

Network of Erasmus Based European Orthodontic Programmes NEBEOP

Site visit report Postgraduate Programme in Orthodontics at the Department of Orthodontics, School of Dentistry, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece



Site visit report according to Appendix 3 to the Bylaws of NEBEOP

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INTRODUCTION

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the Postgraduate Programme in Orthodontics, School of Dentistry of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens consisted of two expert assessors drawn from the registry of assessors of the Network of Erasmus Based European Orthodontic Programmes (NEBEOP), during the General Assembly Meeting in June 2014 in Warsaw, in accordance with the NEBEOP Bylaws 2009. The external assessors were:

- Professor Anne Marie Kuijpers-Jagtman, DDS, PhD, FDSRCS eng, Department of Orthodontics and Craniofacial Biology, Radboud University Medical Centre, Nijmegen, The Netherlands
- Professor Guy Willems, DDS, PhD, Department of Orthodontics, KU Leuven, Leuven, Belgium

The External Evaluation Committee visited the School of Dentistry, Department of Orthodontics at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (hereafter referred to as NKUA) in Athens, Greece on May 4th, 2015. The programme of the site visit is attached as Appendix I.

The committee was charged by the NEBEOP to evaluate the postgraduate programme of orthodontics at NKUA for consideration of full membership of the Network. The NEBEOP is an independent non-governmental European organization, established in 2008, which has the following objectives:

- to strengthen the level of postgraduate training in orthodontics in Europe
- to advocate NEBEOP guidelines that promote optimal postgraduate training in orthodontics in Europe (European Journal of Orthodontics 2014;36:340-349)
- to exchange information on the educational content of postgraduate programmes
- to establish educational collaborations between orthodontic programmes in Europe (common courses, minimum literature reading lists, e-learning, etc)
- to serve as a knowledge platform to bodies involved in postgraduate training in orthodontics in Europe
- to strive for inclusion within this Network of all institutes providing orthodontic education in Europe
- to seek cooperation with comparable or other orthodontic networks and organizations in other regions and countries.

After a minimum of two years of provisional membership the programme director can decide to apply for full membership. A self-assessment and an external assessment of the educational process, structure, facilities and infrastructure of a postgraduate programme in orthodontics is part of the quality assurance guidelines of NEBEOP and a requirement for full membership of NEBEOP. The rules for application for full membership of NEBEOP are stated in the NEBEOP Bylaws, section II.4. This is the first site visit of the orthodontic postgraduate programme at NKUA.

This report contains the observations of the External Evaluation Committee based on:

- the information in the Self-Assessment report of the orthodontic programme directors Professor Margarita Makou and Assoc. Prof. Demetrios Halazonetis at NKUA (March 4th, 2015)
- the on-site visit (May 4th, 2015)
- discussions with the programme directors, eight residents, three members of the faculty and five clinical instructors
- a meeting with the Dean Professor K. Karagianni and the Director of Postgraduate Studies Professor G. Eliades.

The external assessors reviewed the following documents before the visit:

- NKUA Department of Orthodontics Self-Assessment Guide for Evaluation of a Postgraduate Programme in Orthodontics and appendices

- External Evaluation Report of NKUA School of Dentistry by the Hellenic Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (HQAA), January 2010
- NEBEOP Site Visit Guide for Evaluation of a Postgraduate Programme in Orthodontics
- NEBEOP Bylaws

This site visit report embodies a review of the quality of the orthodontic postgraduate programme at NKUA. It serves as the basis for the decision for admission for full membership of NEBEOP. It has to be remembered that NEBEOP is not an accreditation body. Its primary aim is maintaining and improving the quality of advanced education in orthodontics in Europe. Recommendations and suggestions that are offered in this report should be seen within this background.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The School of Dentistry at NKUA functions as an independent organization. The School is administratively completely separate from the nearby School of Medicine. However, both of them do undertake common research activities to their own benefit.

The School of Dentistry organizes 14 postgraduate programmes in different dental disciplines as well as a PhD programme in Dentistry. Each year 10 to 15 PhD theses from the School of Dentistry are defended in public.

There are two postgraduate orthodontic programmes in Greece, one in Athens and one in Thessaloniki. The postgraduate programme at NKUA was initiated in 1994. It is a structured education programme that is partly based on a *truncus communis* with the other dental postgraduate programmes of the School of Dentistry apart from other discipline-specific courses and seminars. The postgraduate programme, after fulfillment of the criteria, leads to a 'Postgraduate Specialty Diploma', which is equivalent to a Master's Degree. So far, 31 orthodontists graduated from the postgraduate programme in orthodontics at NKUA.

The head of department of Orthodontics is Professor Makou, who will retire in September 2015. At present the programme director's responsibility is jointly shared by Professor Makou and Assoc. Professor Dr. Halazonetis. Dr. Halazonetis is expected to take over the responsibilities of head of department of orthodontics as well as those of programme director, tasks in which he is already actively involved.

The postgraduate programme in orthodontics displays many collaborations with other disciplines in the School of Dentistry on top of long standing collaborations with outside hospitals, especially for treatment of cleft lip and palate patients and orthognathic surgery cases.

Enrollment of postgraduate students is based on an extensive selection procedure. At least 25 to 35 students apply for the postgraduate programme in orthodontics at NKUA for each new class. Selection of residents is based on the student's final grades of their dental degree, the grade obtained for the undergraduate course in orthodontics, and their curriculum vitae. Students also have to take a theoretical written exam to test scientific and clinical thinking and as well as proficiency in English. From the preliminary ranking based on these results, the top 8 students are selected for an interview, complemented with evaluation of their manual skills. Eventually, 4 candidates are selected based on the outcome of the second stage evaluation.

STANDARD 1 – CURRICULUM AND PROGRAMME DURATION

The duration of the postgraduate programme in orthodontics is 3 years, representing a total of 180 ECTS. Each new class starts September 1st and consists of a total of 4 students. Every third year, there is no intake of new students, which is primarily based on organizational aspects.

The A-courses of the Erasmus Programme are taught especially within the core programme which constitutes a *truncus communis* for all 14 postgraduate programmes in the Dental School (Community Dentistry, Oral Biology, Biomaterials, Orthodontics, Paediatric Dentistry, Operative Dentistry, Periodontics, Endodontics, Prosthodontics, Orofacial Pain, Oral Pathology, Diagnostics and Oral Radiology, Dentoalveolar Surgery, and Hospital Dentistry). These courses heavily rely on the traditional lecture format. Specific orthodontic topics are covered in courses and seminars by faculty and staff within the orthodontic department. The latter seminars seem to utilize a more student centered learning approach.

In Appendix A of the Self-Assessment, page 21-22, the overall aim of all postgraduate programmes in the Dental School has been given. This mission statement is a general statement, not particularly related to orthodontics. The External Evaluation Committee suggests developing a mission statement that is custom tailored for the postgraduate programme in orthodontics. All faculty members and clinical instructors should preferably be involved in this beneficial exercise.

In this context it was not completely clear from the discussions whether “goals and objectives” as well as “competency levels” are described for the different courses and provided to the postgraduates. The External Evaluation Committee would like to suggest that this matter be given consideration, seen its importance in relation to students’ expectations, evaluations and quality control issues.

STANDARD 2 – CLINICAL TRAINING

The External Evaluation Committee observed that the introduction to the clinical training is well taken care of by an extensive preclinical training involving many wire bending exercises, including two complete Tweed/Merrifield treatments on typodont, one of which is a Class III surgical alignment case and the other being a Class II division 1 four premolar extraction case.

Despite the economic situation in Greece, there is no shortage of patients. On the contrary, patients like to undergo orthodontic treatment in the Dental School because rates are lower compared to private practice. Therefore residents are able to treat a sufficient number of patients and their case load shows a large variety of cases, including multidisciplinary cases such as cleft lip and palate patients and orthognatic surgery cases. All treatments are supervised by an orthodontic specialist at an average ratio of one teacher to four postgraduates. Additionally a faculty member is consulted as well.

Part of clinical training is also based on the existing collaboration with other dental disciplines and the undergraduate curriculum in dentistry. The residents are responsible for the orthodontic first consultations, which are organized at the undergraduate clinic for orthodontics where they instruct dental students in diagnostic procedures and guide them as far as interceptive orthodontic treatment is concerned employing simple removable appliances. The residents furthermore support their colleagues from the paedodontic department with preventive and interceptive treatment procedures in young children seen at the paedodontic consultation.

As far as multidisciplinary treatment planning of surgical cases is concerned, this is organized at the orthodontic postgraduate clinic in the presence of the oral surgeon, one of the faculty members and the resident who is treating the patient. Once the treatment plan is decided upon, the resident will then introduce the patient and the treatment plan, as discussed with the faculty member and the oral surgeon, to the treatment planning sessions where this can be further discussed among the total group of residents. The other multidisciplinary cases are discussed during the same sessions. Unfortunately there are no centralized cleft services in Greece and hence there is no Cleft Lip and Palate Centre in the university hospital, but this is beyond the control of the orthodontic department.

It was noticed that orthodontic residents have the opportunity to attend the surgical maxillofacial procedures in the operating room.

STANDARD 3 – RESEARCH

The External Evaluation Committee witnessed a positive and stimulating atmosphere towards research among the teaching staff and the residents. Residents work hard, in the evenings and also during the weekend, in order to finish the research of their master thesis. They conveyed their desire to have more time available for research during working hours. To make their research time more efficient it could be considered to define the residents' research topics earlier in the first year in order to progress to the next phases of the research project more quickly.

The research infrastructure present in the School of Dentistry is quite impressive, certainly for dental biomaterials and, corresponding to information provided by the programme directors, also for oral biology. Good collaboration also exists with the School of Medicine's laboratories. The School of Dentistry is participating in some European Union Research programmes. There is no clear overall research strategy for the School of Dentistry. Projects are conducted on topics which depend on individual researchers' involvements and interests. The External Evaluation Committee can only support the Dean's wish to develop a more structured research plan for the entire dental school and suggest to work on that matter.

There are also no structured research themes in the orthodontic department, although a basic structure could be identified based on the interest of the research supervisors. Nevertheless, students can suggest their own research topic and faculty members have been trying hard to provide for the correct research guidance. There certainly is enough competent research supervision available.

Furthermore there are no structured research seminars where students present their research to each other. It is suggested to have regular research progress discussions in the department, in which all residents and as many faculty possible participate.

STANDARD 4 – EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

The External Evaluation Commission found that a structured assessment during the postgraduate programme and a final examination at the end is present. Furthermore, residents have to pass a national accreditation exam to obtain recognition as orthodontic specialist in Greece.

All theoretical courses have a written examination at the end. Clinical evaluation is provided on a daily basis, as is direct feedback by all clinical instructors. In this way the residents are closely followed in their progress. At the end of each semester, an overall evaluation is organized and

coordinated by the programme director. After discussion among teachers, the programme director provides written personal feedback to the students and agrees with each of the students personally on the goals that are set for the next semester.

The External Evaluation Committee would advise the programme director to provide written information at the start of the programme on content, aims and objectives of all courses, and all assessment procedures during the 3-year programme for the benefit of clarity to the students as well as quality control (see Standard 7).

STANDARD 5 – PROGRAMME DIRECTOR AND TEACHING STAFF

The programme directors Professor Makou and Assoc. Prof. Halazonetis feel very responsible for the programme. There are 3 additional fulltime faculty members and 10 volunteering clinical instructors.

The faculty members are well-educated and have a variety of backgrounds. Dr. Iosif Sifakakis is more research oriented while Dr. Elias Bitsanis and Dr. Apostolis Tsolakis have their interests in clinical orthodontics. All of them teach undergraduates and postgraduates, and supervise research projects of the postgraduates.

The programme relies heavily on volunteering clinical instructors to implement its curriculum. The following orthodontists are attached to the programme: Dr. Gerassimos Angelopoulos, Dr. George Damanakis, Dr. Marina Karamolegkou, Dr. Despina Koletsi, Dr. Dimitrios Konstantonis, Dr. Maria Nasika, Dr. Pinelopi-Kleio Palaska, Dr. Aliko Rontogianni, Dr. Mattheos Sanoudos, and Dr. Spyridon Yiagtzis. The clinical instructors are working unpaid, spending lots of hours in the department on clinical teaching and research. They seem to be highly motivated by the good working atmosphere in the department created by Professor Makou and Assoc. Prof. Halazonetis. They want to give something in return to the school, and they also appreciate the contact with other colleagues and the residents.

The clinical instructors follow different treatment philosophies to the benefit of the residents being exposed to different treatment techniques. On the other hand this could create uncertainty for the postgraduates but this has been overcome by strictly assigning all patients to a specific day and therefore the supervisor on duty will always be the same. The faculty members, who are fulltime, are responsible for the continuity of the patient treatment and in the end it is the head of department who makes the final decisions if there is a conflict about patient treatment.

The committee was impressed by the motivation and dedication of all teachers involved in the postgraduate programme.

Professional development financed by the department is limited as this is not financially feasible. Nevertheless the School gives days off for professional development and the teaching staff attend courses and meetings absorbing the costs themselves.

The teaching staff expresses their desire for more collaboration between the two Greek universities with a postgraduate programme and also with other programmes within the EU. The committee suggests considering an exchange of teachers and residents and exploring the possibilities for financing short term exchange visits within the new Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.

STANDARD 6 – FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

From our meetings with the Dean, programme directors and teaching staff, it was clear that the economic crisis situation in Greece heavily affects the governmental and private sector. The budget of the School of Dentistry (including salaries) has been drastically cut over recent years and there are no financial resources to implement changes. Due to the economic crisis the number of patients that comes for treatment to the School of Dentistry has increased enormously as treatment is cheaper than in private practice. The orthodontic department is relatively better off than other departments as 50% of their patient income goes to the department.

Residents do not hold a paid position but can apply for a scholarship. Most of the present residents have a scholarship. The residents are provided with all basic facilities, office space and some core materials. They report that they have to buy a camera, laptop, and 6 plier sets for patient treatment themselves. The residents use their own laptop during patient treatment and store some patient data on this computer.

The postgraduate clinic was renovated in recent years and consists of two connected parts with space in between for secretarial computers, instrumentation and sterilization facilities. In both clinic spaces there are 4 dental chairs. The clinic is modern and well-equipped. The former postgraduate clinic with 6 dental chairs in the annex building has been converted to the undergraduate orthodontic clinic.

The department has its own custom-made patient management system that runs on a server of the orthodontic department. The radiographs are stored on the central server of the School of Dentistry and the residents upload the radiographs as well as the intra- and extra-oral pictures manually into the ortho program. The students take impressions, make plaster casts, scan the models and store the digital models on the ortho server. Furthermore there is a patient management system for the School of Dentistry in which the patients are registered only because the finances are handled through this system. These systems are not linked to each other. There is an appointment system in the custom-made ortho program, but this is not used. The students make their own appointments on paper or on their own laptop. No one besides the resident himself knows his appointment schedules. Patient's notes are made in paper files and the residents feed in all paper notes in the ortho programme after clinic hours.

The External Evaluation Committee is concerned about storage of patient data on private computers because of privacy legislation, but also because of the fact that no one has access to this data, i.e. to patient appointments in case of emergency. The department would benefit from modernization of the IT infra-structure. The External Evaluation Committee realizes that this is an effort that cannot be undertaken by the orthodontic department alone but should be part of an improved IT structure for the entire School of Dentistry.

The support staff allocated to chair assistance, instrument handling and sterilization and secretarial tasks is minimal. Residents complain about long working days due to administrative work, which is confirmed by the teaching staff. It could be investigated whether more nurses and secretarial staff could be employed from the budget of the orthodontic department by increasing the number of patients. By having more support staff the clinic would run more efficiently and more patients could be treated. In this way additional support staff would be self-financing.

STANDARD 7 – QUALITY ASSURANCE

There is a national accreditation body the Hellenic Quality Assurance & Accreditation Agency for higher education in Greece. The School of Dentistry has been evaluated for the first time in 2010. This evaluation included a superficial evaluation of all postgraduate programmes of the school and was not specific for the orthodontic programme.

The courses are evaluated by the students at the end of each semester through a written form. The programme as a whole is evaluated by the staff at the end of each academic year and changes as well as updates are implemented. The evaluation of the educational quality of the programme should be designed to promote achievement of the programme goals and objectives. Therefore the External Evaluation Committee recommends to clearly describe the programme aims and objectives as well as the competencies that should be reached.

The department of orthodontics has recently implemented a system for systematic review of patient satisfaction. The first round will be run in 2015.

Quality of clinical treatment has been evaluated as part of a research project by applying the ABO criteria to finished cases of the residents and comparing the outcome with outside practices. The External Evaluation Committee recommends developing an ongoing systematic process to evaluate the treatment provided by the department. One way to do so could be to utilize the quality assessment system of EFOSA (European Federation of Orthodontic Specialists Associations) named ESAS (EFOSA's Self Assessment System quality development in orthodontics). The Hellenic Professional Union of Orthodontists is a member of EFOSA and therefore the system can be used for free. For further information see <http://www.efosa.eu/content/qualitysystem.asp>

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The External Evaluation Committee concludes that the postgraduate programme in orthodontics of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens complies with the standards set forth by NEBEOP and recommends the programme for full membership of NEBEOP.

The External Evaluation Committee has the following recommendations and suggestions:

- It is recommended to develop a mission statement that is custom tailored for the postgraduate programme in orthodontics.
- It is suggested to make research time for postgraduates more efficient by defining the students' research topics earlier in the first year in order to progress quicker to the next phases of the research project. A way to do so would be to define and structure the research lines of the department into a few tracks. Furthermore it is suggested to have research progress discussions in which all residents, and as many faculty as possible, participate.
- It is recommended to describe programme aims and objectives as well as the competencies that should be reached and to systematically evaluate the programme in relation to these criteria. Furthermore it is advised to provide this information in written form to the postgraduates at the start of the programme.
- It is suggested to enhance the collaboration with the other Greek programme in orthodontics and to promote short term exchange visits of teachers and residents within the European Union. Possibilities for financing of exchange visits could be explored within the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.
- The IT infrastructure should be improved to increase the efficiency in the clinic and to protect patients' privacy rights.
- It should be investigated if more nurses and secretarial staff could be employed from the budget of the orthodontic department by increasing the number of patients. By having more support staff the clinic would run more efficiently and more patients could be treated. In this way additional support staff would be self-financing.
- The committee recommends developing an ongoing systematic process to evaluate the treatment provided by the department and to review if the quality assessment system of EFOSA named ESAS (EFOSA's Self Assessment System quality development in orthodontics) could be utilized to this aim.

Appendix I Site visit schedule May 3-5, 2015

Sunday, 3rd of May 3, 2015

Prof. Anne Marie Kuijpers-Jagtman and Prof. Guy Willems meet in the afternoon in the Hilton Athens hotel in preparation of the site visit.

Pick-up at the hotel for evening dinner with Assoc. Prof. Demetrios Halazonetis

Monday, 4th of May, 2015

08:45 Pick-up at hotel by Assoc. Prof. Halazonetis

All meetings will take place at the Seminar Room, 4th Floor, Old Building, School of Dentistry.

09:00-10:00 Meeting with Programme Directors, Prof. Makou and Assoc. Prof. Halazonetis

10:00-11:15 Meeting with postgraduates

class 2013-2016: Anna Iliadi, Afroditi Kouli, Eleni Parcha, Panagiotis Prevezanos

class 2012-2015: Alina Cocos, Kostas Karamesinis, Alexis Katsadouris, Lydia Schoretsaniti

11:15-12:00 Meeting with faculty members: Elias Bitsanis, Iosif Sifakakis, Apostolis Tsolakis

12:15-12:45 Meeting with Professor G. Eliades, Director of Postgraduate Studies and tour of the research facilities in the biomaterials lab

12: 45-13:15 Meeting with the Dean of the Dental School Prof. K. Karagianni

13:30-14:00 Lunch break

14:00-14:45 Meeting with five of the clinical instructors (voluntary teaching staff)

14:45-15:00 Tour of the department and clinical facilities

15:00-17:00 Time for final deliberations of the assessors

17:00-17:45 Concluding meeting with Programme Directors to finalize the site visit

18:00 Transfer to the hotel.

20:15 Pick-up at the hotel for dinner with Prof. Makou, Assoc. Prof. Halazonetis, Dr. Iosif Sifakakis, Dr. Makou

Tuesday, 5th of May, 2015

Prof. Anne Marie Kuijpers-Jagtman and Prof. Guy Willems meet in the morning in the Hilton Athens hotel in preparation of the site visit report.