ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
HELLENIC REPUBLIC

Accreditation Report

for the Postgraduate Study Programme of:

Educational Sciences: Special Education

Department: Special Education

Institution: University of Thessaly

Date: 15 November 2023

Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review ofthe Postgraduate Study Programme of **Educational Sciences: Special Education** of the **University of Thessaly** for the purposes of granting accreditation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART A: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE REVIEW

I.   The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

The Panel responsible for the Accreditation Review of the postgraduate study programme of **Educational Sciences: Special Education** of the **University of Thessaly** comprised the following four (4) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

1. **Prof. Maria Eliophotou Menon (Chair)**
    University of Cyprus, Department of Education

2. **Ass. Professor Emeritus Gina Ioannitou**
    Le Mans Université, France

3. **Prof. Em. Stelios N. Georgiou**
    University of Cyprus, Department of Psychology

4. **Konstantinos Boumpourekas**
    PhD Student, Department of Primary Education, University of Western Macedonia

II.   Review Procedure and Documentation

The accreditation of the Postgraduate Study Programme (PSP) of **Educational Sciences: Special Education** of the University of Thessaly was conducted in a remote mode during the period of 13-15 of November 2023.

In preparation for the evaluation of the PSP, the members of the External Evaluation and Accreditation Panel (EEAP) examined a large number of documents provided in advance by HAHE, including the Proposal for Accreditation of the Postgraduate Programme, the Guide of Studies, the description of courses, the HAHE Guidelines and other relevant information about the Programme (statistical data, quality indicators, student questionnaires, strategic goals, etc.). The EEAP also consulted the website of the Department and the PSP.

The visit was online and took place on Monday 13/11/2023 and Wednesday 15/11/2023. It was followed by further private meetings of the EEAP on the following days to finalise the report. During the visit the EEAP had the following meetings:

Monday 13 November 2023

Meeting with the Directors of the two PSP, the Heads of the Departments of both PSP, MODIP members, and Steering Committees/OMEA members. The two PSP were presented and discussed in this meeting. The meeting included an on-line tour for the presentation of facilities related to the two PSP. Administrative staff members and teaching staff members of both PSP were present. This was followed by a debrief meeting of EEAP members.

Wednesday, 15 November 2023

a) 15:00 - 15:45 Meeting with the teaching staff of PSP2 (Educational Sciences: Special Education). The EEAP discussed professional development opportunities, mobility, competence and adequacy of the teaching staff to ensure learning outcomes, workload, and evaluation by students; the link between teaching and research; projects and research activities directly related to the programme; possible areas of weaknesses.

b) 17:30 - 18:15 Meeting with PSP2 graduates. The EEAP discussed students' satisfaction from their study experience and their postgraduate studies and their career path.

c) 18:30 - 19:15 Meeting with employers and social partners who discussed with EEAP members various forms and opportunities of collaboration with the Programme, relations of the PSP2 with external stakeholders from the private and the public sector, other institutions etc.

d) 19:30- 20:00 Debrief meeting of EEAP members in which they discussed the outcomes of the virtual visit and prepared the oral report.

e) 20:00 - 20:30 Closure meeting with the Director of the PSP2, the Head of the Programme, MODIP, and PSP1 Steering Committee/ OMEA members. In this final meeting, the EEAP provided a general view of some of the conclusions reached.

The EEAP members want to underline that all the above meetings were held in a very constructive atmosphere. Overall, the faculty and staff had prepared a rigorous visit programme with presentations and discussions. All members of the Programme were ready and eager to answer the questions by the EEAP, and this facilitated the latter's task in the evaluation and accreditation process.

III.   Postgraduate Study Programme Profile

At the time of the external accreditation review, the Master's Degree in Educational Sciences: Special Education of the Department of Special Education, numbers 20 permanent members of Faculty Members who teach in the PSP and 58 students.

The PSP was established in 2009 with a 2-year study programme. The Department's new Programme of 2019-20 is a new Programme developed as part of the reorganisation of the 2014-2015 revised PSP Sciences of Education: Special Education. The students of the 2-year Programme are required to complete, to receive the degree 120 ECTS as follows:

- 8 Compulsory courses (of which 2 compulsory courses are related to Methodology of research); plus
- For the specialisation of Special Education and Inclusive Education: 4 Compulsory courses.
- For the specialisation of Learning Disabilities: 4 Compulsory courses.
- The students must also choose between 1) a compulsory practicum of 300 hours, 30 ECTS and 2) a compulsory practicum of 300 hours, 20 ECTS and a thesis of 10 ECTS.

Admission to the Programme takes place according to the general procedures and regulations of the Greek Ministry of Education. They accept students, every two years, that have an undergraduate degree in higher education of a related subject, and certified English language proficiency at B2 level, through interviews. The fees are 4.000 Euros.

According to its mission statement, the PSP of the Department provides students with knowledge, competences, and skills, which relate to the educational field and more specifically:

- Theoretical training and practices in modern trends in the field of special education and inclusion, and of different types of disabilities.
- Knowledge and skills of the Analytical Programme in Schools, teaching methods, and organisation of the class.
- Knowledge and skills in assessing the needs of persons with disabilities and/or special educational needs.

It also familiarises them with their future professional field through Teaching Practice/ Practicum of 300 hours and provides them with professional rights in the field of Special Education.

The Department has not yet been evaluated by any external committee – the present evaluation is the first one.

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

PRINCIPLE 1: QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY AND QUALITY GOAL SETTING FOR THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES OF THE INSTITUTION AND THE ACADEMIC UNIT

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD APPLY A QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY AS PART OF THEIR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT. THIS POLICY SHOULD EXPAND AND BE AIMED (WITH THE COLLABORATION OF EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS) AT THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES OF THE INSTITUTION AND THE ACADEMIC UNIT. THIS POLICY SHOULD BE PUBLISHED AND IMPLEMENTED BY ALL STAKEHOLDERS.

The quality assurance policy of the academic unit should be in line with the quality assurance policy of the Institution and must be formulated in the form of a public statement, which is implemented by all stakeholders. It focuses on the achievement of special goals related to the quality assurance of the study programmes offered by the academic unit.

Indicatively, the quality policy statement of the academic unit includes its commitment to implement a quality policy that will promote the academic profile and orientation of the postgraduate study programme (PSP), its purpose and field of study; it will realise the programme's goals and it will determine the means and ways for attaining them; it will implement appropriate quality procedures, aiming at the programme's improvement.

In particular, in order to implement this policy, the academic unit commits itself to put into practice quality procedures that will demonstrate:

a) *the suitability of the structure and organisation of postgraduate study programmes*
b) *the pursuit of learning outcomes and qualifications in accordance with the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education - level 7*
c) *the promotion of the quality and effectiveness of teaching at the PSP*
d) *the appropriateness of the qualifications of the teaching staff for the PSP*
e) *the drafting, implementation, and review of specific annual quality goals for the improvement of the PSP*
f) *the level of demand for the graduates' qualifications in the labour market*
g) *the quality of support services, such as the administrative services, the libraries and the student welfare office for the PSP*
h) *the efficient utilisation of the financial resources of the PSP that may be drawn from tuition fees*
i) *the conduct of an annual review and audit of the quality assurance system of the PSP through the cooperation of the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) with the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU)*

Documentation

- *Quality Assurance Policy of the PSP*
- *Quality goal setting of the PSP*

Study Programme Compliance

Findings

Relevant documentation included the Quality Assurance Policy of the PSP and the Goal Setting Strategy of the PSP. Moreover, additional documents were examined to assess factors like the suitability of the structure and organisation of the postgraduate study programme, the pursuit of

learning outcomes and qualifications in accordance with the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education -level 7- etc. The Quality Assurance Policy is presented on the website of the Programme. This is not the case for the Goal Setting Strategy. The Quality Assurance Policy presents the mission of the Special Education Department and the PSP, with reference to aims and objectives.

The Quality Assurance Strategy of the PSP defines specific strategic priorities and quality objectives. These place emphasis on the following: the structure and organisation of the programme of studies of the PSP; the quality and effectiveness of teaching in relation to the PSP; the quality and quantity of research output of faculty members; the link between research and teaching. Moreover, the Goal Setting Strategy outlines specific indicators, present and future targets, actions to be taken to achieve the objectives, responsibilities, and timelines. The Goal Setting Strategy refers to three strategic aims and presents a limited number of targets in relation to these aims.

Both documents are clearly written and provide a basis for planning and implementation in relation to achieving quality standards. Overall, the academic unit has established a Quality Assurance Policy that is appropriate for the PSP and serves as a guideline and a point of reference in future planning and decision making. Annual reviews of the quality assurance system are conducted. Overall, the picture is positive, with specific areas for improvement especially in relation to the Goal Setting Strategy.

Analysis of Judgement

The information outlined in the relevant documents as well as the information provided by administrators and faculty members indicates that the academic unit is committed to the implementation of the Quality Assurance Policy. There is an acknowledgement of the need to make a commitment towards continuous improvement. The aims of the PSP as they appear in the Quality Assurance Policy and the Goals Setting Strategy indicate an emphasis on teaching and student-related considerations.

The Quality Assurance Policy is found on the website of the PSP but this is not the case for the Goal Setting Strategy. This is considered a weakness in the provision of information.

The goals set by the academic unit follow the SMART framework in that they are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-specific. Quality goals are combined with suitable performance indicators, which creates a framework for relevant planning and initiatives for improvement. These goals are monitored and updated on a regular basis. Internal processes for quality assurance are used to identify areas for improvement.

The specified learning outcomes agree with the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education. Specific quality goals are defined, discussed, and reviewed on a systematic basis. The academic unit has demonstrated commitment to the promotion of the quality and effectiveness of teaching, as indicated by Department actions, policies, and initiatives. The quality of support services is satisfactory, with some room for improvement in infrastructure. In their presentation, the faculty members provided information on the utilisation of fees, which appears to be based on specific criteria such as the need to support research activities. However, no detailed breakdowns and allocations of financial resources were presented. As regards research performance, before the current evaluation, no information had been collected on the individual research performance of academics, which constitutes a weakness in that the available information related only to the average research performance. Moreover, no reference is made to labour market considerations in the Quality

Assurance Policy even though our interviews and other data indicate that graduates are able to benefit from the acquisition of the Master's Degree in relation to the labour market.

Areas for improvement include the need to enhance the information provided regarding the PSP in relation to quality. For instance, the Goal Setting Strategy of the PSP should be available on the website. In addition, more targets should be formulated, especially in relation to the research performance of faculty members. The Goal Setting Strategy must be further developed as it now includes a very small number of strategic aims and quality targets that are not sufficient to address the strategic emphases and priorities outlined in the Quality Assurance Policy statement. The two documents (Quality Assurance Policy and Quality Goal Setting Strategy) that are considered extremely important for strategic planning are not adequately linked, which is considered a weakness.

Conclusions

The PSP has established a Quality Assurance Policy which ensures that the PSP is monitored and evaluated on a systematic basis. The process provides specific directions for improvement, which is considered necessary for further action. Areas for improvement include the formulation of more strategic targets and a more detailed Goal Setting Strategy, more research targets in relation to individual faculty performance and greater accessibility of the Goal Setting Strategy.

Panel Judgement

Principle 1: Quality assurance policy and quality goal setting for the postgraduate study programmes of the institution and the academic unit	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	**X**
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations
- The two documents (Quality Assurance Policy and Quality Goal Setting Strategy) must be adequately linked. In this context, the EEAP recommends the formulation of a more detailed Goal Setting Strategy with a greater number of strategic aims and targets, which can serve as the basis of quality assurance measures.
- The EEAP recommends greater emphasis on monitoring the research performance of

individual faculty members and the formulation of relevant strategic aims and targets. At present, the strategic targets do not make specific reference to faculty research and output.

- The Goal Setting Strategy must be available on the PSP website.

PRINCIPLE 2: DESIGN AND APPROVAL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD DEVELOP THEIR POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES FOLLOWING A DEFINED WRITTEN PROCESS WHICH WILL INVOLVE THE PARTICIPANTS, INFORMATION SOURCES AND THE APPROVAL COMMITTEES FOR THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES. THE OBJECTIVES, THE EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND THE EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS ARE SET OUT IN THE PRORAMME DESIGN. DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES, THE DEGREE OF ACHIEVEMENT OF THE LEARNING OUTCOMES SHOULD BE ASSESSED. THE ABOVE DETAILS, AS WELL AS INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAMME'S STRUCTURE ARE PUBLISHED IN THE STUDENT GUIDE.

The academic units develop their postgraduate study programmes following a well-defined procedure. The academic profile and orientation of the programme, the research character, the scientific objectives, the specific subject areas, and specialisations are described at this stage.

The structure, content and organisation of courses and teaching methods should be oriented towards deepening knowledge and acquiring the corresponding skills to apply the said knowledge (e.g. course on research methodology, participation in research projects, thesis with a research component).

The expected learning outcomes must be determined based on the European and National Qualifications Framework (EQF, NQF), and the Dublin Descriptors for level 7. During the implementation of the programme, the degree of achievement of the expected learning outcomes and the feedback of the learning process must be assessed with the appropriate tools. For each learning outcome that is designed and made public, it is necessary that its evaluation criteria are also designed and made public.

In addition, the design of PSP must consider:

- *the Institutional strategy*
- *the active involvement of students*
- *the experience of external stakeholders from the labour market*
- *the anticipated student workload according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) for level 7*
- *the option of providing work experience to students*
- *the linking of teaching and research*
- *the relevant regulatory framework and the official procedure for the approval of the PSP by the Institution*

The procedure of approval or revision of the programmes provides for the verification of compliance with the basic requirements of the Standards by the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU).

Documentation
- *Senate decision for the establishment of the PSP*
- *PSP curriculum structure: courses, course categories, ECTS awarded, expected learning outcomes according to the EQF, internship, mobility opportunities*
- *Labour market data regarding the employment of graduates, international experience in a relevant scientific field*
- *PSP Student Guide*
- *Course and thesis outlines*
- *Teaching staff (name list including of areas of specialisation, its relation to the courses taught, employment relationship, and teaching assignment in hours as well as other teaching commitments in hours)*

Study Programme Compliance

Findings

The Department follows a well-defined procedure for applying the University's mission. The features that are in the curriculum study guide (2021-2023) include the organisation of the Programme - with the educational, scientific, and professional focus of it. A clear path for student progression is also presented that includes the delivery methods of the curriculum, with assessment methods and alignment with the European Course Credits System (E.C.T.S.). To obtain the Master's degree, 120 credit units (ECTS) are required, divided into 4 semesters, each of which assigns 30 credits (ECTS).

The Department's new Programme of 2019-20 is a Programme developed as part of the reorganisation of the 2014-2015 revised PSP Sciences of Education: Special Education.

The students of the 2-year Programme are required to complete, to receive the degree, 8 Compulsory courses (of which 2 compulsory courses are related to Methodology of Research); 4 Compulsory courses if they choose the specialisation of Special and Inclusive Education; 4 Compulsory courses if they choose the specialisation of Learning Disabilities. The students must also choose between 1) a compulsory practicum of 300 hours of 30 ECTS and 2) a compulsory practicum of 300 hours, 20 ECTS and a thesis of 10 ECTS.

The Department also provides the students with professional rights in the field of Special Education, through a Teaching Practice/ Practicum of 300 hours.

The PSP is organised into two scientific fields:

- The specialisation of Special and Inclusive Education
- The specialisation of Learning Disabilities
- There is also a third specialisation: Language Development, Language Pathology and Educational Intervention, which is not active.

The Programme was developed by faculty members and approved by the appropriate University committees. There is a procedure in place for periodic revisions of the Programme. Students are given the opportunity to evaluate the courses they attend, and their input is considered in adjusting course content. The Department also considers the suggestions of the stakeholders presented to it during informal discussions, as the EEAP was informed during the interviews with them.

The formative component of the assessment is evaluated with the appropriate tools and comprises of a series of assignments with which students engage, various evaluation activities and short essays. The summative assessment of the courses is a Final Essay or a final examination. To prepare students for their thesis, which is not mandatory, two modules of Research Methodology are provided during the 2nd semester.

The linkage between teaching and research is achieved by integrating recent research findings into the modules taught by the faculty members, by articles, conferences, workshops and by engaging the students through assignments, within the framework of the subjects taught, as well as the thesis.

Several stakeholders and social partners are collaborating with the Programme, such as the headteachers of several schools around Volos, associations, and Special Education structures. During our meeting with several of the stakeholders, they informed the EEAP that they offer informal feedback to their colleagues and provide information on opportunities for field experiences.

Analysis of Judgement

The Department considers both the needs of the students and the realities of the labour market and more specifically in Special Education (public and private schools, tutorial schools, special educational structures) including intercultural education (immigrants, Roma), special education, and adult special education. The practicum is very well attended and organised for all students. The faculty members systematically seek to apply innovative pedagogical approaches to teaching and to integrate scientific developments of special educational research into the content.

Conclusions

The Department has designed a course of study that meets universally accepted standards for teachers of special education. The EEAP was impressed by the enthusiasm with which the faculty regard their work and mission, and their overall dedication.

The EEAP finds also that the 10 ECTS for the Thesis are not satisfactory. The choice that the Programme gives to the students to either do a Practicum of 30 ECTS, or a Practicum of 20 ECTS and a Thesis of 10 ECTS, is confusing for the students. A large number of students choose the thesis and their work corresponds to at least 20 ECTS. Therefore, the Department is substantially compliant with this Principle.

Panel Judgement

Principle 2: Design and approval of postgraduate study programmes	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	**X**
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The EEAP recommends that the structure of the programme be improved by making the Thesis mandatory and allocating to it 20 ECTS instead of 10.

PRINCIPLE 3: STUDENT-CENTRED LEARNING, TEACHING, AND ASSESSMENT

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ENSURE THAT POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES PROVIDE THE NECESSARY CONDITIONS TO ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN THE LEARNING PROCESS. THE ASSESSMENT METHODS SHOULD REFLECT THIS APPROACH.

Student-centred learning and teaching plays an important role in enhancing students' motivation, their self-evaluation, and their active participation in the learning process. The above entail continuous consideration of the programme's delivery and the assessment of the related outcomes.

The student-centred learning and teaching process

- *respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs by adopting flexible learning paths*
- *considers and uses different modes of delivery, where appropriate*
- *flexibly uses a variety of pedagogical methods*
- *regularly evaluates and adjusts the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods aiming at improvement*
- *regularly evaluates the quality and effectiveness of teaching, as documented especially through student surveys*
- *strengthens the student's sense of autonomy, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teaching staff*
- *promotes mutual respect in the student-teacher relationship*
- *applies appropriate procedures for dealing with the students' complaints*
- *provides counselling and guidance for the preparation of the thesis*

In addition
- *The academic staff are familiar with the existing examination system and methods and are supported in developing their own skills in this field.*
- *The assessment criteria and methods are published in advance. The assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary is linked to advice on the learning process.*
- *Student assessment is conducted by more than one examiner, where possible.*
- *Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and conducted in accordance with the stated procedures.*
- *A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*
- *The function of the academic advisor runs smoothly.*

Documentation
- *Sample of a fully completed questionnaire for the evaluation of the PSP by the students*
- *Regulations for dealing with students' complaints and appeals*
- *Regulation for the function of academic advisor*
- *Reference to the teaching modes and assessment methods*

Study Programme Compliance
Findings

From our discussions with the Programme Director, the teaching personnel, students and graduates, it became clear that the Programme's leadership recognises the value of student-centred learning and takes systematic steps to strengthen it even further. There are several indications of this. The number

of students enrolled in this Programme is relatively small, and this allows the teaching faculty to use smaller classrooms rather than the traditional large auditoriums. Students plan their work according to their individual needs and capabilities. They use the available technology to suit their schedules (i.e. e-class) and enjoy group discussions and assignments that strengthen their sense of belonging. They also reported that their teachers constantly encourage them to get involved in their own learning and shape their own development. Assessment is based on written projects, case studies and other similar means of creative synthesising of taught material, rather than conventional tests measuring the reproduction of knowledge.

Analysis of Judgement

The typical education offered by Greek public Universities is teacher-centred (i.e. based on lectures and reproduction of taught material). This is not true in the Programme under discussion. The Panel was happy to observe that the *Special Education* Graduate Programme provides a blended learning system, using traditional theoretical classes together with more contemporary learning experiences such as group discussions, case-studies, and role-play.

Faculty members maintain a close personal relationship with their students and tend to act as role models for them. Moreover, the faculty shows an openness and flexibility to offer input and feedback, as well as a commitment to continuous learning and improvement of the students. In our meeting with the faculty, we noted with pleasure their willingness to constantly monitor the offered educational programmes, and to safeguard the transition from teacher-centred to student-centred teaching.

Interviewing graduates of the Programme allowed us to witness how much the Programme has improved and changed over the years. Students informed us how easy and direct their communication is with the faculty. For example, how fast faculty responds to emails and that they are available beyond scheduled office hours. Moreover, students mentioned the personal relationships they developed with the faculty. The faculty has structured their classes so that there is a designated time for questions, thus making them more student-centred. Our communication with some of the current students and graduates was highly constructive, as they conveyed to us the many positive effects that this Programme had on their career and their lives in general.

Conclusions

There is an emphasis on student-centred learning both in terms of teaching methods and assessment used, as well as in terms of other indicators such as use of appropriate classroom space, use of

technology and non-traditional instruction techniques.

Panel Judgement

Principle 3: Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment	
Fully compliant	**X**
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

Further measures that will strengthen the student-centred nature of this Programme should be taken. Some ideas towards this end are the following: Use more creative assessment methods such as analysis of video-recorded case studies and micro-teaching applications.

PRINCIPLE 4: STUDENT **A**DMISSION**, P**ROGRESSION**, R**ECOGNITION **O**F **P**OSTGRADUATE **S**TUDIES**, A**ND **C**ERTIFICATION**.**

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD DEVELOP AND APPLY PUBLISHED REGULATIONS COVERING ALL ASPECTS AND PHASES OF STUDIES (ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, THESIS DRAFTING, RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION).

> *All the issues from the beginning to the end of studies should be governed by the internal regulations of the academic units. Indicatively:*
>
> • *the student admission procedures and the required supporting documents*
> • *student rights and obligations, and monitoring of student progression*
> • *internship issues, if applicable, and granting of scholarships*
> • *the procedures and terms for the drafting of assignments and the thesis*
> • *the procedure of award and recognition of degrees, the duration of studies, the conditions for progression and for the assurance of the progress of students in their studies*
> • *the terms and conditions for enhancing student mobility*
>
> *All the above must be made public in the context of the Student Guide.*

Documentation
▪ *Internal regulation for the operation of the Postgraduate Study Programme*
▪ *Research Ethics Regulation*
▪ *Regulation of studies, internship, mobility, and student assignments*
▪ *Degree certificate template*

Study Programme Compliance

Findings

The Programme study guide includes information about the structure of the Programme. The Department offers orientation for all new students to support the newly admitted students. The monitoring of student progress takes place through the data provided by the Department's Secretariat and through the institution of the Academic Advisor. The Academic Advisors are the faculty members of the Department to whom students can turn if they need advice or help. In addition, faculty members are very willing to help students, as students themselves confirmed in the interviews held.

The Department provides to the students, mobility opportunities in the framework of Erasmus. However, the mobility of the students of the Postgraduate Programme for internships, is difficult, because most of the students are working. In addition, the current legislation makes it mandatory to carry out the internship in Structures of Special Education in Greece (so that the postgraduate degree is recognised).

The study programme includes the completion of an MA thesis, which is not mandatory. The procedure is well defined as following: the topic must be chosen and submitted through a research proposal. Once the proposal is accepted, a three-member committee is established to follow the Thesis progress. The Thesis' defence is public.

The EEAP found particularly interesting and was impressed by the organisation of the 300 hours Practicum in School structures, where special education and integration programmes are implemented, in education and diagnostic and evaluation bodies belonging to the Ministry of Education and in Special Education and Family Counselling Associations.

Furthermore, the Department grants every year scholarships that correspond to 30% of the fees received.

Analysis of Judgement

The Department has a well-established process for students to register and matriculate through the study programme. Graduating students will be issued both Diplomas and Certificates automatically and free of charge immediately after the completion of their studies. The ECTS system is applied across the study programme and the diploma supplement is issued in Greek and English for all graduates.

Even though, as mentioned above, the Department has Erasmus programmes, there are no incoming/outgoing students.

Conclusion

The EEAP finds that the Programme is developed, published, and fully committed to managing, administering, and applying all regulations that pertain to all aspects of students' admission, progression, recognition, and degree/certification award. The Thesis is not mandatory, but the Practicum is structured so that the students receive the professional rights in Special Education.

Panel Judgement

Principle 4: Student admission, progression, recognition of postgraduate studies and certification	
Fully compliant	**X**
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- The EEAP recommends that the structure of the Programme be improved by making the Thesis mandatory and allocating to it 20 ECTS instead of 10.
- The EEAP suggest that the Department continue its efforts to increase internationalisation.

PRINCIPLE 5: TEACHING STAFF OF POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ASSURE THEMSELVES OF THE LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS OF THEIR TEACHING STAFF, AND APPLY FAIR AND TRANSPARENT PROCESSES FOR THEIR RECRUITMENT, TRAINING AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENT.

The Institution should attend to the adequacy of the teaching staff of the academic unit teaching at the PSP, the appropriate staff-student ratio, the appropriate staff categories, the appropriate subject areas, the fair and objective recruitment process, the high research performance, the training- development, the staff development policy (including participation in mobility schemes, conferences, and educational leaves-as mandated by law).

More specifically, the academic unit should set up and follow clear, transparent and fair processes for the recruitment of properly qualified staff for the PSP and offer them conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching and research; offer opportunities and promote the professional development of the teaching staff; encourage scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research; encourage innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies; promote the increase of the volume and quality of the research output within the academic unit; follow quality assurance processes for all staff (with respect to attendance requirements, performance, self-assessment, training, etc.); develop policies to attract highly qualified academic staff.

Documentation
- *Procedures and criteria for teaching staff recruitment*
- *Employment regulations or contracts, and obligations of the teaching staff*
- *Policy for staff support and development*
- *Individual performance of the teaching staff in scientific-research and teaching work, based on internationally recognised systems of scientific evaluation (e.g. Google Scholar, Scopus, etc.)*
- *List of teaching staff including subject areas, employment relationship, Institution of origin, Department of origin*

Study Programme Compliance
Findings

Relevant documentation included several documents on the roles and responsibilities of teaching staff members. Moreover, a list of teaching staff members was provided, which included information on research interests and expertise. During the interviews, information was provided on professional development and research activities.

There is a clear set of criteria and procedures for the selection and employment of teaching staff. The number of academics involved in the teaching of modules is satisfactory and includes academics of various specialisations. Academics possess relevant qualifications and teaching experience.

Research is supported to a satisfactory extent. The fact that part of the fees paid by students is available for the funding of research activities is an advantage even though faculty members feel that a greater part should be available. Academics are involved in research activities which include publication of articles in journals and participation in academic conferences. The need to improve both the quantity and the quality of research output is emphasised in the Quality Assurance Policy of the

PSP but this does not translate into specific objectives and targets in the Quality Goal Setting Strategy of the PSP. Thus, the strategic targets provided in the Quality Goal Setting Strategy do not make specific reference to faculty research and professional development considerations. Moreover, no data on the individual performance of faculty members were available at the time of the evaluation (e.g. google scholar citations, Scopus citations etc.). However, it must be noted that in the case of some faculty members, information was provided which points to high achievements in research.

Teaching staff is regularly evaluated by students through evaluation surveys.

Overall, employment regulations, staff policies and recruitment processes appear to be highly effective in achieving successful teaching and learning outcomes. There are clear provisions for the systematic evaluation of staff members. However, some areas for improvement exist.

Analysis of Judgement

As previously mentioned, there are well defined criteria for the selection and employment of teaching staff. Even though the full extent of the meritocratic procedures used for recruitment cannot be assessed, there is strong evidence to suggest that the process followed and the criteria used ensure that the academics employed in the teaching of modules are highly competent and effective as instructors. The regular evaluation of teaching staff by students is considered a strength if appropriate action is taken based on the feedback received.

Even though emphasis is placed on research and development, more can be done in terms of formulating a detailed research strategy for the PSP. Currently, the defined research targets do not place sufficient emphasis on research performance and staff professional development. There is a need to develop the Quality Goal Setting Strategy (more goals and specific targets), especially in relation to research and professional development considerations. Moreover, it is important that information on the individual research performance of faculty members is collected on a systematic basis and made available when needed.

Conclusions

The processes used for the staff recruitment are specific and transparent. The PSP is supported by an

adequate number of academics. Specific mechanisms for the evaluation of staff members by students are used on a systematic basis. Based on our findings, areas for improvement include the formulation of more strategic targets which place emphasis on research and professional development, and the collection of information on the individual research performance of faculty members.

Panel Judgement

Principle 5: Teaching staff of postgraduate study programmes	
Fully compliant	**X**
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- There is a need to develop the Quality Goal Setting strategy of the PSP. The EEAP recommends the formulation of more targets and more specific targets, especially in relation to research performance and professional development.
- The EEAP recommends that information on the research performance of individual faculty members is collected on a systematic basis.

PRINCIPLE 6: LEARNING RESOURCES AND STUDENT SUPPORT

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE ADEQUATE FUNDING TO COVER THE TEACHING AND LEARNING NEEDS OF THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMME. THEY SHOULD –ON THE ONE HAND- PROVIDE SATISFACTORY INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES FOR LEARING AND STUDENT SUPPORT, AND – ON THE OTHER HAND- FACILITATE DIRECT ACCESS TO THEM BY ESTABLISHING INTERNAL RULES TO THIS END (E.G. LECTURE ROOMS, LABOURATORIES, LIBRARIES, NETWORKS, NETWORKS, CAREER AND SOCIAL POLICY SERVICES ETC.).

Institutions and their academic units must have sufficient resources and means, on a planned and long-term basis, to support learning and academic activity in general, so as to offer PSP students the best possible level of studies. The above means include facilities such as the necessary general and more specialised libraries and possibilities for access to electronic databases, study rooms, educational and scientific equipment, IT and communication services, support and counselling services.

When allocating the available resources, the needs of all students must be taken into consideration (e.g. whether they are full-time or part-time students, employed students, students with disabilities), in addition to the shift towards student-centred learning and the adoption of flexible modes of learning and teaching. Support activities and facilities may be organised in various ways, depending on the institutional context. However, the internal quality assurance proves -on the one hand- the quantity and quality of the available facilities and services, and -on the other hand- that students are aware of all available services.

In delivering support services, the role of support and administration staff is crucial and therefore this segment of staff needs to be qualified and have opportunities to develop its competences.

Documentation
- *Detailed description of the infrastructure and services made available by the Institution to the academic unit for the PSP, to support learning and academic activity (human resources, infrastructure, services, etc.) and the corresponding firm commitment of the Institution to financially cover these infrastructure-services from state or other resources*
- *Administrative support staff of the PSP (job descriptions, qualifications and responsibilities)*
- *Informative / promotional material given to students with reference to the available services*
- *Tuition utilisation plan (if applicable)*

Study Programme Compliance
Findings

Provision of Facilities for the Teaching and Learning Environment

The basic infrastructure that hosts the Programme's research and educational activities responds functionally to the needs of postgraduate students. More specifically the Programme has a total of nine laboratories, lecture halls, auditoriums and administrative and academic staff offices, which are fully equipped. Additionally, the Programme grants free access to the Central Library of Thessaly and

23

to a wide range of electronic and printed resources. Students and alumni have reported easy accessibility to the digital library, databases, and IT infrastructure.

Funding

The needs of the academic and administrative operation of the PSP are covered by tuition fees paid by its students.

Range of Support Services

The Programme offers support services designed to meet the different needs of its students. Each service addresses specific aspects of student requirements, including student accommodation, boarding, healthcare and psychological support, accessibility and social support for students that face medical or social problems, information about career and academic guidance with collaboration of relevant departments like DASTA (Employment and Career services, that are provided by the University) and other university activities about cultural groups and events. Both students and alumni reported that they were thoroughly informed about these services, when they joined their Programme.

Awareness and Accessibility of Services

Academic staff, students, and alumni agree that the services are generally user-friendly and easily accessible. Administrative staff, after the registration of students, assists them in order to get access to a wide range of services like webmail, e-class and assists them with technical issues through email or telephone.

Administrative Staff for Support Services

Administrative staff is the main pillar of the administrative support for students, dealing with bureaucratic, operational or organisational issues of the Programme. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the Programme's administrative branches provide through e-class easy accessibility to a variety of services in order to meet its students' academic needs. Administrative staff is also responsible for the coordination of the academic staff, for the maintenance of records, for providing administrative assistance and for the implementation of the decisions by the Board.

The ERASMUS+ Office

For the time being there were no foreign students in the Programme or students that participate in an Erasmus programme.

Educational Platforms and Videoconferencing

The Programme fully utilises e-class to promote collaboration among students and faculty. Furthermore, through this platform academics provide postgraduate students with additional educational material, assign tasks, design, and implement assessment activities. Additionally, students and alumni have described as effortless the experience of using these services.

Analysis of Judgement

EEAP members have examined carefully these findings and accentuated the Programme's commitment to providing crucial supporting services to its students. The wide range of support services indicates the Programme's dedication to its students' further evolution and development. Furthermore, the focus on the optimisation and enhancement of the available electronic and printed

resources lines up with current and future educational needs, simplifying and granting access to fundamental material and knowledge significant for academic evolution.

Conclusions

In closing, the Programme displays a solid and robust determination and commitment to providing its students with a wide range of services, managed by committed and well-organised administrative departments and staff. Moreover, the Programme has made creditable steps and efforts in order to support its students and with an honest commitment to further improvement, it can improve the quality of its supporting services, despite its lack of government funding.

Panel Judgement

Principle 6: Learning resources and student support	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The EEAP suggests further improvement of the current facilities.

PRINCIPLE 7: INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

INSTITUTIONS BEAR FULL RESPONISBILITY FOR COLLECTING, ANALYSING AND USING INFORMATION, AIMED AT THE EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT OF POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES AND RELATED ACTIVITIES, IN AN INTEGRATED, EFFECTIVE AND EASLILY ACCESSIBLE WAY.

Institutions are expected to establish and operate an information system for the management and monitoring of data concerning students, teaching staff, course structure and organisation, teaching and provision of services to students.

Reliable data is essential for accurate information and decision-making, as well as for identifying areas of smooth operation and areas for improvement. Effective procedures for collecting and analysing information on postgraduate study programmes and other activities feed data into the internal system of quality assurance.

The information collected depends, to some extent, on the type and mission of the Institution. The following are of interest:

- *key performance indicators*
- *student population profile*
- *student progression, success, and drop-out rates*
- *student satisfaction with their programmes*
- *availability of learning resources and student support*

A number of methods may be used to collect information. It is important that students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.

Documentation

- *Report from the National Information System for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NISQA) at the level of the Institution, the department, and the PSP*
- *Operation of an information management system for the collection of administrative data for the implementation of the PSP (Students' Record)*
- *Other tools and procedures designed to collect data on the academic and administrative functions of the academic unit and the PSP*

Study Programme Compliance
Findings

Data Collection Procedures

The Programme has laid the foundations of solidly built procedures for the systematic collection of data regarding various aspects of its academic unit. These procedures incorporate information about the teaching methods and skills, the content, the difficulty and the usefulness of the available courses, academic staff's research projects, the students' satisfaction with their Programme, on whether and how new technologies were used, the availability of electronic and printed resources, the students' further progression, employability, the career development of graduates, the facilities, and equipment. The collection of data occurs at different and multiple levels within the Programme to ensure a more extensive coverage. This whole procedure is conducted entirely by the administrative staff and the results of the collected data are sent to MODIP for further processing in relation to indicators of quality in terms of teaching staff, facilities, and research in this Programme.

Information Systems and Collection Methods

The Programme employs a combination of an information system, which is used for the collection, process and data management, UniTron, and one single method to collect data through evaluation

questionnaires and collaboration with relevant departments like MODIP and OPESP. The Programme employs a data-driven approach to gather accurate and up-to-date information.

Student Satisfaction Surveys

Regular student satisfaction surveys through evaluation questionnaires are an essential element of the Programme's data collection efforts. These questionnaires provide valuable aspects of students' experiences, concerns, and suggestions for improvement. These surveys are conducted anonymously, before the end of the semester to capture the valid feelings and expectations of the students' academic experience. Furthermore, the data are presented and are easily accessible only to the academic staff.

Analysis of Judgement

The Programme displays a solid commitment to employ the data that are collected from personal and anonymous questionnaires efficiently. The collected data are regularly analysed to identify the main tendencies, the fields of improvement and areas of evolution and growth. The findings are communicated to relevant departments and stakeholders to ensure pellucidity and accountability. Moreover, data are mainly used for the improvement of the teaching methods and skills, support services, IT facilities, efficiency and accessibility of electronic and printed resources, highlighting a wide range of aspects of the academic unit. The analysis of these data assists in the identification of insufficiencies or areas where improvements are required. The Programme utilises graphs and charts to make the collected data accessible only to the teaching staff.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the Programme has laid the foundations of solid procedures for the systematic collection of data, including a variety of fields and aspects of the academic unit like teaching methods and skills, the content, the difficulty and the usefulness of the available courses, employability, and career development of graduates. The Programme employs a combination of information systems for the collection, process and data management through evaluation questionnaires and collaboration with relevant departments to protect the efficiency of data collection. Additionally, the data are presented in a comprehensive and informative way. Moreover, personal questionnaires of students provide significant feedback to obtain crucial outcomes regarding the experience and expectations of students about the Programme.

In closing, the Programme displays a robust commitment to a data-driven model and with constant

improvement in data collection procedures, the Programme's goal to provide a great educational experience to its students is achieved.

Panel Judgement

Principle 7: Information management	
Fully compliant	**X**
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The EEAP found that important data are not made available to the students and suggests that the data should be accessible to both the academic staff and the students.

PRINCIPLE 8: PUBLIC INFORMATION CONCERNING THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD PUBLISH INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR TEACHING AND ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES IN A DIRECT AND READILY ACCESSIBLE WAY. THE RELEVANT INFORMATION SHOULD BE UP-TO-DATE, OBJECTIVE AND CLEAR.

> *Information on the Institutions' activities is useful for prospective and current students, graduates, other stakeholders, and the public.*
>
> *Therefore, Institutions and their academic units must provide information about their activities, including the PSP they offer, the intended learning outcomes, the degrees awarded, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures applied, the pass rates, and the learning opportunities available to their students. Information is also provided on the employment perspectives of PSP graduates.*

Documentation
- *Dedicated segment on the website of the department for the promotion of the PSP*
- *Bilingual version of the PSP website with complete, clear and objective information*
- *Provision for website maintenance and updating*

Study Programme Compliance

Findings

Availability of Key Information

The key information about the academic unit and the Postgraduate Programme (PSP) is indeed available online. This includes details about the Programme's structure, mode of attendance, assessment criteria, the degree awarded, and the CVs of teaching staff. Information is mainly provided in Greek and some of it in English.

Dedicated Website Segment

There is a dedicated section on the Programme's website that serves the purpose of promoting the Postgraduate Programme (PSP). This segment is designed to provide comprehensive information to prospective students and other interested parties.

Availability of Course Outlines

All course outlines for the PSP are accessible online. These outlines offer a detailed overview of the Programme's curriculum, including course descriptions, learning objectives, and assessment methods. They are a valuable resource for both current and prospective students.

Policy for Quality Assurance

The Programme's Policy for Quality Assurance is accessible online via the PSP website. This policy outlines the strategies and measures in place to ensure the Programme's quality and effectiveness. MODIP is the quality assurance unit within the Programme. It was founded as part of the continuous evaluation of the educational and research activities, as well as the functioning and performance of the institution. Its purpose is to guarantee and enhance the quality of these aspects, in alignment with

global standards and the principles outlined by the Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (ADIP). The role of MODIP extends to providing advice to the university's administration and coordinating efforts to establish policies and procedures that promote quality assurance and efficient evaluation, all in accordance with the existing institutional framework.

Clarity and Accessibility of Information

The information published on the PSP website is generally up-to-date, clear, and easily accessible. This accessibility is crucial for prospective students who rely on accurate and current information to make informed decisions about their academic pursuits.

Analysis of Judgement

While key information is available online, there might be room for improvement regarding the provision of this information in multiple languages. Offering content in additional languages can enhance accessibility and attract a more diverse pool of international students.

The presence of a dedicated website segment for promoting the PSP demonstrates a commitment to transparency and communication. This is essential for attracting potential students and providing them with a comprehensive understanding of the Programme's offerings.

The availability of course outlines online is a positive aspect, as it assists students in understanding the Programme's structure and content. These outlines serve as a valuable resource for both students and educators, ensuring transparency in the learning process.

The accessibility of the academic unit's Policy for Quality Assurance on the PSP website underscores a commitment to maintaining high educational standards. This transparency helps build trust among students and stakeholders, demonstrating a dedication to Programme's quality.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the Department, which is responsible for the Postgraduate Programme (PSP) has made commendable efforts to make key information readily available online. The presence of a dedicated website segment for Programme promotion, complete course outlines, and accessible policies for quality assurance is indicative of a commitment to transparency and accountability.

To further enhance the Programme's accessibility, the Programme may consider expanding the availability of information in multiple languages and updating its current website in English,

particularly for the benefit of international students. Additionally, maintaining the up-to-date nature of all online content is crucial to ensure that the information remains accurate and relevant.

Overall, the Programme's efforts in providing clear, comprehensive, and accessible online information contribute positively to the Programme's reputation and appeal to prospective students.

Panel Judgement

Principle 8: Public information concerning the postgraduate study programmes	
Fully compliant	**X**
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

- The EEAP suggests to further expand the availability of information in multiple languages and to update its current website in English particularly for the benefit of international students.
- The EEAP suggests to continue its efforts to maintain the Programme's up-to-date nature of all online content, which is crucial to ensure that the information remains accurate and relevant.

PRINCIPLE 9: ON-GOING **M**ONITORING **A**ND **P**ERIODIC **I**NTERNAL **E**VALUATION **O**F **P**OSTGRADUATE **S**TUDY **PROGRAMME**S

INSTITUTIONS AND ACADEMIC UNITS SHOULD HAVE IN PLACE AN INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM FOR THE AUDIT AND ANNUAL INTERNAL REVIEW OF THEIR POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES, SO AS TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES SET FOR THEM, THROUGH MONITORING AND POSSIBLE AMENDMENTS, WITH A VIEW TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT. ANY ACTIONS TAKEN IN THE ABOVE CONTEXT SHOULD BE COMMUNICATED TO ALL PARTIES CONCERNED.

The regular monitoring, review, and revision of postgraduate study programmes aim at maintaining the level of educational provision and creating a supportive and effective learning environment for students.

The above comprise the evaluation of:

a) the content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the PSP is up to date
b) the changing needs of society
c) the students' workload, progression and completion of the postgraduate studies
d) the effectiveness of the procedures for the assessment of students
e) the students' expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme
f) the learning environment, support services, and their fitness for purpose for the PSP in question
Postgraduate study programmes are reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders. The information collected is analysed and the programme is adapted to ensure that it is up-to-date.

Documentation
- *Procedure for the re-evaluation, redefinition and updating of the PSP curriculum*
- *Procedure for mitigating weaknesses and upgrading the structure of the PSP and the learning process*
- *Feedback processes concerning the strategy and quality goal setting of the PSP and relevant decision-making processes (students, external stakeholders)*
- *Results of the annual internal evaluation of the PSP by the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU), and the relevant minutes*

Study Programme Compliance
Findings

An internal quality assurance system is in place. The Panel had a meeting with its members and was convinced that the Programme is adequately monitored.

Analysis of Judgement

The University's commitment to quality assurances is reflected and evidenced using established procedures and processes. To date, some internal evaluations have been conducted to ensure that the Programme is fulfilling its mission and objectives. The Programme's faculty participate and help to monitor students' performance on coursework, written assignments and assessment. Continuous improvements have been implemented to date in response to the findings of annual evaluation that has enabled the academic unit to align its short- and long-term goals and objectives in accordance with international practices.

Conclusions

The monitoring of this Programme by an internal evaluation committee is adequate.

Panel Judgement

Principle 9: On-going monitoring and periodic internal evaluation of postgraduate study programmes	
Fully compliant	**X**
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

This internal evaluation committee should be maintained and its role should be further strengthened in the Programme. The leadership of the Programme is encouraged to formally seek feedback from external stakeholders (e.g., alumni, employers, social agency directors) by operating an "alumni-external partners" committee. Finally, they could explore ways of systematically acting so that members of excluded/marginalised communities could be included as stakeholders.

PRINCIPLE 10: REGULAR EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES SHOULD REGULARLY UNDERGO EVALUATION BY PANELS OF EXTERNAL EXPERTS SET BY HAHE, AIMING AT ACCREDITATION. THE TERM OF VALIDITY OF THE ACCREDITATION IS DETERMINED BY HAHE.

HAHE is responsible for administrating the PSP accreditation process which is realised as an external evaluation procedure, and implemented by panels of independent experts. HAHE grants accreditation of programmes, based on the Reports delivered by the panels of external experts, with a specific term of validity, following to which, revision is required. The quality accreditation of the PSP acts as a means for the determination of the degree of compliance of the programme to the Standards, and as a catalyst for improvement, while opening new perspectives towards the international standing of the awarded degrees. Both academic units and Institutions must consistently consider the conclusions and the recommendations submitted by the panels of experts for the continuous improvement of the programme.

Documentation
- *Progress report of the PSP in question, on the results from the utilisation of possible recommendations included in the External Evaluation Report of the Institution, and in the IQAS Accreditation Report, with relation to the postgraduate study programmes*

Study Programme Compliance
Findings

The Programme regularly undergoes evaluation by panels of external experts such as the current one, organised by HAHE.

Analysis

The Panel reviewed all available documents and the website and conducted online interviews with the Director of the Programme, the teaching staff, present students and graduates, as well as representatives of constituencies involved with student practice. These discussions concluded that the leadership of the Programme has undertaken a multidimensional effort to create the appropriate learning environment suitable for the benefit of its students.

Conclusions

The discussions with the Programme's leadership and faculty indicated that they understand and value the importance of such external reviews, are receptive to recommendations to improve their Programme and showed a willingness of addressing suggestions towards this end.

Panel Judgement

Principle 10: Regular external evaluation of postgraduate study programmes	
Fully compliant	**X**
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The Panel recommends that further measures could be taken in order to strengthen the student-centred nature of the Programme. Some ideas towards this end are the following:

- Use more creative assignments, such as case-studies, micro-teaching applications, interactive activities, group work and technology-based projects
- Enhance the link between teaching and research
- Strengthen the role of the internal evaluation committee
- Seek greater involvement of external stakeholders through formal feedback and inclusion initiatives

- Make the student evaluations available to students

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I.   Features of Good Practice

The review of the Programme shows that the academic unit is strongly committed to the implementation of the Quality Assurance Policy. Features of good practice include the following.

- The Programme is monitored and evaluated on a systematic basis. Directions for improvement are identified and action is taken when needed.

- Student-centred learning is a priority and is widely used in the Programme.

- There is an adequate number of academics supporting the Programme who are evaluated by students on a systematic basis.

- There is an emphasis on the provision of learning resources as well as a wide range of support services.

- The Programme utilises rigorous procedures for the systematic collection and analysis of data, ensuring its commitment to data-driven decision making and continuous improvement.

- The staff is characterised by enthusiasm, a positive attitude and an acknowledgement of the importance of external reviews.

II.   Areas of Weakness

The main areas of weakness relate to the following

- The number of strategic aims and targets is limited. The defined targets do not make specific reference to important dimensions of quality such as research output.

- The link between the Quality Assurance Policy and the Goal Setting Strategy is weak.

- No information is available on the individual research performance of faculty members, which suggests that this not monitored on a systematic basis.

- The Thesis is not mandatory and is assigned only 10 ECTS, which is not satisfactory.

III.   Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

The EEAP recommends that the above-mentioned areas of weaknesses are addressed and action is taken in order to address these concerns. Moreover, additional recommendations are provided in the report and include the following.

- There is a need for a more detailed research strategy with a greater number of strategic aims and priorities. There is also a need to set more ambitious targets, especially in relation to research and professional development.

- There is a need for a better link between the Quality Assurance Policy and the Goal Setting Strategy

- Further measures in order to strengthen the student-centred nature of the Programme are recommended (e.g. using more creative assignments and making assignment deadlines more flexible, micro-teaching applications etc.)

- It is recommended that the Thesis is made mandatory and more than 10 ECTS are assigned to it.

- Efforts to promote student mobility are recommended.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: **3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10.**

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: **1 and 2.**

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are: **None.**

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are: **None.**

Overall Judgement	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

The Members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname   **Signature**

1. **Prof. Maria Eliophotou Menon (Chair)**
   University of Cyprus, Department of Education

2. **Ass. Professor Emeritus Gina Ioannitou**
   Le Mans Université, France

3. **Prof. Em. Stelios N. Georgiou**
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