

4.1. General Appreciation

The faculty is well qualified with good teaching and research experience. As is evident from the Curricula Vitae appended in the self-evaluation report, the Department has a strong group of faculty members, many of whom have worked and studied abroad and are active in research in different areas of statistics, both theoretical and applied. The contributions to the applications of stochastic thinking have earned them the recognition on a national and international level. In many areas of statistical thinking, the Athens colleagues are contributing not merely on the application level, but they are also involved in both creating and progressing original theory to meet and master the challenges which are set by the applications.

Another indication of their quality is that some faculty members are *associate editors* in international scientific journals.

The very successful organisation of the International Conference on *Environmetrics and Statistics in the Earth and Space Sciences*, co-organised with the *Bernoulli Society Committee for Probability and Statistics in the Physical Sciences* in August 1999 has been internationally acclaimed. The fact that half a dozen contributed presentations have been given by the staff and doctoral students of the Department of Statistics of AUEB gives further proof of the awareness of the institution for environmental problems. Inspired by this conference, J. Panaretos, A.H. El-Shaarawi and W. Urfer decided to work on an international erosion project within the framework of sustainable development and the *United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification*. This research proposal includes Greece, Italy, Tunisia and Egypt.

While some find it a bit superfluous, the majority of the staff has expressed their consent with the regular questionnaires that have to be filled out every semester. They consider it a useful means of self-evaluation helping them to gain insight into their global performance.

4.2. Recommendations

(1) Further strengthening of the faculty is essential. Any serious expansion of the current activities is impossible with the current staff. Strengthening at the senior research level is necessary.

(2) A member of the academic personnel should be appointed to organize the departmental seminar. For a more specific description, see recommendation 3.2.1.(2). Perhaps, the Distinguished Visiting Professorship can be partly used to keep the necessary momentum in the organization of the regular seminar.

(3) It has to be mentioned that projects with outside companies adversely affect the scientific publication output of some members of the permanent academic staff. To avoid the continuation of this unfortunate situation, the Department should search for an academic who needs to look into possibilities for cooperation between the Department and Industry.

(4) Through a limited refocusing of a small part of their courses, the Department may be able to arouse the interest of the private and the public sector in needed statistical expertise. For example, with a little effort it is possible to design a small specialized package of courses on actuarial sciences, on industrial statistics, on survey methodology. Such small packages could quickly follow changes in the market. If at all possible, the search committee for a future appointment should look for a scholar with feeling for one of these important areas of application.

(5) The evaluation procedure should be kept as part of a continuous culture of assessment. The University is recommended to ponder the possibility of using a similar in-house evaluation for all of its Departments.

(6) The Review Team urges the responsible bodies of the Department and the University to entice the members of staff to exploit all possibilities for sabbatical leave. Also the participation in conferences in Greece and abroad should illustrate to its deserved extent, the excellent quality of the research performed in the Department.