

Prof. Sterling: I'll try and do that from memory. My particular panel met 5 times formally and did a very great deal of work outside that. So there were 5 days spent in 4 more committee sessions, agreeing on policy, looking at results. I think overall the committee members spent probably about 20 man-days each, working on the assessment. Now we know that because we had to claim for it. They did actually pay panel members 75 pounds a day. I might say not a lot of money. So about 20 days for each panel member. So very substantial cost when you add it up across the whole sector of 72 units of assessment.

The method that we used on the panel, I was involved in first of all defining the data which we wished to collect and then to check of course against whether that data was available. Obvious things were on the forms in terms of research money per member of staff, one had the number of active staff, one had the research money. So computing the ratio was easy. There were other ratios that we computed all based on the standard data that every institution had to return.

So, there were a great deal of effort in order to make sure that that return was accurate. In fact there were sanctions proposed against any unit of assessment that was incorrectly returned. So I think people in the main took it very seriously. And there were audits. So if you didn't believe the return, that an institution that you thought was weak suddenly came out looking extremely high up in the order, you would actually check the data. And one or two institutions were visited. And with the view to checking whether the publications were real, whether the money was indeed coming from outside and wasn't manipulated, whether the staff were indeed in post, and also some quite detailed checking. I suspect that one was looking at one's colleagues and said well how would you bend it if you were in their position, and checking for that sort of situation.

I don't think there were any sanctions taken in the end. I didn't hear about it, certainly not in engineering.

Prof. Panaretos: Were there any discrepancies found?

Prof. Sterling: No. There were some discrepancies but of a serious nature. There were clearly errors, where somebody put an extra note at the end. No, I think data presentation was OK. And universities did write in, after the submission date, if they had found an error

themselves. This was then circulated to the entire panel. So people were really quite nervous about being found out for misrepresenting the information.

But to go on to your main question on how we did go about it. Well if you defined the data, you then have to define how you would weigh the various ratios that you produced. How important was research grants and contract income in engineering relative to producing a book, relative to producing an ordinary paper, and so on. How were you to combine those and come up with a single number for that unit of assessment.

Now that process was perhaps the most difficult. It was relatively easy for us to get agreement on the research plans, that is the statements made, relatively easy to get agreement on the journals of importance, which ones at the top which ones at the bottom, and very difficult to get the combinations of those things. What weight should go for books published, what weight should go for papers and money earned, and so on. And that was where the major debate was. And of course one was watching output as well to a certain extent.

You run the spreadsheet with a certain set of weights and then you look at the outset and you look at the names of the institutions and you say, oh, I don't believe that. I don't like the outset coming out, I must of got something wrong. Now, one shouldn't really do that but in practice you do a credibility test on the output based on the panel's personal knowledge of those institutions. And it was that process that took the biggest time. But we were supported in that the panel members did not have to do it. The Funding Council provided consultants to do the computations. And the panel would say, we would like the following computations done and the spreadsheets produced. And in the next meeting we would come back and we could then work from there.

The final stage was looking at the rankings with the agreed weights and say does it then satisfy those quality criteria that I have put up on the transparency. That are for international excellence in all the subgroups within the use of assessment. That is, some institutions then moved as a result of that. That they might have had only one or two people in that unit of assessment and you said well really is this an internationally known group, if it is only one or two people? It could be, but you ask the question and if it doesn't satisfy that you move it down.

Prof. Panaretos: Do you plan to make these criteria available to your colleagues or do you want to use them for next time?

Prof. Sterling: I must confess I would like it to be may be available. I think particularly the journal ranking. It is not on legally. You think what would happen. You would have all the publishers suing you.

Prof. Hanham: I will just say a few things. First of all the key difference between this exercise in 1992 and the previous ones in 1986 and 1989 was that all institutions of higher education could enter the contest. And so that most of the polytechnics did and a considerable number of colleges of higher education. So that there was a very long list. And the panels had a basic difficulty, because in many of the institutions that had not been involved in this exercise before there were in effect very small groups of researchers. In many cases single individuals were put in.

In a surprisingly large number of cases those single individuals were given a ranking of one. That is, they were not doing significant research. And the intent I think was actually to warn institutions that they shouldn't do that sort of silly thing again. Put in somebody who was locally thought to be good, but really had no external reputation.

But what you got built into the exercise was therefore part of an educational process for a very large number of institutions. I cannot remember how many eventually were put in, but there was quite a large number. About 160. You see, that's a large number of institutions. And so that the process of sorting out rankings was not just concentrating on the people at the top, it involved making judgement right down the scale and transmitting messages.

Now in so far as the panels knew what the context was in which they were transmitting the messages and how it would be received it has been quite easy. There have been areas which have been really quite well policed. For instance the Economic and Social Research Council has lists of institutions approved for teaching Master's degrees and taking PhD students and so on. And that sort of system, that is the Central Research Council, is already licensing institutions as it were, to receive students that get funding.

That was one of the initial inputs into this process. So that in the social sciences there were many more constraints right at the

beginning about how the panels functioned, than was the case elsewhere.

The different research councils were represented on the panels. In the case of the humanities there wasn't a research council and so they didn't have such a representation. That made a difference. And they clearly in the humanities are going to need such a representation next time.

But it is a big, complicated exercise, much bigger than what we have been doing before and intended to send messages from top to bottom.

Prof. Sterling: Gentlemen, there is one more point I should draw your attention to in relation to changes that might come about in the next exercise. I have been talking in terms of performance per capita, per active academic staff. And this research exercise did just that. It looked at publications per member of staff. You might say that that is perfectly fair as a normalising base.

And can you think about the succession of research exercises that we've had, that effectively vary the amount of research money that any individual member of academic staff has available.

So you'll have noticed in the performance indicators terms of reference where it is talking about value for money. And that is a reference to looking at the inputs to that process as well as the output. So that if an institution has received a very large amount of research money, you would expect a commensurate good performance on the research output. If an institutions has only had a small amount of research money available, you might not expect the same level of output.

The present exercise assumes a parity of input in research. It does not weigh in any way the amount of research money that has been available to that institution. And that as we get a more differentiated system is something that will have to be addressed. How you weigh that, how you take an account of it, that is all out for grabs. But it surely must be taken into consideration.

Prof. Panaretos: I understand why you would not make available the whole process and the weights and the ranking and all the rest of it. I want to ask you what is the feeling of faculty, of the staff, in England within a particular discipline, say engineering. Do they have an idea, more or less, on what the criteria were, what the weights were? If the

common wisdom say that this journal is OK? Or a publication in a scientific journal will get a weight of 5 while a publication in refereed proceedings will get a weight of 2? Or they don't have the slightest idea of how you did it.

Prof. Sterling: I think being academics we're leaky. That's over a period of time information does leak out from panel members as to how it was done, but not in a formal sense, because of all that was said. I mean we were all sworn to very strict secrecy while the process was going on. We are not allowed to release papers even now. But I think, if most universities would try to find out those criteria that were used, they could but informally. I think that is the best one could do.

Prof. Panaretos: In this way the staff feel I suppose secure that the operation is working properly.

Prof. Sterling: Yes, I personally favour more openness in it, but I appreciate the Funding Councils' legal difficulties.

Prof. Christou: Let me ask how those decisions have been received by the universities, how well they have been received.

Prof. Sterling: I think, as Dr Page mentioned yesterday, in the main they are accepted as being valid assessments. There are always exceptions to that. Every institution can say, well I believe that that is wrong, that a particular assessment is wrong. But they will be in the minority. The process has become much more sophisticated than it was when it first started in 1986.

Prof. Hanham: Could I just say this one criterion that has not been mentioned and that some panels used and that was size. Not all
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Prof. Tsaoussis: It seems to me from all the presentations here that one can draw a conclusion which, for our case, is important. You can't take performance indicators or any other systems at face value. You must take into account

- a) the framework within which this system has developed or the national-legal framework and the kind of tradition etc.

- b) On the other hand you must also take into consideration the particular philosophy of education, higher education, in each country.

Which means that in the end you cannot come out with an international sort of, say, set of indicators and performance assessments, no matter what. The important becomes crucial in the context of the European Common Market, because a number of issues are related with the professional qualifications of people, graduating from the universities and having to work within one unified market. And therefore I would like to have a comment from your point of view.

To what extent this kind of national diversification becomes in the not-very-long-run a liability in terms of the free movement of professionals within the wider European context, if it does not lead to a more or less unified at a level of particular criteria, for a quality assessment to allow for comparability.

Prof. Sterling: It is a very tricky area. Let me illustrate it by just the modularity that has been introduced into the UK at the moment, rather than the traditional three or four year degrees that run through from start to finish. The performance indicators that relate to that, in terms of wastage rate for example, if a student registers for a course and drops out, then you might, if it was just going through start to finish, that that was a reasonably accurate indication of drop-out rate, of wastage rate.

If you introduce modularity, which is the way in which we are going, what do you mean by a drop-out rate, when somebody fails to complete a module? They may be completing other modules, they may have substituted a module for that one, and go on to get a perfectly good degree.

So when you then start interchanging those on a European base the whole process gets even more complicated. So I don't know how we are going to cope with that. There is already professional interchangeability of professional education, as you know, engineering qualifications are recognised across Europe. And there are pressures both ways. The Germans would say the British system is rather accelerated for producing engineers compared with our own system. And they always have reservations about the quality of the British chart of engineering. Is it the same level as the German degree? You can argue that either way.

I think if you open that out to any subject areas it is almost impossible.

Dr Page: I would just comment on the wastage rate. An alternative to management statistic rather than performance indicator, because I hate the word, can be the ratio of the time that it has taken a student to get the degree qualification to the optimum time. So that in the British system we expect a student to complete in 3 years, 9 terms. If there has been some drop-out of the module, it may well have taken 10 terms or 11 terms and will be able to average that over the input class.

So, I think there are some mechanisms which can be used to give a meaningful figure.

Referring to the interchangeability of professional qualifications I think it is quite right that over time through the countries of the Community we will move towards greater uniformity. But I believe that the inertia in the system is so great, it will not be rapid, it cannot be rapid. And I would argue that it should not be rapid.

Prof. Mastroiannis: Returning to the issue of external examiners I would like to have some more information about the functioning of these external examiners. For example what do they examine, how they do it. And who sends them in, do the universities call someone specifically or do they call an examiner from a body of examiners. I would like to have some more details on this.

Dr Page: Right. The external examiners are appointed by the university, normally formally by the Senate of the university, on the nomination of the departmental board. And they suggest the name of perhaps two external examiners, they tell you what position they hold, they are professor in such and such a university. They are then appointed.

When the examination papers are first written, in my university those papers are submitted to the external examiners for their comments. At that stage the external examiner has the ability to offer comments and to insist upon changes in the examination papers. Next, the examinations are sacked, the examination papers are marked internally, they can then vary with all the papers, or a representative set of the papers, are sent to the external examiner who can then

form a view on the standard of marking that has been adopted. They will moderate any of the marks that the external examiner thinks fit.

The full set of marks of all the examinees will then be presented to an examining board of which both internal and external examiners are present. And that board will then classify the candidates in the first class, 2.1, 2.2, 3rd, and so on. The external examiners will be able to say quite definitely "I am not prepared to agree to that candidate getting that class". And if the internal examiners insist, the external examiner, I trust, would mention in his report to me, and in my book the external examiner has the last word.

So that is what we ask external examiners to do. It is quite a substantial amount of work. And again we insist that no external examiner should have more than one other external examinership for the first degree at the same time.

We also insist, in fact we require, we can't quite insist in certain disciplines, that an external examiner, after having served one term three years, should not return within a certain period.

But we do recognise there are some very specialised disciplines for example meteorology, we have the largest department of meteorology in Britain there are hardly any others, so if you are not very careful, they've all got to go around and become external examiners to each other. There is no other way of doing it.

So that is what we ask an external examiner to do. It is how we appoint them.

Prof. Vergados: Coming back to the raw materials of the grading, let us say of the journals or whatever it is, I can see why they cannot be made published because sometimes it could be embarrassing to somebody. But now let's come to the legal aspects. Suppose that you don't say good or bad that you just, relatively, say that journal A is in your judgement, you underline judgement, better than B, B better than C, and so on. Will that cause any legal problems, because in Greece you know if we adopt a procedure like that and we cannot make public what criteria we used and how we used them, we are going to face a great turmoil. So it is very important to know that we are really protected from both problems that I mentioned.

Prof. Hanham: Could I just say something about that as somebody who used to handle law cases of this type.

The basic problem is that the various journals in question will advertise that their journals are better than somebody else's journal in order to boost their circulation, given that journals that are mostly published by commercial publishers. It is extremely difficult to handle that sort of thing, because you get dragged into litigation as a party. And a lot of what we are talking about is how to avoid spending all your life in law courts. It is a waste of time and money. I mean the costs can be horrendous in that sort of situation and people don't wish to get into it until the law is clear. If in fact the law could be clarified, that it would make it so that it could be done easily, that could be fine. But there is no lawyer anywhere who wants to clarify the law.

Prof. Panaretos: I think we have moved smoothly to the last session of the meeting and we have already started the general discussion and I suppose I don't have to announce that. Since we are in that session I would like to ask what your experience is from other European countries, especially in reference to evaluation of research. For example I know that in Spain in 1989 they had a similar evaluation scheme for the purpose of distributing some money to faculty and they used various criteria. I don't think that they were similar to the criteria that you used but they used something. I was wondering whether you have any idea as to what is happening in other European countries, if there is anything happening.

Prof. Sterling: I regret that I do not, but Professor Hanham may know.

Prof. Hanham: Quite a lot of European countries are interested in this question. It is inevitable that if you are putting new money into a system, as it was done in Spain, where you try to strengthen your research base, you would ask for evaluations.

And the Spanish universities have been particularly interested, or the government in Spain and the organisation that regulates the Spanish universities, has been interested in essentially upgrading them. And the object is to produce in Spain a system of universities that is a cross between the British, the American and the Spanish.

Now, in that sort of situation it is obvious that they are going to be interested in using any opportunity given by the distribution of money

to ask for evaluations. And to ask outside experts to look at what is going on.

The basic pattern I think in terms of European countries is that, by and large, Britain, Belgium, Holland, the Netherlands and Denmark are all moving in roughly the same direction. To some degree this is true in Germany but because of the German constitution there are difficulties there. It is already the case that it is very common among those countries to have joint teaching programs. My university has a *joint teaching program with a Dutch university, actually it extends to various others*, Dutch professors come to Lancaster, my professors go to Holland. In that sort of situation where it is possible to take the same degree either in Holland or in Lancaster you have already a context in which work is joint. Now, my university has connection with the University of Copenhagen in history and we produce a joint book every two years. Now you cannot work on joint books without having some agreement as to what the quality involved might be.

Now, it is the existence of that sort of connection that has made it very easy to have quality control that moves between the various European countries. The Dutch have been particularly interested in using external evaluators from outside the Netherlands, because the Netherlands are so small. They are heavily linked with American universities and so that the connections there tend often to be with America.

In America the existence of research rankings which have been made by a quasi-official agency, oh dear I forget its name, it is the National Science Board I think, anyhow. There are research rankings for all American graduate programs, in terms of how they are desirable for students, how is the quality of the staff, and so on. This has existed now since the 70's. And so that Americans are used to that sort of evaluation and having their graduate schools categorised. So it is very easy to fit in American graduate schools into the British system, the Dutch, the Belgian and gradually the Danish. The difficulty is to extend it to those countries that are used to working together in terms of their faculty members.

Prof. Panaretos: Well, in your comment you raised another rather important issue which I think we have not solved in this country, namely the possibility of having common degrees, undergraduate degrees, with other European countries. And although in the new Greek law there is a possibility I think, because I've checked that, for

joint postgraduate degrees. I don't think there is a possibility of creating a common degree. This is just a remark.

Prof. Tsaussis: There is some kind of outlet, if you interpret the legislation in a broader sense. At least you have within universities the possibility of having inter-departmental degrees. But there are situations that you can have also inter-university inter-departmental degrees. But I think we have not moved towards that, as yet.

Prof. Panaretos: That is good. Yes, Professor Evangelides.

Prof. Evangelides: There was mention before of drop-outs. It has always been a belief of mine that in the case of British universities it is difficult to get in but then it is not so difficult to complete a course and get a degree. Of course I am not implying that the standards are not high. It is just because the best people get in, it is likely that the best people will complete a course. It is as simple as that. I would like to know however what the rate of, what do you call it, dropping-out or drop-outs is. What percentage are they of the student population, if there are such figures, if such figures are available.

Prof. Sterling: They are indeed available and it will vary from very little or few percents for some subjects to, I mean technology might be up around 90% success rate, 10% drop-out rate. I know of departments that are down to 84% success rate, so 16% drop-outs. If you look at the FE sector it is reckoned to be 1/3 for drop-out and a figure of 3 hundred and 30 million or something pounds in the press just recently about this perceived wastage of about 3 hundred and 30 million pounds because of that drop-out in the FE sector.

Prof. Evangelides: Well, it is natural to have such a rate of drop-outs in the FE. But I am talking about the young people who get in. They don't usually drop out.

Dr. Page: In my university I think the figure is about 8%, the ones that fail. And I tell them, as I address them in their first day, count along 1, 2, 3, up to 12. On average one of you is going to drop-out. And I tell them that there is no reason at all why anyone should drop out, they are all able enough to compete, but they may get seduced by different forms of extravagance etc., which causes it. It is a factor,

it is in my university overall about one in twelve fail. Now, when I say that in all probability those people who have dropped-out come back into the system, into the higher education system, later on in some other way.

Prof. Sterling: It makes it difficult to do the computation. Are they really a waste of money as implied by the 3 hundred and 30 million? They have been educated even if they failed the examination at the end..... [inaudible]

Dr Page: Of course in some cases they have come to the university and they are doing a subject, it may not be a subject that they have previously done, say philosophy, and they may after a year of philosophy, they thought they wanted to study philosophy, they come and they find it is not for me, I want to go away and perhaps study French or something.

They have effectively wasted their year. In most of our universities in Britain in the end of the first year they allow some possibility of choice. In my university most students study three subjects in their first year. If they do well enough in all of them they can perhaps do further studies in any one of those three. Or other possibilities. So there are many possibilities and even there you say, well they don't perhaps do for all of the three subjects and they will leave it. It hasn't been a waste even though they don't take it any further.

They have not proceeded through to success. And I will accept the logical distinction. If you are not a success it does not mean you are a failure.

Prof. Evangelides: It is a question of whether they abandon ship or not.

Prof. Tsaussis: There is a question, however, of prolongation of studies, without dropping out. And that is a different story in terms of cost. So people that become part-time students a posteriori, not because they have declared but because they slow down. Are there any figures in there? Because in some countries all this situation creates a very difficult problem. We do have very high rates of drop-outs in the first years of study, which means that we concentrate there with all sorts of material and personnel which is redundant for the next terms. On the other hand, you do have a prolongation of

studies on account of a number of reasons, which means that your graduates, graduates at their high age, which means that the market receives graduates at a later stage and perhaps which are not well trained in terms of the actual needs of the market.

Prof. Sterling: These are exactly the difficulties that our government is going to run into when it is seeking this in further or higher education charter single indicator of wastage rate. Well, how do you treat distance learning, part-time, and so on? It is a nightmare. It will run into the sack.

Prof. Lykourgiotis: My question is related to the flexibility of the studies, in particular about the ability of a university to provide diplomas, inter-departmental diplomas. For instance in your university you have about 32 departments. How many diplomas do you give? 32 or more inter-departmental diplomas?

In other words, is there a possibility for students to follow partly one department and another one in order to combine the lessons and the courses and take one diploma in-between the two departments.

Dr Page: Your use of the word diploma is misleading for me. Degree, OK. A diploma is normally a sub-degree qualification and my university I think gives only a handful. A degree, yes. We have single subject degrees, we have joint honours degrees. So that there are many possible combinations. So a student could come in and do, say, a single honours degree in French. A student with very similar entry qualifications could end-up taking a joint honours degree, say in French and Italian, or French and History.

There will be a whole range of joint honours degrees which is possible to take and merely limited by the difficulties of the time table. Can they actually do those two subjects simultaneously? And their any entry qualifications are necessary. For example, unless someone comes in with a reasonable A-level in mathematics it is going to be very difficult for them to do, say, engineering. In fact impossible to do certain types of engineering or physics. So there have to be certain entry qualifications. But apart from that there is a wide flexibility of joint courses.

We have found however that there is real difficulty in getting clarity of classification at honours level. If you have say a single subject honours degree in mathematics, well we know what a first class

honours degree in mathematics is, don't we? If the student is doing a joint honours degree in mathematics and computer science what happens if it turns out that he is really a first class performance in mathematics but not quite a first class performance in computer science. There has to be some accommodation then between the two sets of examiners. And if you are not careful you allow the examiners in one subject to veto a high award in the other. So that in many cases a joint honours degree can turn out to be more difficult than a single subject honours degree in terms of classification. And it is something that has to be thought about very carefully.

Prof. Hanham: My university has a provision whereby students can in effect invent their own degrees. That is they invent their courses. It requires the student to come in knowing what they want to do. Which means that of course more of them are older students than is common with the student population and be capable of working out with the adviser a rigorous scheme of study.

Now those students tend to do disproportionately well, because they are independent-minded people, who look as though they are going to become future professors. Because they would like that when they left school and they went out and did something else but then came back. They knew what they wanted to do. You wouldn't let loose most students on that sort of program, because they are not sufficiently self-aware about what they are good at and what their interests really are.

Mr Kaldis: We have a particular problem with these joint degrees in Greece. Perhaps that is one of the reasons the Rector brought it up. It is a question of recognition of this degree for professional purposes. There are certain professionally controlled professions, if you want, in Greece, and I am sure there are in other countries. There are in Britain. So if I can make an example. If you take a joint degree in commerce and French in a British university, as you can do, and return to Greece and try to get a license to be a commercial representative. Now among the other things you have to have in order to be that, you have to have a university degree in a subject. And the question is, would that joint degree in commerce and French be able to give you the qualification to be recognised in that profession as a straight degree in commerce would? Engineering and economics is another problem.

Prof. Sterling: I can tackle that from an engineering perspective, because there is what happens is that the accreditation is not of the departments, is of the degree.

So, if you put forward your pure degree in electrical engineering, shall we say, next to a joint degree in electrical engineering and computer science then it is the electrical engineering computer science component, the students on that, the quality of the courses, the examination procedures, that is looked up by the accreditation panel and are accredited or not. If it is accredited then it is acceptable to that institution for exemption.

Now that is the simplistic approach. What in fact happens is a bit more complicated than that, because take a broad-base engineering department, that is teaching electrical, mechanical and civil engineering for example, and there are many of those in the UK, then each of the institutions comes along. The electricals say there is not enough electrical component in this degree, the mechanicals say there is not enough component and so on. So clearly each institution left to its own devices and without some intelligence would say it is not acceptable therefore it cannot be engineering. It is not acceptable to any of them.

It will then be a nonsense situation. So that there the three institutions will sometimes undertake a joint accreditation or in fact one of the institutions may say it is acceptable as accredited electrical engineering degree provided you take certain options within that. And those will be spelled out in the accreditation letter. It will say, accredited for students taking courses A, B and C. And if there is any change in those courses, the content of those or the number of those, there is a requirement to go back to the accrediting body and say we have changed it. And they will visit again or take a decision. So that is the way it operates in engineering, out of my depth however how to operate with French and commerce I am afraid.

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Mr Kaldis: There are also joint language degrees and they have the same kind of problem when you come to ask for entering the civil service, the teaching profession, as a teacher in one of the two languages. Are you good enough as the teacher who has a degree in

one language? I am sure Kostas Evangelides appreciates the difference.

Prof. Panaretos: Professor Lykourgiotis wants to clarify something.

Prof. Lykourgiotis: How many are the inter-disciplinary degrees? What does a person take relatively to the number of departments? You have 32 departments. How many organised inter-departmental programs do you have?

Dr Page: It almost a combinatorial question. It can be very many indeed. It depends mainly upon the time-table. You see, it would be arranged for example that French may appear as one half of the joint honours degree. That Italian may, that English may, that History may. And it is merely a question whether the candidate chooses French and History or French and Italian.

Prof. Lykourgiotis: So theoretically this number is unlimited, is very-very big, rather.

Dr Page: It could be a very big number of different actual combinations that are taken. But of course in any individual class you could have, say, the joint honours course in Italian, we have a class of 30 students. Those 30 students, each one of them may well have selected a different partner for the Italian. So this is merely a constraint on the time-table and on immediate previous preparation. There are fewer combinations when you actually come to the sciences, because of the requirement of laboratory work. You've only got so many afternoons and evenings when the laboratories can be open.

Prof. Hanham: I think that one of the answers to your question is that in fact the majority of students still do single honours degrees, with some sort of minors in many cases, but essentially basically it is one of single honours degrees. But there are areas in which, for instance business studies, where joint degrees are the norm and there are areas where particular subjects actually like joint degrees. And so that even in the sciences you can find a group of science departments that are extremely anxious to have joint degrees.

Now, we actually at the moment are taking in 80 students a year to do combined science. That is, they will essentially have to do three sciences and in their third year they will concentrate on one, but they may concentrate on two. Now, we get better students for that than we do for students in physics say, because the students like the sense they have freedom.

So that, you know, you get these extraordinary differences. There are big blocks of students. I mean, that means that we are going to end-up eventually with about 300 students doing combined sciences. That is a lot of students for us.

Prof. Christou: [not heard]

..... and then you are not forced to complete your degree within a certain time limit. I suppose that is not the case in Britain. Is there any requirement for it? I mean, in Greece a student can come and sit on exams continuously until he finishes up, which he may never finish.

Dr Page: I think that that would be unusual in Britain. We have some possibilities for a candidate to re-sit an examination. But they are very limited. You may only have so many tries, and it is not many. One or two additional tries. And at the end of that, that means you have really failed that particular examination. And then you are out, yes.

Prof. Christou: Well, I could give you some figures. I've looked at some figures in my university and we have, you know, a success rate of about I would say that about 20% of students complete their degree requirements by the 5th year, and about 40% or 50% by the 6th year. So you have a considerable number of students who do not complete their degree requirements by the 5th or 6th year.

Prof. Sterling: I'll come back to that. How do you then recourse? How is your system resourced? Are you resource on the basis of a full-year equivalent student over all that period of time? Is there some resource on the basis of the assumption of a 3-year course or 4-year course?

Prof. Christou: It is a question.

Prof. Panaretos: I think perhaps we have to organise a meeting in England, where we will explain how our system works. Since we are on the topic of drop-outs and I can see that drop-outs are not only at the students' level but at the professors' level in this room You want to make a comment. OK.

Prof. Evangelides: I have tried to explain this phenomenon of what I called, it was yesterday I think, pensioners. That is students who are permanent students in a sense. And my explanation is this. In Britain students receive grants. So a system, which provides you with cash to help you along the line, cannot allow you many-many tries. OK? You have to get out to give a chance to others who will make a better use of the cash of the grant, the cash they are provided with.

In our case there are no fees and books are given free, but a student has to pay for accommodation and food. So some students, or a lot of students, at least claim, I do not know to what extent this is true, that they have to make ends meet. So they find a job outside and if the job attracts them they think in terms of dropping-in, popping-in, occasionally and taking a subject, a paper, here and there until they complete the cycle and get a degree.

I have two cousins of mine, one who reached 5th year in medicine and never finished that one more year to go. And the other, his brother in fact, who still "owes" one subject to get his degree in law. So, they both have excellent jobs and they won't bother to go back. And I think this is the case with a number of students in Greece.

Prof. Tsaussis: ... [not heard]

... You are always registered as long as you have not graduated. So just to correct Professor Christou, even by death you are not out. That is by law. You have no means for deleting somebody from the register. You cannot do it.

Prof. Panaretos: I think that I can summarise at this point our discussion and say that we have concluded more or less the topic for which we came here. I would like to thank Professor Hanham, Dr Page and Professor Sterling for giving us an opportunity to form a clear view of what has been happening is happening and will be happening in England. I hope that this was useful for all of us.

As we know in Greece we have not yet embarked in this process. However I think there is a positive side to it. If and when we embark

in it we may be wise enough to utilise the experience of countries like England.

Thank you all for your participation. I would also like of course to thank Professor Lykourgiotis -I feel at home you see, that is why I didn't say that earlier- for the hospitality of the University of Patras.

Dr Page: Yes, I think I would just like to add our thanks for inviting us. We do owe, no but we don't owe any debt to the British Council, because they have discharged the debt for us. But we greatly appreciate it and very much appreciated your very warm welcome and hospitality and your friendship, which I know will continue. Thank you very much.

Prof. Panaretos: Thank you all.