitious project.

Date: 15 June, 2008

Name: Emilia dos Santos Ribeiro

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(Evaluator’s signature)