ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
HELLENIC REPUBLIC

Accreditation Report
for the Postgraduate Study Programme of:

Special Education

Department: Early Childhood Education

Institution: National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
Date: 23 September 2023

Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the Postgraduate Study Programme of **Special Education** of the **National and Kapodistrian University of Athens** 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 **Special Education** of the **National and Kapodistrian University of Athens** comprised the following four (4) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

1. **Prof. Leonidas Kyriakides (Chair)**

   University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus

2. **Prof. Emer. Athanasios Gagatsis**

   University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus

3. **Prof. Marios Vryonides**

   European University Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus

4. **Vasileios Ntaflos**

   Postgraduate Student School of Humanities, Hellenic Open University, Patras, Greece

II.   Review Procedure and Documentation

The accreditation of the new postgraduate study programme (PSP) of Special Education of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA) was conducted fully in a remote mode during the period 18-23 of September 2023. The Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE) provided the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel (EEAP) members with a package of materials ahead of the review process that included the Standards for Quality Accreditation, Mapping Grid and Assessment Guide, Assurance Policy Document, the European Qualifications Framework, as well as a wealth of other supportive material. In addition, the panel was also provided with HAHE's accreditation guidelines and was invited to attend an orientation session before the accreditation online visit. The NKUA provided the Department's Accreditation Proposal and a Table of Contents for easy access to the files of each principle/standard, as well as additional supportive material including documents and presentations for each principle. For the evaluation process, the EEAP also consulted the website of the Department.

The EEAP met as a group before the accreditation teleconferences to plan ahead, discuss the accreditation proposals, allocate tasks and coordinate the process to be followed during the evaluation online meetings, and list issues that emerged from the preliminary study of the material. The virtual accreditation visit extended over three days, starting on September 18th, 2023. During this day, the EEAP met with the Director of the PSP, the Head of the Department of Early Childhood Education (DECE) of the NKUA, staff of the Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP), and members of the Steering Committees, as well as members of OMEA. Initially, Professor Vasileios Tsafos (Head of the Department of Early Childhood Education) and Associate Professor Evdoxia Nteropoulou-Nterou (Director of the programme) led an overview of the PSP including a brief history and academic profile, as well as its current strengths and possible areas of concern. The discussion was extended with OMEA and MODIP representatives to explain the degree of compliance of the programme to the Quality Standards for Accreditation. A detailed presentation of the information and supporting material under each one of the twelve principles of the "*Standards for Quality Accreditation of New Undergraduate Programmes in Operation"* was provided. In addition, the Institution held a brief demonstration of student assignments, thesis, and examination papers and material. The last part of the meeting consisted of an on-line tour of the facilities of the Department that are used for the purposes of the PSP. Specifically, classrooms, lecture halls, libraries laboratories, and other equipment were presented in a [video](). The EEAP discussed with administrative & teaching staff members about the adequacy of these learning resources to successfully achieve the objectives of the programme. The meeting concluded with a debriefing session only with EEAP members to reflect on impressions of the first day and prepare for the second day of the online review.

The second day (September 19th, 2023) consisted of a series of meetings related to involved people experiences and impressions about the PSP. First, the EEAP held a meeting with members of the teaching staff to discuss professional development opportunities, mobility, and competence to attain the objectives of the programme. Issues of workload, attainment of learning outcomes, and evaluation of the programme by students were also addressed. The conversation also covered issues regarding the connection between teaching and research, teaching staff's involvement in applied research projects that directly related to the programme, as well as possible areas for improvement. The second meeting was conducted with students that are currently enrolled in the programme (1st and 2nd year). The students described their satisfaction related to their study experience and the facilities of the Department, which was an additional input for the quality assurance process. More general issues concerning student life and welfare were also mentioned. Next, the EEAP met with graduates of the programme to discuss their previous experience during their studies and their current career path and opportunities. A fourth meeting was also conducted with employers and social partners of the programme to discuss the relations of the Department with external stakeholders from the private and the public sector. A debriefing meeting with EEAP

members was later followed to discuss the outcomes of the virtual visit and prepare the oral report. At the end, the EEAP met with the Director of the programme, the Head of the Department, MODIP members and Steering Committee/OMEA members to discuss on several points which may have needed further clarification, concluding with an informal presentation of the EEAP key preliminary findings.

The EEAP members conducted two additional private meetings to finalize the conclusions and draft the Accreditation Report for the PSP. During the final meeting on the 23rd of September, the EEAP gathered again to complete and submit the Report to the HAHE.

III.   Postgraduate Study Programme Profile

The DECE belongs to the School of Education of the NKUA and operates since 1987 bearing its first graduates in 1991 (Law 1268/82). While traditionally connected with preschool education, it is now oriented to the early years of schooling, as the second year of kindergarten in Greece has become compulsory. The Department generally aims to provide scientifically based training for early childhood teachers, placing emphasis on critical thinking and innovative teaching methods. With a professionally oriented undergraduate degree and four postgraduate programmes, DECE aims to provide students with foundational knowledge in their relevant disciplines and prepared them to work as practitioners in preschool and early school levels or in other related positions such as researchers and public servants.

The PSP of Special education leads to a Master of Arts degree that was developed with the purpose to provide high level education in the scientific field of special education mainly related to inclusive education. The programme was originally established in 2001 and became an independent program, organized solely by the DECE, in 2008. Recently, it has been re-established under the DECE in 2018 in accordance with the provisions of Law 4485/2017 (Government Gazette 2432, Issue B', 26/06/2018). The programme's aim is twofold. On the one hand, it aims to develop students' capacity in research, studies development, and educational policies implementation that focus on combating social discrimination in education. Second, it prepares specialist scientists and educators to work in the areas of special education for people with disabilities in public and private institutions, social services, and non-governmental organizations.

The course duration spans 24 months and comprises 120 ECTS. In brief, the courses provide knowledge on contemporary approaches for the education and social inclusion of people with disabilities, as well as research methodologies on special education. Specifically, compulsory modules include:

- Qualitative approaches in educational research: biographical approach and action research in special and inclusive education (10 ECTS)

- Research methods in social sciences and in educational research (10 ECTS)

- Psychological approach of children with disabilities (10 ECTS)

- Educational and social inclusion of people with disabilities (10 ECTS)

- Inclusive education policy and practice: cross–cultural Perspectives (10 ECTS)

Marked features of the programme are the completion of a dissertation and a semester (the spring semester of the first year) of supervised practical training at inclusion programs in general schools, special education schools and units or day treatment centres operated by the state particularly for this purpose. Other obligations to complete the programme are the attendance of a 'Special and Inclusive Education workshop' and the interdisciplinary seminar 'Body, disease and forms of exclusion in modern bio politic societies'.

The classes and facilities utilised for the purposes of the programme are located in Athens. The courses are conducted in the Greek language. The total tuition fee is €3,600 for the two years. Applicants should have a first degree relevant to special education as well as certified knowledge of Greek and English. After the full and successful completion of the studies, the programme leads to the acquirement of MA Diploma in Special Education awarded by the DECE of the NKUA, which qualifies holders for pedagogical and teaching competence (Ministerial Decision number Φ.12 / 547/139457 / Γ1 / 8-9-2014, Official Gazette 2462 B / 16-09-2014).

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 Quality Assurance Policy of the DECE aligns with the quality policy and procedures of the NKUA. This commitment ensures that the department is dedicated to providing high-quality education in Greek and English languages in the field of preschool and early education. The Department achieves this by offering undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral programs of high academic standards and added value. Additionally, it aims to foster critical thinking, quality research and scientific expression for the staff and academic community. This commitment to quality seems to extend to the PSP of Special Education, with a focus on continuous improvement through established quality assurance processes. The Quality Assurance

Policy enhances the academic profile and orientation of the program, supports its purpose and objectives, and specifies annual goals, means, and methods for achieving them. It also ensures involvement of stakeholders in evaluation and redesign processes to continuously improve its programmes. Specifically, to implement this policy, the DECE commits to:

1. Establishing a Quality Assurance Policy framework for the program in Special Education to ensure that specific operations of quality assurance are in place.
2. Allocating and managing resources for the program to assure that resources are available for the attainment of the objectives related to financing staff needs, infrastructure, equipment, and that the effectiveness of the programme is continuously improving.
3. Setting annual Quality Assurance Goals for the program, incorporating measurable and observable objectives assessed through specific indicators.
4. Conducting annual internal evaluation and monitoring of the program in collaboration with the university's Quality Assurance Unit, aiming to identify areas for improvement and implementing agreed-upon corrective actions.
5. Collecting, measuring, and analysing data from various sources such as students, staff, courses structure, teaching, and provision of services using the internal information systems to inform decisions for improvement.
6. Disseminating information about the program to promote clarity, transparently and availability through a dedicated portal in Greek and English on the Department's website.
7. Subjecting the program to external evaluation and certification by the HAHE with independent experts involved in the assessment processes.

As presented in the Program's documents A1-A5, the systematic implementation of the outlined procedures yields several crucial benefits. It ensures the suitability of the structure and organization of the programme within the DECE. This alignment is essential to provide a well-structured and effective educational framework. By rigorously aligning learning outcomes and resulting qualifications with the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education at level 7, it maximizes the recognition and relevance of graduates' qualifications, promoting their academic and professional standing. The policy promotes teaching quality and effectiveness within the programme. This is achieved through continuous monitoring, involving the coordinating committee, the Quality Assurance Unit, the Department's management, and the Internal Evaluation Unit of the University. It ensures that the qualifications of teaching staff, particularly external collaborators, are adequate for providing the required education to postgraduate students. The formulation, implementation, and regular review of specific annual quality objectives are critical for the ongoing improvement of the programme. These objectives guide efforts to assess students' satisfaction and ensure that the programme responds to the demand for qualifications in the job market. For example, the Department assess periodically the labour market needs and track graduates' progress, including those with disabilities. Such procedures help graduates make a smoother transition to their professional careers. In addition, measures are taken to encompass accessible administrative facilities, well-equipped libraries, online resources, scholarship opportunities, and student support services tailored to the needs of the PSP. Indication of the efficient utilization of financial resources is that these are channelled towards providing necessary services to students and facilitating program operations, such as on-site visits to external facilities, maintenance of libraries, offering scholarships, student welfare services, and provision of ICT systems. The annual internal evaluation is conducted in close cooperation with the Quality Assurance Unit and the Internal Evaluation Unit of the University. This systematic approach ensures that the quality assurance processes remain effective and adaptive and underscores the department's commitment to delivering a high-quality educational experience.

The appendix A2 presents the 19 quality goals that the programme has set, which are aligned with the strategic objectives of the DECE and are accompanied by specific indicators as well as actions, responsibilities, and timeframe to undertake. These include (1) enhancing postgraduate student graduation rates, (2) cultivating a culture of quality within the master's program, (3) student-centred learning, (4) provision of academic advising and consultation, (5) active involvement of current and alumni students in internal

evaluation processes, (6) quality of research produced by the faculty based on publications and academic impact, (7) involvement of students in research initiatives, (8) connecting the program with doctoral studies, (9) improving facilities and student support services, (10) connecting the program with the job market and the local community, (11) utilizing, collaborating, and networking with graduates of the department, (12) attracting international students, (13) recruiting faculty members from foreign institutions, (14) participation in activities with European universities within in CIVIS network, (15) involvement of students in Erasmus exchange programs, (16) development of information systems for administration and digital governance services, (17) enhancement of facilities and student support services, (18) improving accessibility for people with disabilities, (19) promoting gender equality and equal representation.

The Quality Assurance Policy of the programme is available on the Department's website and is annually shared electronically via email with the teaching, administrative, and technical staff at the beginning of each academic year. It is also provided to incoming students when a new implementation cycle begins. Moreover, the policy is presented at orientation events for new students, and it is shared with social partners and organizations collaborating with the Department. The primary objective of the program is to offer high-level postgraduate education in the field of Special Education. Since its inception, the program has consistently aimed to specialize postgraduate students in the realm of special education and training. This specialization is achieved by providing students with a strong theoretical foundation, comprehensive on-subject expertise, and in-service practical experience. The program emphasizes critical thinking and encourages students to engage in scientific dialogue, which is a key aspect of research and educational practice. Graduates are equipped not only to produce high-quality research but also to critically evaluate its quality and effectively utilize research outcomes within their professional roles. Successful completion of the program leads to the award of a degree conferred by the DECE in the NKUA.

Through a comprehensive overview of the available evidence (i.e., provision of documents, accreditation meetings, students and social partners perspectives, department's and programmes websites), the PSP of Special Education is dedicated to providing comprehensive knowledge in various domains, including clinical-diagnostic aspects of disabilities, the social, cultural, and political dimensions of disability, contemporary approaches to education and the social inclusion of individuals with disabilities, research methodologies in special education, inclusive education, and disability studies.

It has been also highlighted during the presentation of the programme that specific efforts are made to provide high quality education, adjust students' workload, and adopt a student-centred learning, which has led to steadily increasing the graduate rate of its students. In addition, firm and transparent admission criteria for prospecting student are in place as described in the programme study regulation (mainly based on portfolio rating and personal interview). Last, the number of students admitted in the programme for the current academic year is now set at 30, compared to 25 students was the maximum number for previous years.

This program plays a vital role in promoting educational and social inclusion, actively countering their exclusion, and fostering inclusive educational structures within mainstream education. Additionally, it aims to enhance the workforce of special education schools and training centres by producing graduates who possess pedagogical competence and specialized knowledge recognised by the Ministry of Education. This recognition allows them to work in various local educational private and public employers. As noted by the teaching and administrative staff, the program actively disseminates information through diverse channels, including its departmental website, the University's official platform, institutional emails, annual electronic guides, collective publications, and the digital library of the NKUA, among other avenues. Overall, this Quality Assurance Policy underscores the department's commitment to delivering high-standard education in early childhood and special education.

II.   Analysis

The EEAP noted that the success of the quality assurance system in ensuring graduates' career advancement can be attributed to the effective mechanisms that are in place and faculty's dedicated focus to comply with high standards. Both the chair and faculty members are actively engaged with regular evaluations and

assessments. This commitment has a significant role in ensuring that students receive quality education and practical expertise that prepares them for several career opportunities. These opportunities encompass roles such as special education practitioners at public schools and private institutions, researchers in the scientific fields of special education and disability studies, public servants at policy-oriented positions in inclusive education, advocates of special education and more. The department close collaboration with several social partners and institutions provides students with opportunities for networking, placement, and employment. This was also evidenced during the accreditation meetings with students and external social partners and employers.

The outlined quality assurance procedures ensure program alignment within DECE strategic objectives, maximizing qualification recognition. Continuous monitoring promotes teaching quality, improvement in labour market responsiveness and support students to acquire high-level education emphasizing specialization, research skills, and critical thinking. Efficient financial resource utilization is also evident. The Quality Assurance Policy is shared annually and presented at orientation events. The documentation makes evident the feasibility of the programme to continue through the well-organized progress report (A18) that derived from the internal evaluation and presented during the accreditation process. Specifically, the number of students admitted in the programme for the current academic year is now set at 30, compared to 25 students was the maximum number for previous years, while the graduate rate of the programme's postgraduate students steadily increases. This not only ensures that the interest of students to enrol to the specific programme but also the intention of the Department to sustain the programme for the following years.

The program sets 19 quality goals that adhere to evaluation based on key performance indicators. As shown in the goal-setting document (A3), all goals are monitored and evaluated based on specific targets. In addition, further actions are outlined with the people that are responsible to undertake them within a specific timeframe. This ensures transparency and promotes responsibility among the involved parties of the programme. It is observed that for several targets there is room for improvement, which indicates the commitment of the Department to attain high quality standards and continuously improve the programme. For example, the current percentage of students who have not completed their dissertation yet is at 22%. Through enhanced tutorial courses and provision of additional material in the e-class and open delos platforms, this percentage is targeted to reduce at 16% by the end of the year. It is worthy to note that the programme has particularly well performance at the gender equality and equal representation objective.

The Department's quality assurance system prominently adheres to the "data-driven outcomes" model across operations. This approach applies the quality assurance process to articulate learning outcomes for students, promote ongoing academic development and research among faculty members, refine program studies, streamline administrative procedures, improve study and work conditions, and enhance research practices. As evaluated by the EEAP, these efforts are facilitated through the department's internal quality assurance system. In summary, this Quality Assurance Policy highlights the department's commitment to high-quality education in special education and disability studies to promote inclusion and workforce enhancement

III.   Conclusions

The Department's Quality Assurance Policy and systems operates effectively and systematically collects and analyses data to inform decisions on continuous improvement. The QA policy and strategy plan are transparent and well-defined. The programme's Coordinating Committee, the Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP), Internal Evaluation Group and faculty assembly collects, analyses, and utilizes the aforementioned information to prepare the internal and external evaluation Reports. These annual assessments lead to actionable plans and monitoring indicators, which are published on the program's website. They are taken into account by the relevant committees, the Program Director, the teaching and administrative staff, the General Assembly of the Department, and the Institutional Quality Assurance Unit as a whole. This process leads to decisions aimed at improving the program's operation and facilitating the dissemination of information and feedback to all stakeholders involved.

The EEAP recognises that the outlined quality assurance plan and procedures maintain clarity, relevance, measurability, and adherence to the operational strategic plan. The systematic approach as presented by the programme and Department ensures that the quality assurance processes remain effective and adaptive and underscores the faculty's commitment to delivering a high-quality educational experience. This commitment encompasses structural alignment, rigorous qualification standards, effective teaching, qualified instructors, continuous improvement, labour market relevance, robust support services, efficient resource management, and ongoing evaluation. For these reasons, the quality assurance policy and quality goal setting are deemed fully complaint to achieving excellence within the PSP in special education while demonstrating continuous dedication to improvement through well-established quality assurance processes

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The programme may systematically collect information from social partners, collaborating organisations and employers as an additional measure of continuously evaluating their satisfaction from their collaboration with the programme (e.g., recruiting graduates) as well as being always informed about the continuously transforming market needs.

PRINCIPLE 2: DESIGN AND APPROVAL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

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

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

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

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

In addition, the design of PSP must consider:

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

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

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

Study Programme Compliance

### I.	Findings

The Senate decision for the establishment of the PSP of Special Education was published in the Government of Greece Gazette dated 29/6/2023. In order to obtain the postgraduate degree, students need to complete 4 full academic semesters (120 ECTS), including a practicum and conducting a thesis dissertation.

During the studies, each postgraduate student is required to successfully succeed in eleven (11) courses (nine compulsory and two elective) in total, including practical training of special education and inclusive education for people with disability with supervision by the Laboratory of Special and Inclusive Education. According to the structure of the programme, classes are taught face-to-face on a weekly basis. The language of course instruction, practical exercises, workshops and writing the thesis is in Greek except for one (1) compulsory course entitled "Inclusive Education Policy and Practice: Cross-Cultural Perspectives" which is taught and evaluated in English.

Students are highly involved in the design of the program and by providing their feedback to programme Steering Committee.

The labour market may benefit from the PSP. Stakeholders interested in the graduates include the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, educational institutions in the public and private sectors, non-governmental organisations working on disability rights.

The student guide is a comprehensive 23-page long document that provides general information about the program information about the learning outcomes, the program study, the course and thesis outlines.

A comprehensive list of the teaching staff with their areas of specialisation, their relation to the courses taught, employment relationship, and teaching assignment in hours as well as other teaching commitments in hours are fully provided in the study guide and in the documentation submitted to the EEAP for review.

### II.	Analysis

The PSP followed established procedures and is compliant with the general expectations of a 2-year structure that is spread in 4 full academic semesters (120 ECTS). The courses are well designed and cover the whole spectrum of contemporary issues of Special education. Students as stakeholders are highly involved in the development of the program. The program is clearly linked to the relevant sectors that may employ special education teachers. All information is provided in a clear and structured way.

### III.	Conclusions

The panel concludes that the PSP of Special Education is fully compliant with the second principle of accreditation.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

None.

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

Based on the series of documents provided by the Department presenting the PSP and the meetings conducted during the Accreditation review with the teaching staff and students, there is clear evidence that student-centred learning, teaching, and assessment is one of the priorities of the programme. One of the main goals is to provide postgraduate students with theoretical knowledge and specialized skills for professional activity and develop their critical thinking. This is promoted through approaches that foster autonomous learning, collaboration, and self-reflection such as selecting courses that suit to their learning

profiles and interests. In addition, previous knowledge and experience are taken into account for a personalised academic path design with the purpose to maximize educational gains and experience. The student-centred approach is also pursued through various instruction methods that cater various learning styles including lectures, expert presentations, practical exercises, case studies, question-and-answer sessions, brainstorming discussions, debates, audio-visual presentations, and workshops. Collaborative learning is also promoted through small workgroups, while interdisciplinary knowledge domains offer a well-rounded educational experience.

Students' assessment is partly continuous and diagnostic in order to identify ways to differentiate teaching according to the potential of the pupils. According to the representatives' explanations during the meetings, teaching staff aims to adopt a differentiated approach to the learning process to address the unique needs of each student and embrace diversity in all forms. The teaching staff particularly mentioned that differences among students are perceived as source of inspiration for the design of teaching, rather than a "problem". To this end, several modern learning methods are utilised such as experiential method, exploratory inquiry, action research, emancipatory research, and collaborative group learning.

Students are also required to complete a compulsory supervised practical training of 300 hours during their first year of study, which is an entirely practice-oriented professional experience. A second strength of the programme is the requirement of conducting a dissertation. Dissertation work aims to enact learning focused on deepened knowledge and critical thinking. During this process, students hold one-on-one meetings with their supervisors for personalised guidance and support. Also, students present their research idea prior to implementation as a form of formative assessment, during which they receive suggestions for improvement from their supervisors. Adding to these two strengths of the programme, the Department maintains collaborations with various external stakeholders such as local public bodies, non-governmental organisations, social partners, and other employers, which enhances the graduates' networking opportunities and possibilities for placement. These relationships also facilitate the implementation of other cooperative activities such as special events, conferences, workshops, visits, and interventions.

The programme introduces two further measures of support to empower students. First, each student is assigned to an academic advisor with the aim to promote collaborative relationships between the teaching staff and students. These pre-established relationships have proven to assist students in acquiring a clearer perception about their abilities, offer them ongoing guidance during their studies, and encourage them socially and academically. This collaboration can take the form of formal meetings either face to face or online, or informal calls and chatting. The second practice deals with matching each first-year student with a second-year student to strengthen the relationships between them and orientate new coming students on academic and social issues.

Students with disabilities and chronic diseases are individually supported by being assigned to a specific teaching staff member. According to their specific needs, these students have the option to inquire for alternative teaching methods, assessment, form of educational material and assistance. Last, students can submit any complaints to the administrative office of the Department. A specific coordinating committee handles each issue individually and proceed with potential resolutions following a collaborative approach. Overall, the program strives to create an inclusive and dynamic learning environment, where students actively shape their educational path while gaining advanced knowledge and skills.

II. Analysis

From the analysis, it is evidenced that the PSP of the Department follows the principles of student-centred learning, teaching and assessment. The course objectives and activities, as well as practices applied in the teaching practice, are also consistent with a student-centred approach. Students are given various ways and opportunities to develop their academic, professional and research skills. For example, the consideration of learning profiles, prior knowledge and experience during course selection promotes autonomous learning and personalised academic growth. A possible setback that has been identified during the analysis deals with the adequacy of the specific furniture and equipment to conduct collaborative or group activities in the classroom since the limited number of group desks and classroom's fixed design might impede it at some

extent.

The employment of diverse instructional methods allows to responsive teaching based on students' learning needs and ensures engagement and successful involvement of all students. Related to continuously improving of teaching, the programme incorporates formative and diagnostic assessment procedures which are aligned with the student-centre principles. Thus, students are encouraged and supported to take an active role in the learning and assessment process. It is finally important to note that all areas of the DECE provide individual support and aim to meet the needs of students with disabilities and chronic diseases which is fully associated with the topicalities of the PSP related to inclusive and special education, and provision with equal learning opportunities through differentiated practices.

III.   Conclusions

The EEAP found that the PSP of Special Education in the NKUA is substantially student-centred and cultivates and promotes mutual respect between the students and the faculty and staff. Some small adjustments which are needed for continuous improvement can be easily applied and are to be expected in new academic programs. The Department respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, and considers and uses different modes of delivery, where appropriate. The particular arrangements that are made to better accommodate students and enhance their experience, such as the specific arrangements for students with disabilities, are aligned with the subject areas of the programme of special education and the philosophy of student-centred approach. Consequently, the Department is fully compliant with this principle.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

The classroom resources could be modified where needed to facilitate and allow the implementation of group activities. For example, it may be ensured that the appropriate number of round tables for students to work in teams are in place and the classroom design is adaptable enough when teaching methods change.

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

Students enter the program through an assessment of various supporting documents that are submitted for evaluation. These are described in the admission guidelines and the Internal Regulation of the program.

Student rights and obligations are also clearly described in the study guide. Because of the small number of students that enter the program each year their progression is closely monitored by the faculty of the program.

The Diploma Supplement is described in detail in documentation provided and follows standard European provisions. It is issued free of charge for all graduates of the MSc in Greek and English.

In the fourth semester of the Program, students should conduct a compulsory thesis dissertation. There exist specific quality standards that are clearly described for this. In addition, the subject of the thesis must be of a research nature and original. The language of the thesis writing can be either Greek or English. The procedure and stages of its completion as well as examination are described in detail. For the successful completion of the dissertation the students are required to do an oral examination before presenting to the committee.

When the Postgraduate Diploma Thesis is approved by the examination committee, it is deposited on the website of the Department and in the digital library of the Institutional Repository "Pergamos" of the NKUA.

The NKUA has an approved guide for research ethics which is comprehensive and covers all aspects of ethical contact of research with human participation.

In the PSP in Special Education there is a 300-hour placement in Special education settings (Schools, Centres etc) which is compulsory, lasts one academic semester and is supervised by special associates-supervisors.

II. Analysis

Students' admission procedures are clear and transparent. According to them during the interviews of the accreditation review, the progression of students from one stage to the next is described in detail and followed with precision. The research ethics guide of the NKUA is exemplary. The deposition of all theses on the website and in the Library, depository serves at least two functions. One is to showcase the innovative work that is being carried in the program and secondly to facilitate the protection of students' work from attempts of plagiarism (using special software that detects online sources) by others.

The certification at the end of the program follows standard practices and clearly demonstrates the path that students have followed to reach to a successful completion of their studies.

III. Conclusions

The panel concludes that the program is fully compliant with this principle.

Panel judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

None.

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 Head of the DECE, Professor Vasileios Tsafos, the Director of the PSP of Special Education Associate Professor Evdoxia Nteropoulou-Nterou and the teaching staff presented and explained their vision and were willing to share with the EEAP all the documents and information that could make their work visible.

The teaching and research staff who participate in the PSP are nineteen teachers (19) (academic year 2022-2023) which comprises nine (9) faculty members, two (2) EDIP of the DECE and eight (8) external collaborators. The EEAP found that the average weekly teaching load at the postgraduate level for each member of the PSP teaching staff is 3,15h and 4,05 h for the other educational obligations in the PSP and the Department.

Based on the material that has been presented to EAAP, it is evident that the faculty members of the PSP have excellent relations with one another and have established strong collaborations amongst them. They have a multidimensional teaching and research activity. They organized and participated in national and international conferences bringing more visibility to the Department and their research work. The PSP "Special Education" places particular emphasis on linking teaching and research. Most of the subjects offered in the program aim at this interconnection. Moreover, the master's thesis, a prerequisite for obtaining the postgraduate degree, is an original research thesis.

The students gave feedback to the EEAP indicating that they value and rate very highly the academic staff of the PSP of Special Education. They also feel the courses prepare them well for the job force and provide a good connection between practice and research. They expressed satisfaction with the variety of the topics

offered.

The Alumni who participated in the review with the members of EEAP, expressed a strong connection with the PSP and noted that they felt welcomed to participate in educational opportunities (e.g. symposia, conferences, seminars, co-authored papers, PhD programs). As a matter of fact, some graduates continue their careers in different Universities as researchers or as postgraduate students, while others work as teachers in public or private schools usually in Greece. This was regarded by all interviewed as important since it increased the bond and sense of community among students, as well as faculty and graduates with the potential for future collaborations, teaching opportunities and availability of practical experiences.

II.   Analysis

The faculty continue to develop academically, and several faculty members publish their research work in international scientific refereed journals (SCOPUS). A significant number of monographs and edited volumes have been published during the last years. Moreover, based on the material that has been presented to EAAP, there is a significant number of (SCOPUS) citations related to the staff publications.

Distinguished scientists who have a position or qualifications as a professor or researcher in a research centre, artists or scientists of recognized prestige with specialized knowledge or relevant experience in the subject of the PSP, are invited as visitors to meet the educational needs of the PSP "Special Education". The invitation of a visitor from abroad is made only if he/she is assigned teaching, in accordance with the procedure and what is specifically defined in the Postgraduate Studies Regulation, in accordance with the applicable teaching assignment to the faculty members of the Institution.

Concerning the procedures and criteria for teaching staff recruitment, the PSP and the DECE follows the current legislation on the recruitment and promotion processes of faculty members. Specifically, all procedures of announcement, selection, promotion, and recruitment are posted on the information system APELLA. The details of these processes are accessible to candidates and members of the evaluation committee, ensuring transparency and securing a meritocratic result.

III.   Conclusions

The interdisciplinarity that characterizes the field of special education enables the staff of the PSP to collaborate with teachers from different and related fields and come from the field of psychology, pedagogy, sociology, methodology, statistics, new technologies and arts. It is obvious that excellent actions have been taken in the PSP to ensure quality in teaching and research. The faculty produce impressive scholarly output as noted in the Accreditation Report and evidenced in their profiles on different international and local pages. They have an important presence in peer-reviewed journals, present in national and international conferences, and produce monographs and edited volumes.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The EEAP believes that the PSP and the Department should consider alternative ways to increase the faculty's international scientific collaborations and mobility.
- The programme and the Department should consider identifying and keeping track of administrative work that could be carried out by the administrative staff to alleviate faculty overload and to free time for faculty members to engage in scholarship.

PRINICPLE 6: LEARNING RESOURCES AND STUDENT SUPPORT

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE ADEQUATE FUNDING TO COVER THE TEACHING AND LEARNING NEEDS OF THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMME. THEY SHOULD –ON THE ONE HAND- PROVIDE SATISFACTORY INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES FOR LEARING AND STUDENT SUPPORT, AND – ON THE OTHER HAND- FACILITATE DIRECT ACCESS TO THEM BY ESTABLISHING INTERNAL RULES TO THIS END (E.G. LECTURE ROOMS, 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 of Special Education provides sufficient resources and means to support learning and academic activity to postgraduate students. The teaching staff of the PSP in Special Education consist of 9 faculty members, 2 members of the Teaching and Research Staff, 1 administrator, 2 Visiting professors from Universities abroad and 6 External Collaborators.

The PSP Special Education is housed in the building of the School of Education Sciences of the NKUA. The DECE has at its disposal auditoriums/classrooms for the delivery of courses and computer laboratories, as well as a library.

Among the many services provided to the students which are customary and fully expected to be in place there is the provision of an Electronic Classroom which is an e-course management system that supports the asynchronous e-learning activities. The program makes a lot of efforts through the Department and School to fully support the students.

The fees that students pay for their course provide partial support for the program. There is a detailed provision of how they are utilized.

II. Analysis

From the evidence in the documentation but from student and graduates interviews the panel is convinced that despite the fact that the Program is housed in the centre of a big city and the challenges are sometimes a lot, the program is sufficiently supported by the existing infrastructure.

The program's biggest asset, however, appears to be its human capital. The staff supporting the program are extremely dedicated and often go beyond the expected workload to support the students and the activities of the program.

This was evident to the panel both by the staff who were interviewed but also by the students and the graduates of the program who spoke with excitement and praised the staff's effort and commitment.

III. Conclusions

The panel concludes that despite some objective challenges the program is fully compliant with this principle.

Panel Judgement

Principle 6: Learning resources and student Support	
Fully compliant	✓
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

Similar to the recommendation of Principle 3, the programme and Department could ensure that the learning resources and classrooms' infrastructure are adequate to meet different teaching methods and approaches, such as group activities.

PRINCIPLE 7: INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

Documentation

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

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The DECE has established procedures for the collection of data regarding student body, teaching methods and student progression. There is data for the years 2008 – 2020 about the employability and career paths of graduates collected in 2022.

The DECE maintains the overall accountability for overseeing the continuous improvement of its academic provision, research outputs, and the performance standards of its students. It has developed an internal quality assurance system under the supervision of Quality Assurance System. The Internal Quality Assurance System of the services and activities of the Department is conducted on an annual basis. The members of the Department participate in the Internal Quality Assurance System which is divided into three main pillars: (1) Qualitative and quantitative evaluation process of the Department's data (questionnaires, statistical data, interviews), (2) Report and Planning Reports, (3) Annual Evaluation Report.

The information collected by the Internal Quality Assurance System is analysed by the Committee on Internal Evaluation (OMEA) which makes specific recommendations for the improvement of the quality of the studies provided, of the services, of the functions of the Department and of the infrastructure. All this is discussed in the Department Assembly, with the aim of taking the necessary decisions.

II.   Analysis of judgement

For the collection of information, the DECE relies on the information system for the management of Higher Education Secretariats of the NKUA. The information system offers personalized electronic services and has the ability to provide information in tabular or microdata format. Basic information in this system concerns: (a) enrolments in academic semesters, (b) course registrations according to the curriculum followed by each student, (c) textbook declarations and (d) grades in courses of the PSP. These data are requested by the managers of the relevant database of the University and are presented in summary tables.

In addition, at the end of each academic year, the teaching staff of the Department fill in the inventory forms of the Quality Assurance Unit, which include data such as the participation of academic staff in inter-university or interdepartmental postgraduate programs or data on the mobility of academic staff for the performance of academic work outside the NKUA.

Student evaluations are obtained with the completion of Likert scale questionnaires (with quantitative and quality questions) and interviews at the end of the semester and for each course they attended, but this is not mandatory. The students' participation rate currently reached 80%, but the Department aims to achieve higher numbers in the future.

The Committee on Internal Evaluation collects, analyses and utilizes the above information in the preparation of the periodic Internal Evaluation Reports under the guidance of the Quality Assurance Unit and propose recommendations to the General Assembly and the management bodies.

The Quality Assurance Unit of the NKUA is responsible for the supervision of the constant improvement of its academic provision and research outputs, as well as the efficient operation of its academic services, in accordance with international practices and the guidelines required by HAHE.

The EEAP has been given access to sets of statistical data. This wealth of information is also accessible to the academic community and the public through the Departmental website.

III.   Conclusions

The Department is fully compliant with Principle 7. The system of collecting, analysing, and using information relating to an efficient management of the PSP is quite satisfactory and has proven helpful for the identification of problems and the development of appropriate solutions. As such, the Department is in agreement with the institutional principles which govern the collection of data regarding students, teaching staff, course structures, annual monitoring, assessments, progression, and completion rates.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

Take actions to improve the response rate of student evaluation questionnaires.

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

The Department has put in place a comprehensive public information system. The determination above is based on reviews of printed and electronic sources, as well as interviews with the Head of the Department, members of the MODIP, OMEA, faculty staff and students. The EEAP examined materials that exhibited evidence of critical information sharing with students, faculty members, external partners, and the community at large. The Department's website in Greek language (see here) contains information about its facilities, faculty members and staff, studies and guides, announcements, events, policy of quality assurance, and internal assessment reports (e.g., see Annex A8). News about awards, activities of members of the academic community are also posted on the Department's website. The information given is complete without being excessive or redundant. However, the English language version of the website is underdeveloped as it stands. It contains some information translated in English and it should be improved so it will have the potential to promote the international visibility of the Department.

The EEAP didn't find any social media pages on the website or any other similar link. The programme is presented in thematic websites of education for greater visibility (for example see here).

The Department ensures that there is printed information material for the PSP, for the events it organizes and the initiatives and actions in which it participates.

An important tool for the timely and comprehensive information of the Postgraduate students of the Department is the e-classroom, for which they are encouraged to have an account from the first day of their studies. The e-class platform is an integrated learning management system and the enhancement of asynchronous distance learning. On the platform there are pages of all the postgraduate courses offered, designed by the instructors and enriched with educational content.

II.   Analysis of judgement

The EEAP found out that the Website and Social Networking Committee of the Department plays a key role in monitoring, controlling and ensuring the quality, validity and timeliness of public information concerning the Department. The EEAP discussed with staff, students, and stakeholders and thoroughly studied the functionality of the Department's website. The analysis revealed that the Department has made a significant effort to present itself to its students and to the public, but some extra steps must be done in order this effort to be more targeted and complete.

III. Conclusions

Overall, the EEAP believes that the variety of ways of public information used by the Department is fully compliant and suggests following the recommendations below.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations

- The EEAP encourages the Department to enrich the English version of their website.
- The EEAP encourages the Department to consider creating an e-Newsletter or a social media page in order to maintain contact with students, schools, social partners and stake holders.

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

At the NKUA, an Internal Quality Assurance System is in place, covering the entire range of the various functions and activities of the Institution. Since the establishment of the PSP of Special Education, quality assurance and evaluation procedures have been adopted, which are carried out through Internal Evaluation. The annual Internal Evaluation process highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the operation of the programme and aims among, other things, to establish new objectives and match them with the desired quality levels. The evaluation of the programme is coordinated by the Department's Evaluation Working Group (OMEA), supervised by MODIP and carried out in accordance with the procedures defined by the HAHE. Internal evaluation mechanisms serve the formative purpose of evaluation. As a consequence, the Department has developed a comprehensive strategy for continuous quality improvement that is based on evidence. The EEAP has found that programme is regularly reviewed and revised with the participation of students, graduates and faculty members. The Director of the programme, Associate Professor Evdoxia Nteropoulou-Nterou, has presented to the members of the EAAP an indicative timetable of the procedures of the annual periodic evaluation of the PSP of Special Education.

Students mainly answer to questionnaires, and they also participate in interviews and group discussions. The internal evaluation concludes with the writing of the internal evaluation report of the academic unit. The

student questionnaire mainly concerns the quality and the means of research and teaching, the structure and content of studies, student welfare and the infrastructure of the Program and of the DECE or the NKUA. Based on the results of the analyses of student responses presented by the Director of the programme, one can realize that students are satisfied from the programme that is offered to them. In regard to the criteria that are used to evaluate the quality of the program, the Program considers several indicators including student success rates (mainly in courses and in Program thesis), the overall degree of student satisfaction based on their responses to the questionnaire. On the other hand, the teachers' number of publications in peer-reviewed journals, the number of references to the staff publications, and generally speaking the quality of the research of the staff research are also taken into account. Finally, the relations with external stakeholders like employers or other social partners from the private and the public sector is also considered.

II. Analysis

The constant development and implementation of the Internal Evaluation falls under the responsibility of the relevant Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP). MODIP handles all the different procedures and processes required by the Institution for the external evaluation and improvement of all educational and research work carried out at NKUA. This became obvious during the meetings with the faculty of the Program. It was found out that the programme and the Department takes the results of their internal evaluation report seriously into account. As a consequence, findings of internal evaluation are used for improvement purposes. Procedures for readjustment and modernization of the material of the study program are also established based on the results of the internal evaluation. It should be emphasized that the Program's action plan already includes attempts to remove the negative aspects and strengthen the positive points of the internal evaluation, with defined priorities that are based on the results of this evaluation. Consequently, specific recommendations for improving the quality of the teaching, research work of the PSP emerged.

III. Conclusions

The internal evaluation of the program is regularly conducted by MODIP. The Program is regularly reviewed and revised with the participation of students, graduates and faculty members. Based on the report of MODIP, relevant interventions/adjustments are carried out, to achieve the identified goals of the study program. The information collected is analysed and the program is modified according to the internal evaluation data. The student evaluations are a major part of the quality monitoring procedure. As a conclusion, the members of the EAAP believe that a comprehensive monitoring system of the programme is in place.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations
The program should find ways to collect data on student employability and the career paths of graduates.

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

This is the first external evaluation of the PSP of Special Education that is conducted in the context of ETHAE. As such there are no prior recommendations of external evaluations of ETHAE to be followed. Nevertheless, the director of the PSP has mentioned different activities of external evaluation concerning the programme in its previous form. An example of this kind of evaluation is the Final Report for the External Evaluation of the MA Programme "Education and Human Rights" in 2006. It was a composite Report following the requirements of the Greek Ministry of Education for the funding of the restricting programme (O.P. "Education"). It was based on evaluations of the programmes in the successive summers of 2002,2003,2004 and then in May 2006.

At the NKUA, an Internal Quality Assurance System is in place, covering the entire range of the various functions and activities of the Institution. Its constant development and implementation fall under the responsibility of the relevant Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP). MODIP handles all the different procedures and processes required by the Institution for the external evaluation and improvement of all educational and research work carried out at NKUA.

The EEAP reviewed all available documents and the website of the PSP and of the DECE and conducted extensive online interviews with the Director and the teaching staff of the programme and the Head of the Department. The EEAP found that the programme and the Department has undertaken a multidimensional activity in creating more digital skills courses and hours of practical training, and it has balanced the distribution of all courses in the Scientific Fields of the programme courses. The Director of the PSP and the Head of the Department has also provided information about the activities of different committees of the PSP, the intended learning outcomes of the courses, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, the learning opportunities available to their students and the degree awarded.

The members of the EAAP verified that the PSP and the Department have a process for reviewing the findings and recommendations of such external evaluations. This includes a preliminary review by the Director of the PSP and the Chair of the Department and notification of the evaluation results to all faculty and staff of the PSP. A faculty meeting is scheduled to discuss the findings and recommendations and identify next steps of action.

These recommendations and the incorporation in their processes include the compliance with the MODIP requirements, the development of strategic goals and the policy for quality control.

II. Analysis

Based on the above-mentioned findings, the EAAP verified the procedures adopted by the Director of the PSP and the Department concerning the different dimensions of the programme and the planning of their actions in order to fulfil the possible suggestions for the improvement of the programme. The Department and the programme have strengthened the relations with social partners and has developed cooperation with Institutions that are related to special education activities.

The Department has a very good communication and collaboration with alumni through a social media page and the posting of information highlighting the academic and professional development of members. The Department has also tried to addressed the low response rate of the course evaluations and promises to continue its efforts to increase this rate.

III. Conclusions

This is the first external evaluation of the programme in the context of HAHE, so there is no track record of prior recommendations. Nevertheless, the director of the programme has mentioned different activities of external evaluation, implemented by panels of independent experts, concerning the programme in its previous form. The discussions with the faculty indicated that they understand and value the importance of such external reviews, are receptive to recommendations to improve their program and showed an attitude of addressing such suggestions.

Panel Judgement

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

Panel Recommendations
None.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

- The Department and programme steering committee have established strong internal monitoring mechanisms to continuously evaluate and improve the quality of the programme, accompanied with specific key performance indicators, targets to achieve, as well as the required timeframe and responsibilities.
- There is enough effort to involve professors from Universities in other countries into the teaching and research activities of the programme, which enhances its visibility to the international community as means of extraversion and internationalization.
- The programme includes a compulsory practical training at inclusion programs in general schools, special education schools and units or day treatment centres operated by the state particularly for this purpose. This does not only increase the Department's connections with the labour market and the wider society, but also helps students to further develop their skills during their studies. Therefore, the practical training is additional feature of the programme that contributes to increasing students' readiness as workers and thus, their employability.

II. Areas of Weakness

- The programme should review the guidelines for conducting the thesis dissertation, identify potential barriers in this process for students, and address factors that impede students from completing it on time or not contributing to the quality of their research.
- The Department should promote direct partnership of its students with other Universities in Greece and abroad, for example through virtual collaborations, on-side exchanges or mobility programmes.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

- The programme could systematically involve external stakeholders i.e., social partners, collaborating organisations and employers into the internal evaluation mechanisms and procedures, since bonds are already in place, to further improve the quality of programme based on the labour market needs.
- The Department could more actively involve students into the research activities and projects, which will contribute to enhancing their research skills and knowledge and acquiring practical experience.
- The programme could place balanced emphasis on the qualitative and quantitative research, which will help students to recognise both types' strengths and weaknesses, as well as complementarity, especially in the field of special education.
- The programme could further investigate a more suitable alignment between the programme title, the subjects and classes offered, and the intended learning outcomes.
- The programme and the Department could consider alternative ways to increase their international scientific collaborations, internationalization (e.g., enriching the English version of the website), information sharing and visibility (e.g., through newsletters and social media), and students' mobility.

IV.   Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: **1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10.**

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

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	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname   **Signature**

1. **Prof. Leonidas Kyriakides (Chair)**

   University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus

2. **Prof. Emer. Athanasios Gagatsis**

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3. **Prof. Marios Vryonides**

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