

Statistical Education in Greece: 15 Years of a Department of Statistics

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The Department of Statistics of the Athens University of Economics and Business (AUEB) was established in 1989, when the Athens School of Economics and Business was renamed as the Athens University of Economics and Business. Until then, Statistics was part of the Department of Statistics and Informatics.

In the 15 years that have passed since its establishment the Department has produced many innovations not only with regard to Statistics in Greece, but also worldwide. Its faculty has grown from 7 to 20 today. A main characteristic of the faculty is that a large proportion of it (9 out of 20 members) are women.

The undergraduate program that was adopted in 1989 was the result of studying relevant information from more than a 150 Statistics programs worldwide. An interesting feature was that in 1994 the ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) was adopted making the Department the first one in Greece that implemented the system to its full extent.

Immediately after its establishment, the Department was linked through the Erasmus scheme with some of the best Departments of Statistics or Mathematics of other European Universities. Among them were the ones of the University College London, the University of Sheffield, the University of Newcastle, the University of Dortmund, the University of Munich, the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, the University of Lund, the University of Dublin Trinity College, the Universitat Wien, the Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration, the Universite de Montpellier 2, the University of Tampere etc.

In 1995, a formal graduate program awarding M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees was established. An innovative feature of this program was that it was delivered in English. Furthermore, all students at the M.Sc. level were required to write a thesis, which had to be sent for evaluation abroad. The thesis was written in English for this purpose. M.Sc. theses were sent to one external reviewer. Ph.D. theses were sent to at least two reviewers abroad. The list of the people who acted as referees includes: Sir David Cox, C.R. Rao, David Bartholomew, N. Balakrishnan, Soren Asmussen, L. Devroye, Isabel Fraga Alves, Chris Chatfield, Francis X. Diebold, Stephen E. Fienberg, Nick Fieller, D.R. Grey, Joe Gani, Edward I. George, Clive W.J. Granger, H.U. Gerber, J. Haslett, Ildar A. Ibragimov, John Hsieh, R.V. Hogg, Kenneth Hill, Norman L. Johnson, Vladimir Kalashnikov, S.K. Katti, Enrique del Castillo, Stephen R. Clarke, Peter Congdon, Herman K. van Dijk, Guadalupe Gomez, S. Johansen, Benjamin Kedem, A.W. Kemp, Samuel Kotz, Stephen Lagakos, Johannes Ledolter, Bruce G. Lindsay, G. Markoulides, Peter McCullagh, A. O'Hagan, Keith Ord, Peter Mueller, J.J. McCutcheon, D.C. Montgomery, Cristine Muller, Malcolm Pemberton, J. Pollard, Christian P. Robert, G. Roberts, Andrea Rotnitzky, G. Roussas, B.K.P.

Scaife, T. Shorrocks, David Stephens, Jef Teugels, D.M. Titterington, Michael S. Triantafyllou, C. Tsokos, Antony Unwin, Wolfgang Urfer, Guadalupe Gomez, Jose Villasenor, William H. Woodall, Edward C. Waymire, Shelemyahu Zacks.

Later, in 1999, a professional graduate degree was established to serve the needs of people who were already in the job market and wanted to improve and update their knowledge on modern methods in Statistics.

So far, 755 students have graduated from the undergraduate program, 97 from the M.Sc. program, 43 from the Part-Time professional graduate program and 5 from the Ph.D. program.

Another interesting feature of the graduate program is that a distinguished visiting professors series was established as part of it. The distinguished visiting professors gave a short course on a subject of their expertise. People who taught in this series were: Donald Rubin, (2002), David Freedman (2001), David J. Bartholomew (2000), C.R.Rao, (1999), Samuel Kotz (1999), Sir D.R.Cox (1998), Jef Teugels (1998), Leslie Kish (1997).

A number of distinguished scientists were awarded honorary doctorate degrees from the Department. These were: Boris Gnedenko (1993), Leslie Kish (1997), Sir David Cox (1998), C.R. Rao (1999).

In 2003, a volume in celebration of the 13 years of the existence of the Department in honour of two retired Professors (C. Kevork and P. Tzortzopoulos) entitled *Stochastic Musings: Perspective from the Pioneers of the Late 20th Century*, was published by Erlbaum. In this volume people connected with the Department one way or the other have kindly contributed papers. These were Vic Barnett, David Bartholomew, David R. Cox, Bradley Efron, Katharina Emrich, David Freedman, Joe Gani, Norman L. Johnson, Dimitris Karlis, Leslie Kish, Samuel Kotz, Irini Moustaki, Saralees Nadarajah, John Panaretos, Stelios Psarakis, Bhaskara M. Rao, Radhakrishna C. Rao, Damodar N. Shanbhag, Jef Teugels, Zoi Tsourti, Wolfgang Urfer, Evdokia Xekalaki and Vladimir M. Zolotarev.

It should be mentioned that the Department was the first one in Greece to introduce a course on Bayesian Statistics immediately after its establishment in 1989. This course has been developed and offered to the undergraduate students since then.

An Institute devoted to Statistics (Institute of Statistical Documentation Research and Analysis) was established in 1995 and it is closely related to the Department of Statistics. The Institute has contacted a number of studies that are available on the web (<http://stat-athens.aueb.gr/istaer/instituteen.html>)

In the year 2000 the Department underwent an external evaluation. Members of the evaluation team were C.R. Rao (chairman), J. Teugels, P. Florides and W. Urfer. The report of the external examiners is available on the web site of the Department (<http://stat-athens.aueb.gr/istaer/evaluation/extreview0601.html>).

It is hoped that the Department will continue thriving and offer its services to the country and to the discipline.