



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
HELLENIC REPUBLIC



Εθνική Αρχή
Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης
Hellenic Authority
for Higher Education

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ΑΠΟΦΑΣΗ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ

Το Συμβούλιο Αξιολόγησης και Πιστοποίησης της Εθνικής Αρχής Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης (ΕΘΑΑΕ)

Έχοντας υπόψη:

1. Τις διατάξεις του Ν. 4653/2020 (ΦΕΚ 12/Α'/24-01-2020) «Εθνική Αρχή Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης. Ειδικοί Λογαριασμοί Κονδυλίων Έρευνας Ανώτατων Εκπαιδευτικών Ιδρυμάτων, Ερευνητικών και Τεχνολογικών Φορέων και άλλες Διατάξεις», όπως ισχύει.
2. Την υπ' αριθμ. 18135/Ζ1/7-2-2020 Απόφαση της Υπουργού Παιδείας και Θρησκευμάτων (ΦΕΚ 94/τεύχος ΥΟΔΔ/7-2-2020), περί διορισμού του Προέδρου του Ανώτατου Συμβουλίου της Εθνικής Αρχής Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης (ΕΘΑΑΕ).
3. Την υπ' αριθμ. 16384/Ζ1/15-2-2024 απόφαση του Υπουργού Παιδείας, Θρησκευμάτων και Αθλητισμού (ΦΕΚ 137/τεύχος ΥΟΔΔ/19-2-2024), περί παράτασης της θητείας του Προέδρου του Ανώτατου Συμβουλίου της Εθνικής Αρχής Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης (ΕΘΑΑΕ).
4. Την υπ' αριθμ. 15650/23-04-2020 Απόφαση του Προέδρου της ΕΘΑΑΕ (ΦΕΚ 329/τ.ΥΟΔΔ/04-05-2020) «Ορισμός των μελών του Συμβουλίου Αξιολόγησης και Πιστοποίησης (ΣΑΠ) της Εθνικής Αρχής Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης (ΕΘΑΑΕ)», όπως ισχύει.
5. Την υπ' αριθμ. 43323/11-6-2024 Έκθεση Πιστοποίησης της Επιτροπής Εξωτερικής Αξιολόγησης & Πιστοποίησης του ΠΜΣ Πολυλειτουργική Διαχείριση Δασικών Οικοσυστημάτων και Βιο-οικονομία του Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλίας.
6. Την 41^η/24-07-2024 συνεδρίαση του Συμβουλίου Αξιολόγησης και Πιστοποίησης, θέμα 2 «Έγκριση εκθέσεων πιστοποίησης ΠΜΣ – Χορήγηση πιστοποίησης».

ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΕΙ ΟΤΙ

το Πρόγραμμα Μεταπτυχιακών Σπουδών

Πολυλειτουργική Διαχείριση Δασικών Οικοσυστημάτων και Βιο-οικονομία του Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλίας

συμμορφώνεται πλήρως με τις αρχές του Προτύπου Ποιότητας για την Πιστοποίηση των Προγραμμάτων Μεταπτυχιακών Σπουδών της ΕΘΑΑΕ και τις Αρχές και Κατευθυντήριες Οδηγίες για τη Διασφάλιση Ποιότητας στον Ευρωπαϊκό Χώρο Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης (ESG), για το επίπεδο σπουδών 7 του Εθνικού και Ευρωπαϊκού Πλαισίου Προσόντων.

Η διάρκεια ισχύος της πιστοποίησης ορίζεται για πέντε έτη, από 24-07-2024 έως 23-07-2029.

Ο Πρόεδρος της ΕΘΑΑΕ

Καθηγητής Περικλής Α. Μήτσας



Με τη συγχρηματοδότηση
της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης



Πρόγραμμα
Ανθρώπινο Δυναμικό και
Κοινωνική Συνοχή





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Accreditation Report **for the Postgraduate Study Programme of:**

**Multifunctional Management of Forest Ecosystems
and Bio-economy**

**Department of Forestry, Wood Sciences & Design
University of Thessaly**

Date: 1 June 2024



Με τη συγχρηματοδότηση
της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης



Πρόγραμμα
Ανθρώπινο Δυναμικό και
Κοινωνική Συνοχή



Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the Postgraduate Study Programme of **Multifunctional Management of Forest Ecosystems and Bio-economy** of the **University of Thessaly** for the purposes of granting accreditation

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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 **Multifunctional Management of Forest Ecosystems and Bio-economy** 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. Andreas Katsiotis (Chair)**
Cyprus University of Technology, Limassol, Cyprus
- 2. Prof. Thomas Panagopoulos**
University of Algarve, Faro, Portugal
- 3. Prof. Emeritus Ioannis Vlahos**
Hellenic Mediterranean University, Heraklion-Crete, Greece
- 4. Mr. Ioannis Chatzieffraimidis**
PhD Candidate, University of Western Macedonia, Florina, Greece

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

In preparation for the review and assessment of the PSP **Multifunctional Management of Forest Ecosystems and Bio-economy** of the **University of Thessaly**, the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel (EEA Panel) reviewed a multitude of materials provided by the Hellenic Authority of Higher Education (HAHE), which included background information and guidance on the review and accreditation process, detailed material and data related to the programme under evaluation, such as the programme accreditation proposal and associated appendices.

The programme review was conducted via teleconference, organized and coordinated by HAHE and the University of Thessaly (UTH). The schedule and agenda of the review were as stated below.

Monday, 27/05/2024:

- a) Preliminary private meeting of the EEA Panel. Discussion of the programme under review; assignment of writing parts of the draft accreditation report to the members of the EEA Panel.
- b) Welcome meeting and short overview of the two (2) PSPs: a) with the Vice-head of the **Department of Ichthyology and Aquatic Environment** Prof. Ioannis Boziaris, the Director of the PSP Mediterranean Aquaculture (PSP1) Prof. Panagiota Panagiotaki, the PSP1 Steering Committee member Assoc. Prof. Eleni Golomazou, , the PSP1 Steering Committee member Assoc. Prof. Ioannis Karapanagiotidis, the Member of the OMEA of the DIAE Prof. Dimitrios Ventzas, and b) the Head of the **Department of Forestry, Wood Sciences & Design** Prof. George Ntalos, the Director of the PSP Multifunctional Management of Forest Ecosystems and Bio-economy (PSP2) Prof. Michail Vrachnakis, the PSP2 Steering Committee member Prof. Periklis Birtsas, the member of the OMEA of the Department of FWSD, the MODIP member of UTH Prof. Nikolaos Tsiropoulos, the MODIP Coordinator Ms Eleni Tsironi, and the MODIP staff Ms Konstantina Founta. Presentation of UTH quality assurance policy, current status and future developments, as well as presentations and discussion of both Departments and their corresponding PSP1 and PSP2 history, academic profile, current status and future developments, strengths and areas of concern, degree compliance to the quality standards for accreditation, internal procedures, course examinations, review of students' progress, course/instructor evaluations, etc.
- c) On-line tour of classrooms, lecture halls, library facilities, laboratories. All facilities were presented in videos produced for this purpose. During the presentation of PSP1 Administrative staff members Asimena Koromilli (PSP1/DIAE Secretary), Asimo Panagou (PSP1 Secretary) and teaching staff member Assoc. Prof. Ioannis Karapanagiotidis were present, and during the presentation of PSP2 Administrative staff members Athanasios Kyriakis (PSP2/DFWSD Secretary), Vasileios Aretos (PSP2 Secretary), and teaching staff members Prof. Ioannis Papadopoulos and Assoc. Prof. Ioannis Aretos were present.
- d) Private debriefing meeting (EEA Panel members only).

Tuesday, 28/05/2024:

Teleconference meetings related to PSP1 Mediterranean Aquaculture of the Department of Ichthyology and Aquatic Environment of the University of Thessaly.

Wednesday, 29/05/2024:

- a) Meeting and discussion with PSP2 Multifunctional Management of Forest Ecosystems and Bio-economy teaching staff members Profs. M. Trigkas, D. Samaras, laboratorian teaching staff Dr. K. Ninikas, and external teaching staff Adj. Prof. V. Iakovoglou, Prof. K. Papaspyropoulos, AUTH laboratorian teaching staff D. Chouvardas, and Dr. P. Kakouros (Greek Biotype/Wetland Centre-EKBY).
- b) Meeting and discussion with ten (10) current PSP2 students.
- c) Meeting and discussion with nine (9) recent PSP2 graduates.
- d) Meeting and discussion with employers and PSP2 social partners: I. Anastasiadou, Forester, Public Forest Service of Mouzaki, V. Koutis, Forester, Trikala Development Agency (KENAKAP SA), V. Filipou, Forester, Energy Community of Karditsa, E. Sakellariou, Electrical Engineer, Karditsa Development Agency, F. Dimitrakopoulou, Economist, Euracademy, International organization, E. Alexandropoulou, Environmentalist, Hunting Co-Federation of Greece, and E. Apostolides, Forester, YLI Forest Studies, Athens.
- e) Private debriefing meeting (EEA Panel members only): Discussion of the outcomes and findings of the PSP1 virtual visit; preparation of oral report.
- f) Closure meeting with the Head of the Department of Forestry, Wood Sciences and Design, PSP2 Director and Steering Committee faculty, OMEA members of DIAE, and MODIP members: Informal, oral presentation of the EEA Panel PSP2 key findings and clarifications.

Thursday 30/05/2024 to Saturday 01/06/2024:

Draft report writing. EEA Panel virtual meetings. Review and finalization of PSP1 & PSP2 accreditation draft reports.

Throughout the review and evaluation process, the EEA Panel was in close communication with the University UTH staff, which were very accommodating in providing additional information requested by the EEA Panel. The EEA Panel found that both Departments and the PSP1 and PSP2 administrations, as well as the faculty, staff, current students, and recent graduates interviewed were eager and helpful in our discussions, providing valuable additional information.

III. Postgraduate Study Programme Profile

The University of Thessaly was founded (along with the Aegean and Ionian Universities) in 1984 with the Presidential Decree 83/1984, which was modified in 1985 with the P.D. 302/1985 and P.D. 107/86. Volos was designated the central location of the University of Thessaly. Nowadays, the University's main campus is located in Volos, and regional campuses are located in Karditsa, Larissa, Trikala and the city of Lamia. The Department of Forestry, Wood Sciences & Design is based in Karditsa.

The post-graduate study programme (PSP) 'Multifunctional Management of Forest Ecosystems and Bio-economy' (POLYVIO) is organized and offered by the Department of Forestry, Wood Sciences & Design, University of Thessaly (UTH) located in Karditsa. The PSP was approved by the Senate of the UTH in 2020 (15417/20/ΓΠ/05-08-2020), published in the Official Gazette 3685/03-09-2020, and operates based on law 4485/2017.

The objective of the PSP is to provide, at the post-graduate level, knowledge in the specific subjects of forest management ecosystems and forest bio-economy. More specifically, the mission of the PSP is: a) the creation of specialized and competent business executives, but also entrepreneurs and researchers in bio-economy and application of principles in the modern multifunctional management of forest ecosystems and high value natural resources, such as forests, meadows, wetlands and game species, including non-timber forestry production (i.e. mushrooms, resin and aromatic plants), along with management of urban landscape, GIS application and utilization of biomass energy technologies; b) in-depth knowledge of specific PSP subjects; and, c) preparation of graduate students for doctoral level studies. Feasibility and sustainability studies have been obtained, prior to the approval of the PSP by the University's Senate.

Most of the teaching load is provided by the department's academic staff (including retired staff), along with short contract teaching staff (based on the article 19 of law 1404/1983) and academic staff from other universities. All staff contributing to the PSP have a PhD degree. Furthermore, visitors can also be invited, following a decision taken by the departmental assembly.

The program has set a maximum number of admitted students at thirty (30) per academic year. Admissions were presented for academic years 2020-21 (14 candidates accepted and all have completed their studies), 2021-2022 (22 candidates accepted and 15 have completed their studies), and 2022-2023 (9 candidates accepted and 2 have completed their studies). According to the above data, graduation rate is 69%.

The PSP is offered on a full or part-time basis. The duration of studies for the awarding of the Postgraduate Studies Diploma is three (3) academic semesters for full-time students and five (5) academic semesters for part-time students. The 3rd, 4th and 5th semesters, respectively, are offered for the preparation of the postgraduate diploma thesis. During their studies, postgraduate students are required to attend postgraduate courses, participate in all educational and research activities and prepare a postgraduate thesis. Each course corresponds to six (6) ECTS credits. Each student is required to attend and pass a total of ten (10) courses, during the first two semesters, and to successfully complete a diploma thesis, during the third semester (full-time students). The postgraduate thesis corresponds to thirty (30) ECTS credits. The total number of credits (ECTS) required to obtain the Diploma of Postgraduate Studies is ninety (90) ECTS. In the first semester all courses are compulsory, and in the second semester there are three compulsory courses and a selection of two (2) courses as electives from a catalogue of eight (8) possible courses.

The Department of Forestry, Wood Sciences & Design offers four (4) postgraduate study programmes. The department also support doctoral studies and post-doctoral research.

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

I. Findings

The University has developed and implemented its Quality Assurance Policy as part of its broader strategy (<https://qa.uth.gr/quality-assurance-committee/>; https://qa.uth.gr/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/MODIP_Politiki_Diasfalisis_Poiotitas_2022_1097625350.pdf). The

Department of Forestry, Wood Sciences & Design, in collaboration with the University Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) and the Department Internal Evaluation Group (IEG), has harmonized the quality policy of the PSP Multifunctional Management of Forest Ecosystems and Bio-economy with that of the University, accompanied by annual quality assurance targets for the continuous development and improvement of the PSP, as well as that of the academic unit and other educational programmes.

The Quality Assurance Policy of the Department is publicly accessible from the Department website (https://msc-forest.fwsd.uth.gr/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/politikes_poiotitas_DEXYS-1.pdf) and includes all necessary information regarding the structure and processes to implement the policies and guidelines set by the University. Furthermore, the PSP quality assurance policies are harmonized with the strategic objectives of the DEXYS Department, at all levels, and is actively supported by all participants in the educational process. Quality Assurance Policy for the PSP is publicly available at https://msc-forest.fwsd.uth.gr/wp-content/2024/05/A2_ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΗ-ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ_ΠΜΣ_ΠΟΛΥΒΙΟ.pdf.

The following procedures are adopted in order to implement the Quality Assurance Policy of the department: a) emphasis is placed on student-centred learning that is in accordance with the National and the European Framework Higher Education Qualifications; b) the principles of Management and Quality Assurance System of the UTH are applied; c) quality of research and publication of results is promoted; d) teaching is linked to research in order to keep up-to-date with the latest developments in the field the students; e) an annual evaluation is carried out by the IEG in collaboration with the QAU of UTH; f) there transparency in all departmental actions; g) action is taken to prevent all kinds of discrimination; and h) continuous improvement of the educational activity of the Department is pursue.

The quality and effectiveness of teaching at the PSP is closely monitored through the course/instructor evaluation by the students, the collection of data by the IEG and transfer to QAU on an annual basis. The evaluation questionnaire is comprised of two categories of questions; the first category has five sections related to: 1) the course structure, 2) the assignments, 3) the laboratories, 4) the instructors, and the 5) the instructors assistants. The second category includes a series of questions where the student can express opinions and views on courses and instructors. All information is also included in English language.

II. Analysis

The PSP is comprised of two semesters of courses and one semester for executing and writing a diploma thesis. A number of thesis diploma topics are suggested to the students in collaboration with stakeholders (i.e. the Public Forest Service of Mouzaki/Karditsa). Out of 10 courses, eight are compulsory and two are electives, that can be chosen from a list of eight courses. All necessary information about each course is described in detail in a complete Study Guide (in Greek and English) easily accessible at the website of the PSP. Information given in the Study Guide also include general information about the university and the department, the vision and basic principles of the PSP, the personnel, the facilities, and all information needed by the students (courses curriculum, code of ethics, IT services, access to the library,

mobility opportunities, etc). Learning outcomes and qualifications of PSP graduates in Multifunctional Management of Natural Ecosystems and Bio-economy meet the criteria of Level 7 European Qualification Framework. The courses are well structured and offered in class and, up to 35% remotely, taking advantage of the synchronous teaching e-class technology. All exams are written in class.

The PSP strictly follows and implements the quality policies of the University of Thessaly, established by the Institution's QAU. The quality policy "Aims at the systematic improvement of the quality of indicators of all units of the Foundation, administrative and academic, at shaping a motivational environment and developing motivation and excellence strategies for students, teachers and administrative employees. The basic principles that govern the operation of the PSP include among others: integrity, respect, cooperation, academic freedom, excellence, transparency, impartiality. The targets set by the Quality Assurance Policy has four pillars: a) monitoring and improvement of provided education, b) enhance research activities and public diffusion, c) course evaluations, and d) promote interaction with scientific community and field excursions. Within each pillar base and target scores are presented. In all quality targets scores are reasonable and achievable; however, in one case (graduating percentage) base score is 57% and target score was set to 30%, which probably is not correct. One low base score was the average number of annual field excursions (0.33), with setting a target score of 2. All participating academic staff have good, published record.

III. Conclusions

Overall, the PSP is well structured and balanced, providing opportunities to the student to select from elective courses offered, in addition to the compulsory courses. A number of students are already working in relevant fields. The department has an Internal Evaluation Group (OMEA) responsible for preparing the annual and the four-year evaluation reports, confirming the quality of the educational process provided. All parties involved, at the University level and the Departmental level, are committed for proposing and implementing recommendations, leading to a continuous process of improvement.

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	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

R 1-1: Use the expertise provided by the Centre for Teaching and Learning of UTH for supporting and advising the teaching staff of the PSP

R 1-2: Increase the number of field trips during the semesters

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 PROGRAMME 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 PSP Multifunctional Management of Natural Ecosystems and Bio-economy begun accepting students in 2020 and is one of the three postgraduate programs within the Department of Forestry, Wood Sciences and Design. The main objective of the programme is to provide skills in matters of bio-economy and the application of its principles in the modern functional management of forests, wetlands and meadows ecosystems. All courses target to achieve the above-mentioned objective. A course in research methodology is offered, along with a number of courses dealing with forest management aspects, technology, entrepreneurship. GIS technology is also included in an elective course. Its graduates gain specialized knowledge and experience relevant to management of natural ecosystems and bio-economy.

I. Analysis

The programme is in accordance of appropriate standards, relevant legislation and University regulations. The curriculum is balanced and covers the subjects mentioned in the title of the Programme. The subject of bio-economy is of major importance at the European level. Most of the graduates that were present in the interview are involved either in the public sector as foresters or in private environmentalist companies. Collaboration opportunities between the program students and public forest services and other agencies, along with the private sector was mentioned. There were at least three graduates that are pursuing advanced studies at the doctoral level.

For the improvement of the curriculum it is suggested:

- Motivate students with mobility opportunities
- Include lectures in smart forest management, remote sensing methods (use of biosensors), analysis of data, use of drones, design and development of recreational areas
- The public sector has suggested to include a course in mountain hydrology and hydraulic constructions
- Include lectures in National and European framework and legislation on forest and their exploitation
- Increase significantly the number of field trips

The overall structure of the PSP is reasonable, good laboratory infrastructure exists, there is proximity with forests, and the academic staff have excellent knowledge of the taught courses. It is important to provide administrative support for students outside the office working hours, since a lot of activities are during weekends. Study Guide is complete, providing all necessary information to students (including city description). Allocation of ECTS should be according to the actual workload of each course and not all courses having the same credits.

II. Conclusions

Overall, the PSP has a reasonable structure and provides to its graduates useful knowledge and experience in bio-economy, and in multifunctional management of natural ecosystems.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

R 2-1: Further promote collaboration with stakeholders

R 2-2: Increase student participation in mobility opportunities

R 2-3: Include lectures on themes suggested by the stakeholders

R 2-4: In future restructuring of the program ECTS for each course should represent actual course load

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

I. Findings

The 'Multifunctional Management of Natural Ecosystems and Bio-economy' postgraduate program employs a well-structured approach for course delivery and assessment. Classes are primarily conducted in-person, scheduled on Friday evenings, all day Saturday, and until 17:00

on Sundays, with only a few sessions offered online. Courses are held every two weeks. According to the Study Regulations, 35% of the PSP curriculum is delivered via distance synchronous learning.

The rights and privileges of students, including awards for exceptional academic performance, are detailed in the PSP Study Guide. Lecture halls are well-equipped to support the learning process, and student complaints are managed online.

The program offers several elective courses; however, a minimum participation rate of 10% is required for these courses to be conducted. Student evaluations of courses are performed at the end of each semester, and participation in these evaluations has been notably high.

Additionally, each student is assigned an Academic Advisor who offers personal, academic, and career guidance, ensuring comprehensive support throughout their studies.

II. Analysis

The PSP program is designed to accommodate working students by scheduling courses on Friday evenings and weekends, ensuring that students can balance their professional commitments with their academic pursuits.

There are eight elective courses available, from which students can select two in their second semester. The elective courses are:

- Advanced Applications of Geographic Information Systems in Forest Ecosystem Management
- Ecosystem Management for Non-Timber Forest Products (mushrooms, resin, aromatics)
- Urban Green Management
- Modern Approaches in Ecotourism
- Properties and Applications of Innovative High Added Value Wood Products
- Biomass Energy Utilization Technologies
- Bio-product Marketing
- Cultural Ecology

At the end of each semester student satisfaction surveys are conducted to measure the effectiveness of the teaching. According to the provided documentation, the participation rate for these surveys is approximately 60% and the satisfaction is high. The internal evaluation focuses on teachers, the organization of thematic units, educational material, infrastructure, administrative services, and distance learning. These evaluations are conducted electronically via the internet.

The availability and role of the Academic Advisor are described in detail in the study guide. For each postgraduate student, the Coordinating Committee appoints a faculty member as an advisor and another as a supervisor. The advisor monitors and oversees the general progress of the student's studies, while the supervisor, appointed by the Coordinating Committee upon the student's request, holds scientific responsibility for the completion of the Diploma Thesis.

Students have expressed high satisfaction with the PSP, with many actively involved in research projects. Interviews conducted by the EEA panel reveal also that students developed better skills and were very satisfied upon completion of the program.

III. Conclusions

The EEA Panel finds that, after discussions with students, alumni, teaching staff, and employers, the PSP functions effectively in terms of student-centred learning, teaching, and assessment. The program's careful design, particularly tailored for working students, provides significant flexibility, enabling them to choose specific skills and achieve individualized learning outcomes.

Interviewed students and graduates expressed satisfaction with the PSP and the teaching staff. They appreciated the program's structure, which accommodates their professional commitments by scheduling courses on weekends. The program also offers a variety of elective courses, allowing students to tailor their education to their interests and career goals.

However, there are a few areas identified for improvements as suggested in the following recommendations.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

To further enhance adherence to Principle 3, the EEA Panel recommends the following:

R 3-1: Enhancing the already well-equipped lecture halls and ensuring all necessary resources are readily available to support both in-person and distance learning.

R 3-2: Providing additional resources and support for students engaged in research projects to further enhance their learning and professional development.

R 3-3: In future restructure of the curriculum some elective courses, e.g. Advanced Applications of Geographic Information Systems in Forest Ecosystem Management, are essential for students' comprehensive education and could be made mandatory.

PRINCIPLE 4: STUDENT ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, RECOGNITION OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES, AND CERTIFICATION.

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

I. Findings

Each year, the Director of the PSP publishes a call for applications for admission to the PSP in both print and electronic media, as well as on the PSP website. This call invites applications for studies commencing in the following academic year. The deadline for submitting applications must be at least three (3) months after the initial publication of the call.

The evaluation of applicants for the PSP – POLYVIO is based on a total score (on a scale of 1-100) according to the following criteria:

1. Degree/Diploma grade with a minimum score of "Very Good" (30%)
2. Level of foreign language proficiency (10%)
3. Publications in scientific journals, presentations at scientific conferences (5%)
4. Possession of other postgraduate degrees (5%)
5. Relevant professional experience (10%)
6. Letters of recommendation (10%)
7. Oral interview (30%)

The Selection Committee will invite for an interview those candidates who meet the formal requirements. After selecting the students and obtaining their acceptance, they will proceed with their enrolment in the PSP. All necessary information is adequately described in the PSP Internal Operating Regulation.

Each course requires mandatory assignments and employs a student-centred evaluation system to deepen understanding of the subject matter. Students gain knowledge and skills that are aligned with their selected specialization track and professional goals.

The duration of the PSP leading to a Postgraduate Diploma is three (3) semesters for full-time study, with the final semester dedicated to the completion of the postgraduate thesis, as clearly defined in the Study Regulation. This PSP includes two semesters of coursework (10 courses in total) and one semester for the postgraduate thesis. ECTS credits are distributed equally across the courses in the first two semesters, and 30 ECTS credits are awarded for the postgraduate thesis.

Postgraduate students have access to all departmental on-site and digital facilities. The teaching methods are primarily on-site, with 35% of the courses offered through distance learning. Student mobility is highly encouraged, and to date, two students have utilized this opportunity.

At the end of each semester, the PSP awards one (1) scholarship based on academic performance. While the program has partnerships with private companies, these do not include scholarships.

To obtain the Postgraduate Diploma, students must complete a total of ninety (90) ECTS credits. The completion of a postgraduate thesis is mandatory. In addition to the Postgraduate Diploma, students receive a Diploma Supplement in both Greek and English. The program does not include practical training.

II. Analysis

Adequate knowledge of English is a prerequisite for participation in the PSP. The Diploma Supplement is issued in both Greek and English.

All postgraduate students are required to complete a mandatory research-focused dissertation. Alongside semester assignments and exams, these are compulsory components of the program. The course assessment methodology allocates 40% of the grade to assignments and 60% to final exams.

All matters concerning the completion of the required postgraduate thesis are clearly defined in the Study Guide, and the provided information is sufficiently detailed.

Although student mobility is encouraged, participation remains relatively low, with the majority of students unable to take advantage of this opportunity.

The Internal Operating Regulation of the PSP does not currently mandate practical training, although there are students interested in gaining practical experience.

III. Conclusions

After consulting the provided documentation and discussing with the EEA Panel, it is generally considered that the PSP 'Multifunctional Management of Natural Ecosystems and Bio-economy' functions effectively in terms of student admission, progression, recognition of postgraduate studies, and certification. The program's structure, which includes mandatory assignments and a student-centred evaluation system, ensures a comprehensive learning experience.

However, the Panel believes that several enhancements could add significant value to the existing PSP. These include increasing student mobility, boosting the participation of academic staff from abroad, establishing practical training opportunities, and creating an alumni association. Implementing these recommendations would further enrich the program and support students' academic and professional development.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

To further enhance adherence to Principle 4, the EEA Panel recommends the following:

R4-1 Increase the Number of Admitted Students. Given the small number of applicants, it is crucial to implement strategies to attract more students.

R4-2 Introduce Scholarships from the Private Sector.

R 4-3 Incorporating practical training into the curriculum will greatly enhance the program.

R 4-4 Increase Field Workshops and educational trips.

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

I. Findings

The PSP Multifunctional Management of Natural Ecosystems and Bio economy (ΠΟΛΥΒΙΟ or POLYVIO) is organized by the Department of Forestry, Wood Science and Design in Karditsa. It was established and operates since the academic year 2020-2021. The procedure for selecting and hiring staff is set by the Department and efforts are made to attract lecturers, professors and researchers with high standards, proven teaching experience and research publications.

Each teaching staff is assigned a particular course to be taught during the academic study period and even though the law sets the 8 hrs limit per week, many lecturers work for 10 or 12 hrs per week not counting the extra work load due to the supervision of theses' projects. The theses are generally equally undertaken by the teaching staff; however, some staff undertake to supervise more theses than others due to the preferences' of students.

The PSP has provisions for the reimbursement of staff and supports their mobility through the Erasmus and other short-term visits abroad. It was made known however, that very few of the staff participated in such visits, the main reason being the work overload.

At the end of each semester students are urged to fill electronically and anonymously questionnaires regarding their satisfaction with the courses and the teachers. Participation was fairly satisfactory considering the low number of students. Results of the questionnaires are made known to the teaching staff through the MODIP and the program coordinator.

II. Analysis

The selection and hiring of the teaching staff for the PSP are done in a well-organized procedure according to the rules set by the Department.

The teaching staff of the PSP are specialized in the field which they are assigned to teach and exhibit a satisfactory academic profile and research experience with publications in international scientific journals, undertaking a good number of national and international research programs.

The research carried out by the permanent teaching staff is quite satisfactory and research results are incorporated in the teaching procedures. Mobility of staff should be enhanced and this could be made possible by hiring extra teaching staff to substitute.

Students, alumni and stakeholders during the on-line interview expressed their satisfaction with the faculty and the good spirit of cooperation during their studies and after their graduation.

III. Conclusions

The PSP POLYVIO is supported by teaching personnel of high competence and quality in their fields of expertise and specialization. The recruitment of more personnel would contribute to better professional development and participation of staff in mobility activities.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

R 5-1: Encourage and Increase mobility of staff

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 LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORT, AND – ON THE OTHER HAND- FACILITATE DIRECT ACCESS TO THEM BY ESTABLISHING INTERNAL RULES TO THIS END (E.G. LECTURE ROOMS, LABORATORIES, 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

I. Findings

The PSP Multifunctional Management of Natural Ecosystems and Bio economy (POLYVIO) is housed in the premises of the Department of Forestry, Wood Science and Design in the Karditsa Campus. The program is supported by 13 teaching staff, 8 of them are permanent faculty of the Department and 5 are external staff. Secretarial support is provided by 2 permanent administrative staff.

The PSP is utilizing the premises of the Department of Forestry, Wood Science and Design which consist of 3 main buildings in an area of 6.500 sq. meters. The Department has adequate infrastructure and facilities. Laboratory and research equipment are excellent providing students with knowledge and training in the field of specialization of the program.

The infrastructure and laboratory equipment of the Department are modern and up to date and are also available for use by the students of the Program for their lectures, laboratory sessions and for conducting their thesis work.

Other Services available to students include auditoriums, lecture rooms, offices, dormitories, library and the Open e-Class platform.

35% of courses are carried out remotely online to serve those who are not near the Karditsa campus. In-campus lectures are held usually on Fridays through Sundays for those who are working and cannot attend on weekdays. Educational excursions are also organized for in situ training for analyses of forest and grassland ecosystems.

II. Analysis

Through the interviews held online with staff, students and graduates it was concluded that support services, laboratory equipment and lecture halls are satisfactory for the implementation of the program. Students of the POLYVIO are able to use all facilities and services used by the undergraduate students. Stakeholders who were interviewed representing mostly private and public organizations expressed their support and willingness for cooperation with the department and the particular post graduate program.

III. Conclusions

The PSP has excellent infrastructure for a successful training in Management of Natural Ecosystems and Bio-economy and provides well trained graduates that can meet the demands of the industry. The interviewed graduates confirmed that getting a degree from the PSP helped finding jobs in the labour market or helped in the advancement in their jobs.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The EEAP found that all criteria for principle 6 were satisfactory and no recommendations are made.

PRINCIPLE 7: INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

INSTITUTIONS BEAR FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR COLLECTING, ANALYSING AND USING INFORMATION, AIMED AT THE EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT OF POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES AND RELATED ACTIVITIES, IN AN INTEGRATED, EFFECTIVE AND EASILY 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

I. Findings

Through the application of respective information technology services provided by the University (e.g., eUniversity, Open e-Class, MS-Teams, information system of quality assurance body), a comprehensive information system of data collection and recording has been developed regarding the overall operation of the institution. The data refer to the academic faculty, the administration, and the students. Further data have been collected by the research financial services and the library. The information obtained from the satisfaction surveys by the students and the graduates databank is limited. Key Performance Indicators of the students and staff are limited. Additionally, limited data were provided for student satisfaction during several years.

II. Analysis

The Department maintains an integrated information system in collaboration with MODIP, for the collection and analysis of internal and external evaluation data. The PSP annually collects data related to the research activity of faculty, available funds, student mobility, and academic records. The information obtained from the satisfaction surveys by the students and the graduates is limited. The EEAP believes that the Programme has made efforts to achieve students' participation in the evaluation of the teaching staff.

III. Conclusions

The PSP evaluate the data collected and present some of the results in quantifiable measures in terms of the programme, and key performance indicators. The data should assist in the preparation of internal evaluation reports and related improvement proposals. The development of an alumni body has also been welcomed by the graduates of the programme in their meeting with the EEAP members.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

To enhance adherence to Principle 7, the EEA Panel recommends the following:

R7.1. The University, with the help of the PSP, should organize an alumni network.

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

I. Findings

Public information regarding the PSP 'Multifunctional Management of Natural Ecosystems and Bio-economy' is primarily accessible through the relevant website, specifically <https://msc-forest.fwsd.uth.gr/>. The website provides comprehensive content in both Greek and English languages, ensuring accessibility for a wider audience.

Furthermore, a separate section on the department's website is specifically allocated for Postgraduate Studies, offering descriptions of the PSP, but not detailed. This section is also available in both Greek and English, facilitating easy access to information for prospective students.

Additionally, the department's website regularly updates news and events related to postgraduate programs, ensuring that visitors stay informed about the latest developments and opportunities within the PSP.

The PSP website offers extensive information about the program's curriculum, ECTS credits (90), study guide, including details about dissertations, and the academic unit's Policy for Quality Assurance. Entry requirements include holding a first degree from an accredited University and possessing adequate knowledge of the English language.

Overall, these features ensure transparency, accessibility, and up-to-date information for individuals interested in the PSP, facilitating informed decision-making and encouraging engagement with the program.

II. Analysis

All relevant information about the PSP, encompassing learning outcomes, courses, curriculum details, and teaching staff, is meticulously presented on the dedicated webpage. The content published on the website is regularly updated, ensuring that it remains current and readily accessible, providing users with a seamless browsing experience. Moreover, comprehensive details about the PSP are also easily accessible on the Department's website. This ensures that

individuals have broader access to relevant information, facilitating informed decision-making and encouraging engagement with the program.

III. Conclusions

The Department's website conveniently directs users to the PSP's dedicated webpage. Presently, the PSP website offers up-to-date information about teaching activities and departmental events, available in both Greek and English languages. To further enhance its utility, the PSP website could incorporate additional details regarding alumni connections, fostering a sense of community and facilitating networking opportunities for current and former students alike.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The EEA Panel has no recommendations for Principle 8.

PRINCIPLE 9: ON-GOING MONITORING AND PERIODIC INTERNAL EVALUATION OF POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

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

I. Findings

The self-assessment of the programme is based on procedures and continuous improvement of the level of educational offerings along with supporting the learning environment, ensuring the current character of the programme, and the strategic goals of the Institution. Factors considered for the assessment include the student's workload, students' expectations, and the assessment of the students. Also, scientific and technological developments, societal and job market needs, and national, European, and international environmental policies are considered. The programme director collects information from the delivery of the programme along with scientific, technological, business, and societal developments. The Director collects all requests for changes to the programme, such as changes to the course content, course schedule and calendar, faculty workload, proposals for new courses, etc. Using the student course/instructor evaluations along with requests related to suggested changes, a proposal is submitted to the Department assembly. The annual report is submitted to MODIP for review,

and recommendations are shared with the Department general assembly. Decisions are made at the end of the academic year and are implemented at the beginning of the following academic year.

II. Analysis

Through the process of internal review and continuous improvement plan, the positive aspects of the programme are reinforced by adding new topics based on scientific developments. The collected information is analysed, and the programme is adapted to ensure that it is up-to-date. There is a strategically designed consideration for improving courses using the course evaluations by students. Programme weaknesses are immediately addressed when problems are identified with the programme in students' evaluation. Remediation of knowledge gaps of the students was achieved through special seminars, extended office hours for the faculty to assist students, in addition to the availability of the academic advisor.

The PSP is reviewed and revised but without the direct involvement of students and other stakeholders. Extension of collaborations with international sectors and further involvement in external activities such as conferences should be common practice.

III. Conclusions

The self-assessment procedure of the programme is frequent but does not involve a systematic participation of the students and the external stakeholders.

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

R 9-1: There should be an organized formal inclusion of alumni and stakeholders in the process of the annual internal self-assessment.

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

I. Findings

The PSP has not undergone an external evaluation before. Following the instructions of HAHE to this Principle, the EEAP utilised the IQAS Accreditation Report (2019) of the University of Thessaly. Also, the EEAP used information from the external evaluation of the University of Thessaly in 2015. The response to the recommendations from the previous External Evaluations was brief and not specific.

II. Analysis

The PSP has responded to some issues from the previous external evaluations, and the Programme has taken into consideration those relevant recommendations and is willing to proceed with the implementation of all recommendations for the PSP.

The recommendation of development of procedures for the sustainable and continuous engagement of stakeholders has not yet been implemented.

The recommendation about uniform format of Biographies for all Faculty members was not fully implemented.

The recommendation to include alumni and students in continuous improvement was not fully implemented.

III. Conclusions

The recommendation from the previous external Institution's evaluations were not fully considered. The EEAP concurs with the previous recommendations. A point-by-point response

to the previous evaluations and a time schedule about when they will be fulfilled should also be mentioned.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

R 10-1: The PSP should act upon the recommendations of the previous Institutional external evaluations.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

- Very well structured and organized PSP
- Excellent information in Study Guide
- Very well structured and informative website
- High student engagement in course evaluations
- The PSP supports needs of society

II. Areas of Weakness

- Low number of students
- Insufficient number of field exercises and visits
- Inadequate advertisement of the program
- No Alumni association
- Lack of administrative support on weekends, when there are activities planned.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

- Use the expertise provided by the Centre for Teaching and Learning of UTH for supporting and advising the teaching staff of the PSP
- Increase student and staff participation in mobility opportunities
- Include lectures on themes suggested by the stakeholders
- In future restructuring of the program ECTS for each course should represent actual course load
- Enhance the already well-equipped lecture halls and ensuring all necessary resources are readily available to support both in-person and distance learning.
- Provide additional resources and support for students engaged in research projects to further enhance their learning and professional development.
- In future restructure of the curriculum some elective courses, e.g. Advanced Applications of Geographic Information Systems in Forest Ecosystem Management, are essential for students' comprehensive education and could be made mandatory.
- Increase the Number of Admitted Students. Given the small number of applicants, it is crucial to implement strategies to attract more students.
- Introduce Scholarships from the Private Sector.

- Incorporating practical training into the curriculum will greatly enhance the program.
- Increase Field Workshops and educational trips.
- The University, with the help of the PSP, should organize an alumni network.
- There should be an organized formal inclusion of alumni and stakeholders in the process of the annual internal self-assessment.
- The PSP should act upon the recommendations of the previous Institutional external evaluations.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: **1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9.**

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: **4 and 10.**

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

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