



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
HELLENIC REPUBLIC



Εθνική Αρχή
Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης
Hellenic Authority
for Higher Education

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Αθήνα, 30-05-2025

Αρ. πρωτ. QA_1578

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), την υπ' αριθμ. 16384/Ζ1/15.02.2024 απόφαση του Υπουργού Παιδείας, Θρησκευμάτων και Αθλητισμού (ΦΕΚ 137/τ. ΥΟΔΔ/19-02-2024), περί παράτασης της θητείας του Προέδρου του Ανώτατου Συμβουλίου της ΕΘΑΑΕ, καθώς και την υπ' αριθμ. 88986/Ζ1/1.08.2024 απόφαση του Υπουργού Παιδείας, Θρησκευμάτων και Αθλητισμού (ΦΕΚ 846/Υ.Ο.Δ.Δ/7.8.2024) περί της ανανέωσης της θητείας του Προέδρου του Ανώτατου Συμβουλίου της Εθνικής Αρχής Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης (ΕΘΑΑΕ).
3. 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.
4. Την υπ' αριθμ. QA_1443/14-05-2025 Έκθεση Πιστοποίησης της Επιτροπής Εξωτερικής Αξιολόγησης & Πιστοποίησης του ΠΜΣ «Μεσογειακά Συστήματα Αγροτικής Παραγωγής» του Τμήματος Γεωπονίας, Φυτικής Παραγωγής και Αγροτικού Περιβάλλοντος του Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλίας.
5. Την 50η/29-05-2025 συνεδρίαση του Συμβουλίου Αξιολόγησης και Πιστοποίησης, θέμα 2 «Έγκριση εκθέσεων πιστοποίησης– Χορήγηση πιστοποίησης».

ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΕΙ ΟΤΙ

το νέο Πρόγραμμα Μεταπτυχιακών Σπουδών

Μεσογειακά Συστήματα Αγροτικής Παραγωγής
του Τμήματος Γεωπονίας, Φυτικής Παραγωγής και Αγροτικού Περιβάλλοντος
του Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλίας

συμμορφώνεται ικανοποιητικά με τις αρχές του Προτύπου Ποιότητας για την Πιστοποίηση των Νέων 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 29-05-2025 έως 28-05-2030.



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 New Postgraduate Study Programme of:

Mediterranean Crop Production Systems

**Department of Agriculture Crop Production and Rural
Environment
University of Thessaly**

7 December 2024

NOTES

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Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of
the New Postgraduate Study Programme of **Mediterranean Crop
Production Systems** 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 new postgraduate study programme of **Mediterranean Crop Production Systems** 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. Emeritus Spyros G. Pavlostathis (Chair)**
Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, USA
- 2. Prof. George Manganaris**
Cyprus University of Technology, Limassol, Cyprus
- 3. Prof. Amalia Tsiami**
University of West London, London, UK
- 4. Mr. Ioannis Dimitrios Kamperos**
PhD Candidate, Agricultural University of Athens, Athens, Greece

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

In preparation for the review and assessment of the new **PSP Mediterranean Crop Production Systems** 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, as well as detailed material and data related to the programme under evaluation, such as the programme accreditation proposal and associated appendices provided by the new PSP through the HAHE.

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

Monday 02/12/2024:

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.

Tuesday 03/12/2024:

- a) Welcome meeting and brief overview of the new PSP with the Vice Rector and President of MODIP Prof. I. Anagnostopoulos, the Head of the Department Prof. A. Sfougaris, and the PSP Director Prof. Ch. Lykas. Brief presentation of the Department history and accomplishments; presentation of the structure, quality assurance, and other futures of the new PSP.
- b) Meeting with PSP teaching staff members, Profs. N. Danalatos, V. Antoniadis, O. Pavli, and K. Giannoulis: Discussion of teaching involvement, learning resources and other futures of the new PSP.
- c) On-line tour of facilities and discussion of facilities and learning resources with laboratory teaching staff member Dr. D. Bartzialis, and Profs. P. Maletsika and D. Petoumenou.
- d) Meeting and discussion with employers and PSP social partners: Dr. Th. Thomaidis, CTO Pangeae R&D; Mr. M. Zhacharis, CTO Soilab; and Mr. Ch. Genitseftsis, CEO Spirito Group Marketing & Communication.
- e) Private debriefing meeting (EEA Panel members only): Discussion of the outcomes and findings of the PSP virtual visit; preparation of oral report.
- f) Closure meeting with the Vice Rector and President of MODIP, the Department Head and PSP Director, and MODIP Manager, Ms. E. Tsironi: Informal, oral presentation of the EEA Panel PSP key findings and clarifications.

Wednesday 04/12/2024 to Saturday 07/12/2024:

Draft report writing. EEA Panel virtual meetings. Review and finalization of draft report.

Throughout the review and evaluation process, the EEA Panel was in close communication with the Department and PSP administration, which were very accommodating in providing additional information requested by the EEA Panel. The EEA Panel found that the Department

and the PSP administration, as well as the faculty, staff, and employers interviewed were eager and helpful in our discussions, providing valuable additional information.

III. Postgraduate Study Programme Profile

The establishment of the new postgraduate study programme (PSP) Mediterranean Crop Production Systems was approved by the Faculty Senate of the University of Thessaly (meeting no. 305/02-04-2024) based on the provisions of Public Law 4957/2022 as well as other pertinent laws and regulations. The new PSP is organized and will be offered by the Department of Agriculture Crop Production and Rural Environment, located in N. Ionia, Magnisias. There are two study tracks proposed: a) Sustainable Agriculture and Plant Breeding; and b) Cutting-edge Sectors in Fruit and Vegetable Production.

The goals of the new PSP are: a) the promotion of scientific knowledge and the development of research in areas related to modern cultivation systems of plant species with high added value and in cutting-edge fields of plant production science relevant to the Mediterranean region; and b) to train and develop scientists to staff bodies and services of the public and private sector and who will be active in the sustainable management of genetic and natural resources for the production of agricultural goods of high quality and added value.

The programme has set at thirty (30) the maximum number of admitted students per academic year. Admitted students are graduates primarily of agronomy, as well as engineering and other natural sciences. The admission criteria and selection process are specified in the proposed PSP Internal Regulation posted on the PSP website (<https://agr.uth.gr/program/mesogeiaika-sustimata-agrotikis-paragwgis/>). Tuition fees are set at €2500 for the entire programme.

The PSP consists of two (2) academic semesters study resulting in level 7 Diploma of Postgraduate Studies. To graduate, the student must have successfully completed a total of 60 European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits (35 ECTS for coursework and 25 ECTS for the preparation and successful completion of the mandatory postgraduate thesis). Lectures are given in a hybrid mode (i.e., partially in-person and remotely), and lecture attendance is mandatory. Students must take and succeed in seven (7) courses chosen from a total of ten (10) mandatory and elective courses offered. The EEA Panel found that the number of courses offered cover new topics and technologies related to the main thrust of the proposed PSP with particular emphasis on climate change and the Mediterranean region. Teaching staff in the PSP includes seven (7) core faculty of the Department of Agriculture Crop Production and Rural Environment and one (1) specialized laboratory staff member. Provisions to include external instructors and seminar speakers are made. Specialized technical staff and administrative staff assist the PSP.

The PSP prepares graduates with knowledge and research tools that will allow them to work in agricultural businesses and services, in research organizations, as well as in public services and bodies. There are strong links to the society, which is key priority of the PSP Mediterranean Crop Production Systems, the Department of Agriculture Crop Production and Rural Environment, and the Institution.

The Department of Agriculture Crop Production and Rural Environment offers two postgraduate study programmes, participates in two inter-departmental postgraduate study programmes, and supports doctoral studies.

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

Principle 1: Strategy, Quality Assurance Policy and Quality Goal Setting for the New Postgraduate Study Programmes

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD INCLUDE IN THEIR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT THE DEVELOPMENT, ORGANISATION, AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES (PSP) IN SPECIFIC SCIENTIFIC FIELDS AFTER INVESTIGATING THEIR FEASIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY.

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD APPLY A QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY FOR THE NEW POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES AS PART OF THEIR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT.

THIS POLICY SHOULD EXPAND AND BE AIMED (WITH THE COLLABORATION OF EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS) AT THE PSP OF THE INSTITUTION AND THE ACADEMIC UNIT. THIS POLICY SHOULD BE PUBLISHED AND IMPLEMENTED BY ALL INTERESTED PARTIES.

By decision/s of the Institutional Senate, the Institutions should adapt their strategy to allow for the provision of postgraduate study programmes, in addition to attending to the profile, vision, mission and strategic objectives of the Institution. In this strategy, the Institutions should anticipate the potential benefits, difficulties or risks from the implementation of new postgraduate study programmes and plan all the necessary actions to achieve their goals. The Institution's strategic choices should be documented through specific feasibility and sustainability studies, especially for new postgraduate study programmes.

In the case of PSP delivered by distance methods, the Institution prepares and applies an e-learning strategy. The Institution's e-learning strategy is integrated into its overall strategy and identifies educational goals while keeping up to the rapid technological changes and to the developments in pedagogical models. The Institution should include in its strategy the justification and feasibility as to why e-learning has been selected as the appropriate learning strategy for the particular programmes of study where it is applied.

In the context of e-learning, innovation strategies, the possibility of programme revision, the linking between learning and research (requiring knowledge of the latest innovations in order to select the most appropriate means to achieve the learning outcomes) should be taken into account.

The quality assurance policy of the academic unit for postgraduate study programmes should be in line with the Institution's strategy 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 postgraduate 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 continuous 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 and the availability 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 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 internal review and audit of the quality assurance system for the PSP through the cooperation of the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) with the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU)*

Documentation

- *The Institutional strategy for postgraduate studies, which includes a special strategy for e-learning, as long as it is applied to the Institution's PSP*
- *Feasibility and sustainability studies for the new PSP*
- *Quality Policy of the academic unit for the development and improvement of PSP*
- *Quality Targeting of the academic unit for the PSP*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The new PSP on "Mediterranean Crop Production Systems" is comprised of two semesters (30 ECTS each) covering the minimum number of 60 ECTS to be considered appropriate for level 7, according to the European and National Qualifications Framework. In principle, each PSP student needs to successfully attend seven (7) modules (35 ECTS) and to conduct a research-oriented thesis (25 ECTS).

The Quality Assurance Policy document (<https://agr.uth.gr/program/mesogeika-sustimata-agrotikis-paragwgis/>) of the academic unit includes a commitment for its implementation and the efficient use of PSP financial resources. However, this document is referring to all postgraduate study programmes supported by the Department without specifics for the newly developed PSP programme.

The academic unit has set some measurable goals regarding the postgraduate study programme, especially in respect of teaching methods, yet not always paired with appropriate key performance indicators (KPIs).

The graduates of this PSP are expected to enhance their competencies and seek a position of professional maturity based on the data provided from the feasibility study conducted by the Department.

Course lectures will be provided in person or via distant learning; the mode or attendance per course per week have been clarified.

The nature of the offered PSP provides incentives for fruitful collaboration with farmers and other professional bodies and communities. This interaction is expected to additionally lead to enhanced visibility and recognition of the University of Thessaly within Greece.

II. Analysis

SWOT analysis of the proposed new PSP lists as weaknesses the need for additional modern equipment and the limited number of faculty involved as instructors. This issue may affect the quality of the offered research-oriented thesis.

The Quality Assurance Policy document need to be amended, adjusted to the needs and priorities of the current PSP programme. It should specifically focus on what ways its continuous improvement will be accomplished.

The PSP programme should set a higher number of specific and measurable goals paired with suitable key performance indicators towards learning outcomes.

The goals in respect of the offered teaching methods (on site and distant) are missing.

The feasibility study did not elaborate in detail relative to the other competitive PSP and how the current PSP will fill a gap, especially as no modules particularly linked with climate change are being offered.

Concerns are raised regarding the minimum number of ECTS (60) offered compared to other competitive PSP with 90-120 ECTS.

The postgraduate studies thesis receives 10 ECTS in the first semester and 15 ECTS in the second semester. To the EEA Panel knowledge, the ECTS are credited once the thesis is successfully defended. This part needs to be clarified and to be sufficiently communicated to PSP students.

III. Conclusions

The proposed PSP is substantially compliant towards Principle 1. Several recommendations are provided based on the analysis conducted on aspects linked to the strategy, quality assurance policy, and quality goal setting for the new PSP.

Panel Judgement

Principle 1: Strategy, Quality Assurance Policy and Quality Goal Setting for the New Postgraduate Study Programmes	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

R1.1 The amended Quality Assurance Policy should be sufficiently communicated to all parties involved. It is also suggested to be communicated in English to increase visibility of the new PSP within an international context.

R1.2 Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely goals should be set regarding the PSP, especially in respect to teaching methods, student satisfaction, learning outcomes, and research outputs of the accomplished PSP thesis.

R1.3 The PSP programme should include several specific and measurable goals towards learning outcomes and research outputs (i.e., publications in refereed journals or presentations in Conferences per PSP student) and means to inform the alumnae and other potential interested parties from other Academic Units for enrolment in the current programme.

Principle 2: Design and Approval of New 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 NEW POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES. THE OBJECTIVES, THE SPECIFIC SCIENTIFIC SUBJECT AND THE STREAMS OR SPECIALISATIONS, THE EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND THE EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS ARE SET OUT IN THE PROGRAMME DESIGN. DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW 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, the specialisations, the expected learning outcomes, the structure, the courses, the teaching and assessment modes, the teaching staff and the necessary resources 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. In particular, for each expected 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 for the 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 NQF, 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: teaching assignments per subject area and per course*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The PSP is supported by seven (7) faculty of the Department who offer courses linked to their area of expertise. However, there is lack of modules linked to adverse climate change scenarios and low-input agricultural practices through precision agriculture. These subjects are only partially elaborated in some modules.

The teaching load of the (7) faculty is high, beyond their contractual obligations. Their commitment and *pro bono* service are acknowledged.

The stakeholders (3) interviewed by the EEA Panel were enthusiastic about their interaction with the Department, mainly in joint funded projects, yet they were unaware of the curriculum of the new PSP. In addition, there was no evidence of undergraduate students and/or past graduates' participation in the curriculum development.

The EEA Panel found no evidence of advice by an External Advisory Board in the strategic development of the PSP, potential curriculum enhancements, research needs, and alternative funding sources. It was evident, that such proposition was well received by the Director of the PSP and the Vice Rector of Academic Affairs.

II. Analysis

There was/is no formal procedure in place for the development of the new PSP and for periodic revisions of the curriculum.

Hands-on experience of PSP students is limited to some modules and specific courses, partially due to limited supporting personnel for practical exercises.

It was not clear and discrete the differentiation between the two study tracks offered by the proposed PSP.

The remote delivery of the PSP is essential for the success of the new PSP. This issue needs to be handled with special attention by the technical IT services of the Department in terms of inventory and qualified support personnel.

Competitive PSP programmes were not analyzed in depth.

There is concern relative to the heavy teaching load and the number of PSP theses that each faculty will supervise.

III. Conclusions

The programme is substantially compliant with Principle 2. Below are several recommendations that may enhance its quality.

Panel Judgement

Principle 2: Design and Approval of New Postgraduate Study Programmes	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

R2.1 A formal process should be established for students/alumni/stakeholders to participate in the continuous improvement of the curriculum.

R2.2 Hiring additional faculty in the fields linked to climate change and precision agriculture should be prioritized.

R2.3 A course on Applied Statistics should be incorporated horizontally for all postgraduate studies programmes offered by the Department.

R2.4 Guest lectures by invited speakers (both from academia and industry), either on-site or virtually, should be an intricate part of each course module.

R2.5 Consider assembling and publicizing an External Advisory Board which will assist in the strategic development and enhancement of the programme.

Principle 3: Regulations for 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).

The Institution should develop and publish the internal regulations prescribed by law which, among other things, should regulate all issues of postgraduate studies from the beginning to the end of the studies.

Indicatively:

- *The students' 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*

In case that the PSP is offered through distance learning methods, the Institution should have in place a regulation for e-learning, including in particular the following issues:

- *Services of the Institution to support e-learning*
- *Methodology for the development and implementation of courses*
- *Ways of providing teaching and variety of teaching and assessment modes*
- *General standard of course structure*
- *Student support system*
- *Support of faculty/teachers with mandatory e-learning training for new staff members*
- *Technological infrastructures made available by the Institution*
- *Student identity confirmation system (student identity check, assignment and exam writing process, security and certification issues).*
- ❖ *The Institution should establish rules for the provision of appropriate access and for the assurance of the participation of students affected by disability, illness, and other special circumstances.*
- ❖ *Ethical issues, such as those concerning data protection, intellectual property rights and rules for protection against fraud are governed by the e-learning regulation.*

All the above must be made public within the context of the Student Guide.

Documentation

- *Internal regulation for the operation of the postgraduate study programme*
- *Special regulation for the implementation of e-learning if the PSP is delivered through distance methods*
- *Research Ethics Regulation*

- *Regulation of studies, internship, mobility, and student assignments*
- *Degree certificate template and Diploma Supplement template*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The new PSP is organized and will be offered by the Department of Agriculture Crop Production and Rural Environment. Lectures will be delivered using a hybrid learning mode (face-to-face and remote teaching).

The admission criteria are clearly presented. Applicants should have an undergraduate degree with a GPA of 6.5 and above. Admitted students are graduates primarily of agronomy, as well as engineering and other natural sciences. The applicants should also provide a certificate for the English language according to governmental principles.

A research Ethics Regulation was provided in the documentation.

The Department provided the Diploma Supplement template as it is a compulsory document for the graduates in both Greek and English.

The role of the Academic Advisor has been described: mitigation measures to be taken when poor student performance is observed as well as resolution of other academic challenges. The Department also provides numerous services to the students to ensure engagement.

The course handbook presents in detail the students' rights and obligations as well as the steps towards their progression and ways to mitigate unforeseen circumstances.

The PSP does not include required practice or internships; however, PSP students may participate in the Erasmus+ programme. Information on Erasmus+ is provided at the course handbook.

II. Analysis

The new PSP proposal outlines the subjects and teaching schedule, detailing which courses will be delivered remotely and which will be conducted in-person.

A well-defined structure is provided, ensuring that all courses alternate between in-person and remote delivery on a weekly basis. This hybrid model aims to offer flexibility, enabling students to work or study remotely, thereby supporting a distance learning approach.

Admissions to the PSP will be processed through email submissions. Additionally, the Department offers one annual scholarship in the form of a tuition fee waiver, subject to specific eligibility criteria.

III. Conclusions

The Department has established regulations governing student admission, progression, and the recognition of postgraduate qualifications and certification.

Panel Judgement

Principle 3: Regulations for Student Admission, Progression, Recognition of Postgraduate Studies, and certification	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

R3.1 Invite industry representatives to serve as guest speakers on current curriculum topics.

R3.2 Invite industry partners to supervise students on projects of interest to industry.

R3.3 Increase hands-on practice with more laboratory/field exercises.

Principle 4: Teaching Staff of New 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 and scientific competence of the teaching staff at the PSP, the appropriate staff-student ratio, the proper staff categories, the appropriate subject areas, the fair and objective recruitment process, the high research performance, the training, 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, policy for attracting highly qualified staff, and PSP Obligation Regulation*
- *List of the intended for recruitment teaching staff including subject areas, employment relationship, Institution of origin, Department of origin and relevant individual achievements*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

There are seven (7) faculty members that would deliver the PSP (one Professor, two Associate Professors, and three Assistant Professors and one special teaching staff). No participation of other Faculty is included either as co-instructor or as guest lecturer.

The faculty members are responsible for one to two courses and there is a certain degree of sharing responsibilities for the programme delivery. The teaching staff members are dedicated to the successful delivery of the new PSP.

There is transparency on the workload of faculty members, who in addition to the PSP, have teaching responsibilities in the undergraduate programme of the Department.

II. Analysis

The PSP is projected to enrol a maximum of thirty (30) students. While the maximum number of enrolled students is overambitious, it is a rather challenging task for the faculty to work

with the students and provide quality of supervision at the heavy weighted research thesis project. The faculty members would have to supervise at least four postgraduate theses in a short period of time. The research projects should be completed within the second semester and summertime. As the students would have to complete their write up in August and September, which is the usual annual leave time of the faculty members, it brings further stress on human resources.

The EEA Panel has not been informed of any structured professional development plans for teaching staff, particularly junior faculty, and support staff with PhDs, such as start-up grants or mentoring initiatives.

The teaching staff is dedicated to the successful delivery of the new PSP. While some faculty members have strong research profiles, other members are lagging with limited research activities and publications.

III. Conclusions

The programme is substantially compliant with Principle 3. Below are several recommendations that may enhance its quality.

Panel Judgement

Principle 4: Teaching Staff of New Postgraduate Study Programmes	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

R4.1 More faculty members should be involved with the new PSP, as current members are overloaded. This can be achieved with common modules among the other postgraduate study programmes offered by the Department.

R4.2 Junior staff members should engage in research to enhance their research performance and publications.

R4.3 Teaching staff with expertise in areas linked to the nature of the PSP (i.e., precision agriculture, adaptation to climate change) should be appointed on a contract basis.

Principle 5: Learning Resources and Student Support

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE ADEQUATE FUNDING TO COVER THE TEACHING AND LEARNING NEEDS OF THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES. 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, 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 and foreign students, students with disabilities), in addition to the shift towards student-centered 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 University maintains adequate laboratory facilities, including a 12-ha farm. It also maintains computer laboratories, libraries, and subscriptions to research databases. These facilities are deemed sufficient for the successful delivery of the proposed postgraduate programme. Yet, several laboratories are lacking modern infrastructure as provided in the SWOT analysis.

The University provides career as well as comprehensive student welfare services, which include student dormitories, dining facilities, sports facilities and activities, psychological support and counseling services, as well as a notable cultural activities programme.

Furthermore, the University places significant emphasis on discrimination-related issues through its participation in relevant awareness programmes.

Students are informed about welfare services through email communications and corresponding announcements on the University's website. Many of the student support and welfare services maintain their own detailed websites.

The student welfare services are adequately staffed with appropriate personnel.

The tuition utilization plan is integrated into the detailed operational budget of the PSP.

II. Analysis

An analysis of the institutional framework reveals a comprehensive infrastructure and support system that demonstrates the University's commitment to academic excellence and student welfare. The physical infrastructure encompasses substantial laboratory facilities, including a noteworthy 12-ha farm, complemented by modern computer laboratories and extensive library resources with comprehensive research database access. This robust infrastructure appears optimally configured to facilitate postgraduate education and research.

The Institution demonstrates an exemplary commitment to student welfare through a multifaceted support system that transcends conventional academic services. Of particular significance is the integration of career services alongside traditional student support mechanisms, indicating a forward-thinking approach that acknowledges the importance of professional development. Moreover, the University's active participation in discrimination awareness programmes reflects its dedication to fostering an inclusive academic environment, aligning with contemporary higher education principles.

From a financial management perspective, the integration of the tuition utilization plan within the operational budget framework suggests a methodical approach to resource allocation and fiscal planning for the PSP. The systematic financial structure indicates careful consideration of resource distribution and programme sustainability.

III. Conclusions

In conclusion, the Institution has established a comprehensive support structure that effectively balances academic excellence with student welfare, career development, and social responsibility. This is reinforced by transparent communication channels and sound financial management practices, creating an environment conducive to advanced academic pursuit and professional development.

Panel Judgement

Principle 5: Learning Resources and Student Support	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

R5.1 Develop comprehensive metrics for tracking facility usage.

R5.2 Introduce regular assessment mechanisms for student support services through structured feedback systems and establish clear KPIs to measure service effectiveness and student satisfaction.

R5.3 Improve the inventory in less-equipped laboratories based on the surplus generated by the tuition fees.

Principle 6: Initial Internal and External Evaluation and Monitoring of New Postgraduate Study Programmes

INSTITUTIONS AND ACADEMIC UNITS SHOULD HAVE IN PLACE AN INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM, FOR THE AUDIT, INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE NEW POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES, THUS ENSURING COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF THE PRESENT STANDARDS. ANY ACTIONS TAKEN IN THE ABOVE CONTEXT SHOULD BE COMMUNICATED TO ALL PARTIES CONCERNED.

The internal evaluation of the new PSP includes the assessment of the accreditation proposal, as well as the documentation in accordance with the Principles of the present Standards and the quality procedures of the Institution's Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS). The internal evaluation of new postgraduate study programmes also aims at maintaining the level of educational provision and creating a supportive and effective learning environment for students. The Institution, through its Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) and the corresponding academic units, organise and support the external evaluation procedures of the new PSP, according to the specific guidelines and directions provided by HAHE.

The above comprise the assessment of:

- the objectives, content, and structure of the curriculum, the knowledge offered and the level of science and technology in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the PSP is up to date, according to the relevant documentation listed in the decisions of the pertinent bodies*
- the entailed students' workload for the progression and completion of postgraduate studies*
- the satisfaction of the students' expectations and needs in relation to the programme*
- the learning environment, support services, and their fitness for purpose for the PSP in question*

Postgraduate study programmes are designed and established in accordance with the provisions of the Institution's internal regulations, involving students and other stakeholders.

Documentation

- *The Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) procedure for verifying whether the requirements of the Standards for Quality Accreditation of New PSP are met, as well as the procedure for organising and supporting their external evaluation procedures*
- *Assessment and feedback mechanisms of the PSP strategy and quality targeting, and relevant decision-making processes (students, external stakeholders)*

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

Academic staff members of the PSP demonstrated their awareness of the significance of external evaluation and accreditation processes and their contribution to programme enhancement.

While the University demonstrates intention to utilize feedback from external evaluations, there is no standardized procedure delineated in the PSP operational regulations.

The proposed PSP is new and as such has not previously undergone any external evaluation.

II. Analysis

The Institution demonstrates a positive foundational awareness of evaluation importance, as evidenced by the teaching staff's recognition of external evaluation and accreditation's role in programme improvement. This awareness represents a crucial first step in establishing a culture of continuous improvement.

The stakeholders (3) interviewed by the EEA Panel were enthusiastic about their interaction with the Department, yet they were unaware of the curriculum of the new PSP. In addition, there was no evidence of undergraduate students and/or past graduates' participation in the curriculum development.

A critical weakness emerges in the lack of standardized procedures for utilizing external evaluation feedback. Despite the University's expressed intention to implement evaluation findings, the absence of formalized procedures in the operational regulations suggests a gap between intention and systematic implementation. This lack of standardization could potentially limit the effective utilization of valuable evaluation insights.

III. Conclusions

The PSP shows fundamental awareness of evaluation importance but needs enhancement of its quality assurance framework. While proposed external evaluation participation is strong, internal evaluation mechanisms by the faculty and standardized procedures for implementing findings are not specified. The programme's first external evaluation offers an opportunity to establish comprehensive assessment procedures. Implementation of structured evaluation protocols and regular, annual assessment cycles would strengthen the programme's quality assurance and enhance educational outcomes.

Panel Judgement

Principle 6: Initial Internal and External Evaluation and Monitoring of New Postgraduate Study Programmes	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

R6.1 Develop a comprehensive internal evaluation system that incorporates feedback from multiple stakeholders, including academic staff, administrators, alumni, and external stakeholders alongside existing student evaluations to ensure a holistic assessment approach.

R6.2 Establish formalized procedures within the operational regulations for processing and implementing external evaluation feedback, including clear guidelines for action plans, timelines, and responsibility assignments.

R6.3 Design a formal tracking system to monitor and document the implementation of recommendations from both internal and external evaluations, including measurable outcomes and success indicators.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

- The PSP has the necessary procedures for monitoring quality assurance and aligns with the strategic objectives of the Department and the University.
- Faculty and staff are knowledgeable, enthusiastic, and dedicated to the PSP's mission.
- The PSP and the Department maintain a network of potential employers and stakeholders.

II. Areas of Weakness

- Limited number of specific and clearly defined key performance indicators (KPIs).
- There is a lack of a module in Applied Statistics and other areas linked to the aims of the programme (i.e., Precision or Low-input Agriculture, Climate Change).
- Lack of modern equipment in several laboratories and limited supporting/technical personnel.
- Modest research output for some faculty involved in the PSP.
- There was no formal, organized involvement of external stakeholders, alumni, etc. in the design of the new PSP.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

- Amend the specific learning outcomes of each course module in a more specific and countable way.
- Include specific activities linked to hands-on experience per module.
- Incorporate a module in Applied Statistics that can be offered horizontally for all PSPs of the Department.
- Develop an Alumni Association, track the employability and career paths of graduates.
- Implement annual evaluation audits and provide executive summary of the main outputs and the programme objectives for the following academic year.
- Increase the number and refine KPIs to set measurable goals, track outcomes, and identify areas for improvement, strengthening the overall quality and impact of the PSP.
- Implement mentorship and grantsmanship training programmes for junior faculty to boost research funding, outputs, and collaborations.
- Encourage mobility of PSP students, faculty, and staff.
- Consider forming an Advisory Board comprised of external faculty, graduates, and social and industrial partners to support continuous PSP review, curriculum development, and programme enhancement.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: **3, 5**

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: **1, 2, 4, 6**

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

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

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

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname

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- 2. George Manganaris**
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