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HELLENIC REPUBLIC



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# **Accreditation Report**

## **for the Postgraduate Study Programme of:**

**Informatics**

**Department: Informatics & Telecommunications**

**Institution: National and Kapodistrian University of Athens**

**Date: 20 October 2023**

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

- 1. Dr. Sotiris Skevoulis (Chair)**  
Pace University, New York, USA
- 2. Dr. Paraskevas Dalianis**  
Uni systems AEE, Quest group, Greece
- 3. Mr. Rizos-Theodoros Hadoulis**  
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece
- 4. Prof. Yani Skarlatos**  
Boğaziçi University, Turkey

## II. Review Procedure and Documentation

The External Evaluation and Accreditation Panel (EEAP) attended a series of videoconference meetings utilizing WebEx tool with the leadership of MODIP, OMEA and PSP in Informatics at the Department of Informatics & Telecommunication at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.

Videoconference meetings took place from Monday the 9th until Wednesday the 11th of October 2023 as a part of the remote External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel Review. The EEAP has been warmly welcomed by the Head of the Department Professor Dimitris Gunopulos, the Directors of the two PSP: PSP1 Language Technology: Associate Professor Yannis Panagakis and PSP2 Computer Science: Professor Manolis Koubarakis, the Head of the Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP) Mr. Konstantinos Bourletidis, the MODIP member Mr. Theodoros Chajitheodorou as well as many members of the Steering Committees/ OMEA from both PSPs. In the end of the first day, EEAP requested several supporting documents and information which MODIP made available the very next day. EEAP expresses the heartfelt thanks to the MODIP representatives for the speedy response to its request.

On the second day (10th of October) the Panel met with representatives from the PSP Language Technology. Details of the meetings of this day are offered in a separate report for the PSP in Language Technology.

On the third day (October 11th) of the videoconference sessions, the Panel had the opportunity to discuss with academics and technical staff members from the PSP in Informatics Programme. Following that, the Panel met with a few (six) current students from the Programme. The students were asked various questions about their academic life. They expressed their perspectives regarding the structure of the PSP Programme, the challenges they are facing and their experiences so far from the Programme and the University in general. The next videoconference was with some graduate students selected by the Programme. The focus of the EEAP was identifying the graduate student's integration into the industry and their opportunities for further studies. All graduate participants had landed exceptional opportunities in pursuing PhD studies at some prestigious institutions or held excellent positions in the software development industry.

On the same day, an additional meeting followed with some of the PSP's social partners group that included representative of the Information Society SA and the President of Ένωση Πληροφορικών Ελλάδος. Unfortunately, there was no representative from the industry, so EEAP did not have the opportunity to explore the mechanisms and links/procedures in place that facilitate the different partner interactions with the Programme.

On the final day of the remote visit (October 11th) the EEAP met with the leadership of the department and the Programme as well as with members of the MODIP and OMEA. The Panel offered a summary of its findings during the two-day remote visit and summarized briefly the

main results of the meetings. It also expressed its dismay regarding the lack of industry partners to discuss their opinion and experiences with the PSP.

The report hereafter presents the collective findings of the Panel based on the two-day meetings, shared documentation provided by the PSP, private discussions that followed during the videoconferences, and email communication with MODIP.

### **III. Postgraduate Study Programme Profile**

The PSP in Informatics was established in 2018 and is offered by the Department of Informatics and Telecommunications as a three (3) semesters degree that corresponds to 90 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) credits. 60 ECTS are coming from courses on 30 from the mandatory Thesis.

The PSP awards its graduates a master's in informatics degree with three areas of specialization: a) Computer Science Foundations & Applications, b) Data, Information & Knowledge Management and c) Computer Systems: Software & Hardware. The programme currently has 37 students.

There is a total of thirty-two (32) full time faculty members, three (3) teaching and lab assistants, and twelve (12) internal and external adjuncts teaching in the program. The PSP is also supported by three (3) professional administrators.

The study program can be considered flexible since students can select from a vast variety of courses to work on their specialization area. Students have elective modules that they can select depending on their preferences and the specialization they would like to follow.

## **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**

A Quality Assurance Policy has been established by the PSP of Informatics. (Doc. A2) The relevant document; in compliance with the quality policy of the NKUA; affirms the commitment of the academic unit to establish, maintain, monitor, and improve quality assurance; and clearly defines its implementation through setting of goals for continuous improvement with monitoring and evaluation on an annual basis, collection, and analysis of data relevant to quality assurance, as well as management of financial resources.

The financial resources drawn from tuition and other sources are fully utilized for student tuition and



Congress participation aid, as well as procurement of goods and services intended to improve the quality of education.

## **II. Analysis**

MODIP is monitoring and enforcing quality assurance. The coordination committee of the PSP and the department administration are managing the whole process. Annual internal audits are foreseen. The first evaluation took place in December 2022. The quality data that had been collected was analysed. Strong and weak points were noted, and improvements/corrective actions were proposed. The intended completion date was set at the end of 2023. (Docs. A8, A3, A18)

The quality policy of the unit has been published on its web site, and the adopted goals have been listed.

The program's faculty maintains a positive attitude towards quality assurance evaluation, and interviews with students indicate a high degree of satisfaction with the quality and relevance of the education offered by the academic unit.

In spite of the faculty members' efforts to improve the educational process through promotion of cordial relations with students, encouraging them to participate in research projects and improved evaluation methods such as essay type instead of multiple-choice questions, there appears to be a significant measure of discord on the part of current students and recent graduates of the program. There have been complaints of some faculty members being too busy to attend to students, of failing to follow the schedule and plans for the course they have announced, of classes being held mostly during working hours, of lack of a mechanism of hearing complaints, of insufficient information on course evaluations, lack of support on vocational guidance, weak connections with the market and the business sector. However, there is consensus on the program furnishing its graduates with skills useful in their future jobs.

A service for hearing complaints from students will be offered as of the beginning of the current academic year, and a system of academic advisors is being instituted. (Docs. A10, A11)

A set of measurable goals in connection with teaching method, student satisfaction, and learning outcomes have been codified in Doc. A3. They are all commensurate with Key Performance Indicators and appropriate for Level 7 of the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher education. The degree of attainment of the goals is being audited. (Docs. 3, 8)

The evaluation committee could not find evidence on direct connections with industrial partners and could not get feedback from employees of the program's graduates.

## **III. Conclusions**

A quality assurance policy has been established by the PSP.

## Panel Judgement

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

## Panel Recommendations

Ensure that student feedback on courses and the program as a whole is as thorough as possible by encouraging participation and stressing its importance for the benefit of all.

Make an effort to systematize and document the information collected in relation to the market demand for professional qualifications expected from the program's graduates.

Ensure that the corrective measures decided during the program's internal evaluation, such as the creation of a complaint hearing mechanism and a system of academic advisors, of improved student social conditions, and attention to the needs of working students have materialized.

Although the annual audit performed in conjunction with MODIP is well documented, periodic internal reviews carried out by the program administration should be more formalized and better documented.

## PRINCIPLE 2: DESIGN AND APPROVAL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

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

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

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

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

*In addition, the design of PSP must consider:*

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

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

### **Documentation**

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

## **Study Programme Compliance**

### **I. Findings**

The M.S. program in Informatics offers specialization in the fields of Computer Science Foundations and Applications and Data, Information, and Knowledge management. The program aims at training students to work and conduct research in their fields.

The curriculum, syllabus, and course contents have been developed in accordance with the relevant policies of the institution and European recommendations. They have been revised, and they are included in the study guide. (Doc. A5)

The study program of Informatics offers advanced training in computer science and data processing techniques, and it resembles comparable programs in U.S. and European universities. The design of the program has been based on the needs of the national and international markets in the area of informatics and conforms to the prescriptions of Level 7 of the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education. (Docs. A5, A6, A7)

The program of study aims at continuous improvement of educational and research activities as well as at high quality of services provided under the guidelines of the National Administration of Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ADIP). The institution's quality assurance unit (MODIP) oversees the process of internal and external evaluations of the program.

### **II. Analysis**

The program of studies consists of core courses aiming at establishing a common foundation for students coming from informatics, computer science, and computer and electrical engineering backgrounds. The core courses are followed by specialized courses leading to the front lines of the relevant subjects and aiming at preparing students for research. A thesis based on research on a specialized subject concludes the course of studies,

All necessary documentation describing the program, including the senate decision for its establishment, curriculum, list of teaching staff, study guide, and course and thesis descriptions have been provided. Criteria for success have been set. (Docs. 4, 5, 6, 7, 14)

There are three different areas of specialization in the program, and a large variety of courses are being offered to cover these areas. However, many of the courses are being offered simultaneously at the undergraduate and graduate programs. This could cause problems to former undergraduates of the same field who have already passed these courses and must find other relevant ones to attend to in their graduate course of studies. Moreover, the dual level courses are being offered during working hours, and this may make it difficult for working students to attend.

Internal audits of the program's operations are performed in cooperation with MODIP. Data on course structure and organization are collected from the Integrated National Quality Data System (OPESP), the Hellenic Authority of Higher Education (HAHE), and departmental systems. The data are analysed in order to evaluate and improve the educational process.

Periodic revisions of the curriculum in consultation with internal and external experts, students, graduates, and other stakeholders are stipulated in the rules of procedures of the PSP approved by the Senate of the University. (Doc. A14)

### III. Conclusions

The program is relatively new and has undergone only one internal quality assessment so far, while the first external evaluation is currently in process. Although the design and approval of the program seem fine on paper, there are surely corrections and/or additions that will have to be made as the program evolves. The program has been designed and approved.

#### Panel Judgement

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

#### Panel Recommendations

EEAP recommends the appointment of academic advisors and the establishment of a complaints handling office have already been made at the recommendation of the internal assessment report. The unit should be alert and respond to the recommendations of the present report in order to alleviate any problems related to the design of the program.

Efforts should be made towards increased cooperation with external partners, who will come up with ideas for continuous development of the goals and the curriculum of the program.

Provisions to the effect of differentiating graduate from undergraduate level courses must be made due to possible legal implications.

Graduate courses preferably should be conducted in afterhours.

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

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

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

*The student-centred learning and teaching process*

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

*In addition*

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

#### **Documentation**

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

#### **Study Programme Compliance**

##### **I. Findings**

- The MSc Program has established and made available a set of regulations for addressing student complaints. In particular, a committee consisting of two members of the teaching personnel and the department's president will handle students' complaints. However, the academic year 2023-23 will be the first year during which students will be provided with an official mechanism for filing complaints.

- Between the 8th and the 11th week of each semester, students evaluate the MSc program's courses using electronic questionnaires. The results of this procedure are then provided to the course coordinators and analysed by the Internal Evaluation Team of the Department. Only a small fraction of the enrolled students participate in this evaluation procedure.
- A variety of pedagogical methods are employed.
- The academic year 2023-23 will be the first year during which students will be assigned an academic advisor upon enrolment in the MSc Program.
- During the meeting of this evaluation committee with a group of students of the MSc Program, it became evident that it lacks in flexibility when it comes to modes of delivery and that the student-centred learning is undermined by the lack of communication between teachers and students.

## **II. Analysis**

The function of the academic advisor and the complaint committee cannot be evaluated in depth, since 2023-24 will be the first year of their operation. The fact that some students expressed complaints regarding the lack of communication between them and the teaching staff raises serious questions that have to be addressed.

## **III. Conclusions**

The MSc program provides most of the necessary conditions to encourage students' active involvement in the learning process. However, there is still room for improvement, especially in terms of addressing students' needs and concerns. Thus, in terms of Principle 3, it is considered to be partially compliant.

### Panel Judgement

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

### Panel Recommendations

Fostering effective communication between students and teaching staff in an MSc program is crucial for creating a positive and productive learning environment. One step towards that direction could be establishing clear and easily accessible communication channels by utilizing online platforms, such as learning management systems or dedicated program websites, to share important information, announcements, and resources.

Offering workshops or training sessions on effective communication (e.g., email etiquette, constructive feedback, and active listening skills) for both students and teaching staff could also help. Furthermore, steps could be taken to ensure teaching staff are accessible and approachable. Encouraging them to be available for questions, guidance, and support outside of regular office hours could help. Last but not least, sharing success stories of students who have benefited from effective communication with teaching staff can serve as inspiration and motivation for others.



#### **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**

- All regulatory documents can be accessed on the official MSc Program web page (<https://www.di.uoa.gr/cs/docs>).
- Article 4 of the Internal Regulation for the operation of the MSc Program outlines the student admission procedures and the required supporting documents.
- The Internal regulation explicitly outlines students' rights and obligations.
- Paragraph 7 of Article 10 of the Internal Regulation for the operation of the MSc Program permits students to optionally participate in an Internship through the Erasmus+ or the CIVIS program, although further details are not provided in the Internal regulation.
- Article 5 of the Internal Regulation for the operation of the MSc Program addresses the duration of studies.
- Article 15 of the Internal Regulation for the operation of the MSc Program outlines the procedure for the award of the degree.

## II. Analysis

In general, the admission, progression, thesis drafting, recognition, and certification of the studies are covered in detail, and the corresponding procedures and responsibilities are clearly outlined.

## III. Conclusions

In summary, the Internal Regulation offers a thorough framework that encompasses admission, academic progress, thesis preparation, study recognition, certification processes, and clear delineations of the related procedures and responsibilities.

### Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 4: Student admission, progression, recognition of postgraduate studies and certification</b>	
Fully compliant	X
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 mechanism for the recruitment of the teaching staff is specified by the law and managed by the Greek Department of Education upon the recommendations of the University. The programme recently recruited several new faculties, some of them graduates from some prestigious educational institutions such as MIT, Carnegie Mellon, Harvard, etc. The professional qualifications of the teaching staff are commensurate with the subject matter covered by the PSP. The faculty member's research activities span the fields of computing with most faculty members very active in their areas of expertise. Several research projects are collaborative with other institutions of higher learning within Greece and the EU. Currently there are 7 ERC grants. These projects involve several postgraduate researchers pursuing PhD degrees and very few undergraduates. The record of publications produced by the faculty members in conferences and refereed journals indicates moderate research engagement.

The faculty encourages students to participate in projects and conduct high quality research resulting in journal publications and conference presentations. Students and graduates speak favourably of their experiences in the program and express satisfaction with preparedness in their professional lives.

In spite of the faculty members' efforts to improve the educational process through promotion of cordial relations with students, encouraging them to participate in research projects and improved evaluation methods, there appears to be a measure of discord on the part of some current students and recent graduates of the program

There is a significant effort of the teaching faculty to bring quality research into the graduate classrooms as it was evident by the examples EEAP received from the faculty.

## **II. Analysis**

The PSP consists of 32 faculty (Assistant Professors, Associate Professors and Professors) and three special teaching faculty. From the data presented to the panel, the total student enrolment in the PSP is 37, the number of applicants for the current academic year was 122, with 50 accepted in the Programme. The workload is balanced, and the faculty get the chance to work on the research projects.

Regular student evaluations of the teaching staff are conducted on a semester basis. However, it is important to note that only a rather small percentage of students actively participate in these evaluations. Each semester, students are requested to complete electronic questionnaires / surveys.

## **III. Conclusion**

The academic staff is appropriately qualified to run the PSP. The major concern lies in the low level of student participation in course evaluation, which significantly diminishes the effectiveness of the outcomes and hinders the achievement of comprehensive teacher assessments. The EEAP acknowledges the difficulty in rectifying this issue but emphasizes the need for the PSP to intensify its efforts in motivating and encouraging students to actively engage in the evaluation process. This is crucial as it directly impacts teacher assessment and professional development.

## Panel Judgment

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

### Panel Recommendations

- There is an immediate need to create a network with the industry and ask for their participation in the future updates of the program.
- The PSP should make every effort to increase the percentage of student participation in the course evaluation process every semester. Courses with 0% student participation in the evaluation process is unacceptable. It deprives the program from an informative tool to monitor the quality of the courses.
- The PSP (and department leadership) is encouraged to establish frequent self-assessment procedures for its faculty. It would be a report of the areas they have exceeded, the issues they work on to fix and declare their plans of improvement or maintenance of teaching, research and service. EEAP would also have an easy to glance over tool to extract useful information for the report.

## **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 available infrastructure and services are thoroughly described in the official website of the MSc Program (<https://www.di.uoa.gr/department/infrastructure>).
- The MSc Program in Informatics is a post-graduate program operating within the department of Informatics and Telecommunications of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, and

thus, in addition to its own dedicated resources to be referred later, it shares those of the department and the University.

- The building infrastructure of the department include nine (9) classrooms, three (3) conference rooms, five (5) Independent Workshop areas, a reading hall with a capacity of 130 seats, fifteen (15) labs and a computer room.
- Travel expenses, conference registrations with presentation of scientific work, publications in scientific journals and subscriptions to educational software are covered with the tuition fees collected by the MSc Program.
- During the meeting of this evaluation committee with the administrative staff members, it became evident that they have both the formal qualifications and the skills to support the students of the MSc Program.
- During the meeting of this evaluation committee with a group of students of the MSc Program, it became evident that students have not been meticulously informed about the available infrastructure and services provided.

## II. Analysis

Sufficient resources and means to support learning and academic activity are provided by the MSc Program. However, when it comes to the disseminating the relevant information to the students of the MSc Program, there is room for improvement.

## III. Conclusions

The MSc program provides infrastructure (buildings, labs and educational tools) and services (teaching, welfare), which are deemed satisfactory for its purposes. However, further steps have to be taken towards informing students about the available infrastructure and services in a regular and systematic way.

### Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 6: Learning resources and student support</b>	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

### Panel Recommendations

To inform MSc program students about available infrastructure and services in a regular and systematic way, the MSc Program may consider conducting a comprehensive orientation session at the beginning of each academic year to introduce new students to campus facilities and support services. Sending out periodic reminders and announcements through various channels (e.g., email, social media, notice boards) to keep students informed about important dates, resources, and service updates could also be of help.

## **PRINCIPLE 7: INFORMATION MANAGEMENT**

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Documentation**

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

## **Study Programme Compliance**

### **I. Findings**

- NKUA has established a set of QA principles for the collection of data, regarding course structure and implementation, students, teaching staff, annual monitoring, periodic internal/external assessments, etc. and operates centralised information systems, providing effective academic services and tools to its Programmes for their administrative and QA purposes.
- The PSP Steering Committee and the PSP Director, in close cooperation with the NKUA's QA Unit, the Department and its internal evaluation group (IEG), are committed to utilise the available tools in order to collect, organise, manage, and analyse information towards the continuous improvement of the Programme.
- QA Unit, in its recent internal evaluation report (document A8.), recognises that several preventive/ corrective actions must be taken toward improving the PSP. Nevertheless, the material shared with EEAP apart from the defined actions and results, did not provide sufficiently documented associated objectives, and evidence of actions, decisions and measurable KPIs.
- The PSP has recently implemented a mechanism (survey) to collect feedback from its graduates upon their employment status and satisfaction from the programme. The graduates emphasized on the quality of the faculty and the effectiveness of their studies for the market



needs. Among the suggested areas of improvement, were, the need to adapt the course lectures schedule in order to be suitable for part-time/ working students, and to assure the timely announcement of the grading for all course projects / exercises, as well as all PSP courses' final results.

- Published information on the progress of PSP's QA processes and results of its periodic internal evaluation is very limited -if any- on its website. Furthermore, significant inconsistencies and/or lack of details are found in the provided online material associated with essential aspects of the PSP, such as the delivery of the Programme and assessment requirements, as was emphasized by students and graduates.

## **II. Analysis**

- Data collected from various sources should provide a holistic -although concise- view of PSP's performance and student experience. Formal and systematic processes for eliciting extended data from all internal and external stakeholders may provide thorough input for periodic review of the Programme and QA purposes and facilitate a decision-making approach leading to well described actions toward PSP's effectiveness.
- Further efficiency measurements using quantitative and qualitative indicators through KPIs, should be identified, providing valuable and reliable information to support higher-level decision-making.
- Regular data collection from students at the end of each semester allows for periodic evaluations and identification of trends for improvement. Nevertheless, persistent low response rates in course assessment surveys raise concerns about QA data adequacy and effective decision-making.
- Performing dedicated regular surveys involving other stakeholders (in addition to the students), including the existing industrial network, may enhance the incorporation of useful feedback for the continuous review and development of the PSP.
- The PSP is making an effort to collect feedback from various external stakeholders However, it appears that this has been done so far with an ad-hoc and uncoordinated approach. Establishing formalised and documented processes for eliciting input from external stakeholders (including staff's extended network of regional and national social partners and industry experts) may enhance academic offerings through systematic external collaboration. It could also improve the publicity of PSP's offering, increasing the number of potential candidate students for the Programme.
- The PSP must benefit from all external stakeholders' cooperative spirit and willingness, which became apparent to EEAP during the review meetings.

## **III. Conclusions**

- The PSP must further elaborate on using the institutional information systems and ensure the comprehensive data management and quality assurance processes contribute to its effectiveness and success. Further KPIs need to be established, analysed, and documented for all preventive and corrective actions identified by the QA Unit.
- The PSP should clearly outline long-term objectives and expand upon them as necessary through periodic internal quality review processes to promote continuous improvement. For

example, no measurable KPI is defined for students' low response rates to surveys and specific actions to resolve this. Such low student participation affects the data's importance and accuracy. Perhaps, different surveys should be formulated adapted to PSP's specific needs and course differentiations.

- The PSP should consider extending and formalising external stakeholders' active participation in its QA processes, including, among others, graduates. An early establishment of an alumni association might stimulate valuable feedback for continuous program improvement and visibility to the industry.

### Panel Judgement

<b>Principle 7: Information management</b>	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	X
Non-compliant	

### Panel Recommendations

- The PSP should develop a formal (independent from the Institution) procedure for collecting, processing and presenting data from student surveys, aiming to ensure QA practices are in place to review the PSP. This procedure should be aligned with any Internal/ External evaluations of the PSP.
- Additional KPIs should be adopted, supported by sufficient documentation, including those associated with students' participation in course assessment, expanding the breadth of periodic QA goals reviewed towards PSP continuous improvement.
- A formal procedure should be created and implemented to systematically promote the active participation of external stakeholders, capitalising on staff's network of external relations in PSP QA processes.
- The PSP is encouraged to promote and support the formation of an Alumni membership aiming at the active engagement of its graduates in periodic activities (e.g., an industrial Open Day), strengthening the PSP's visibility/promotion and QA processes.

## **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*

### **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 maintains a webpage ("Πρόγραμμα Μεταπτυχιακών Σπουδών (ΠΜΣ) με τίτλο "Πληροφορική" - M.Sc. in Computer Science". <https://www.di.uoa.gr/cs>), providing information for the PSP (mainly in Greek), including:
  - o Its identity and graduation rules and conditions.
  - o A video with interviews with graduates promoting the programme to prospective students.
  - o Graduate Studies, Courses and Schedule.
  - o Staff's main information and the Program Coordinating Committee Members.
  - o Involved secretariat staff and contact details.
  - o Links to University, Departmental and student services.
- It is evident that complete and detailed information about the Programme is currently provided only in Greek.
- As described in the available documentation, and also presented in the PSP meetings with EEAP, the Department and the PSP have defined and followed a simple and short process with clear assignments to members of its faculty and staff for the maintenance and support of its website.

### **II. Analysis**

- The website should be the main source of information about the PSP, providing all the information needed in a clear and concise way. There is currently a main departmental page within the main website of the Institution, which provides all departmental information (guides, courses, links to departmental social media pages, detailed information on Faculty and their research, etc.), including all graduate programs, in Greek and English. There is a link to the PSP's specific website, which provides specific to PSP information only in the Greek

language.

- The PSP Greek website is well organised, user-friendly, and easily accessible. It is informative and comprehensive, with information about the PSP Program of Study, the academic and administrative personnel and procedures, student-related issues and services, regulations and requirements, etc. However, information on research is accessible via the departmental webpages. There is also no information on alumni and graduates, as no alumni exist for the postgraduate Programme, at the moment.
- Information for prospective external stakeholders, such as social partners, regional organisations, companies or even professionals, such as previous graduates, is also not provided. There is also limited information at Programme level for any participation or support of the PSP to open activities, events, and conferences. The web visitor should search within the faculty's material for research details, research activities and projects, etc.
- The Departmental office and the PSP' secretariat staff provide updates and public announcements via relevant electronic platforms, such as personalised emails, and important announcements on PSP in the aforementioned pages (main website and vertical Greek site).
- PSP guides and regulations are available as PDF files in Greek and some basic info on the QA policy may also be found on the site. However, for any additional info on the QA system, the web visitor should search on the Institutional and/or departmental website. EEAP, also found limited details on the Thesis assessment criteria.
- Due to the existing straightforward website maintenance process, there is no evidence and statistical information on the maintenance requests, actions and related activities for QA and monitoring purposes.

### **III. Conclusions**

- The PSP website is the main channel of communication for both students and staff, as well as the outside world. It must be bilingual to its full depth, providing all required content in two languages (Greek & English) in an organised, easily accessible approach.
- The PSP website should incorporate information relevant to the interests of different visitor profiles, such as students, graduates, potential students and partners, including external researchers and professors. The website could provide further information for prospective incoming ERASMUS+ students, although its participation is currently too limited. It is also apparent that there is no sufficient and easily accessible information for non-Greek speaking students.
- The PSP appears to be promoted with the distribution of information leaflets, announcements in public media, presentations at events, etc. However, evidence of such activities is too limited on its website.
- Updates and public announcements are distributed via relevant electronic platforms, such as personalised emails, to students, staff, etc., and only important PSP announcements appear on the website.
- Despite the simplicity of the existing maintenance process, the Department should consider the incorporation of an electronic process for managing the maintenance activities (such as electronic registration of requests, workflow mechanisms, activity logs or monitoring, etc.), which might also provide the required data and statistical information for QA purposes.
- PSP guides and regulations are provided, while the Greek website offers only fundamental information about the Quality Assurance (QA) policy. The website should provide all QA related documentation and results, not of course restricted by GDPR or other limitations.
- Details about the Thesis' assessment criteria were not found in the provided documentation and the website.

## Panel Judgement

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

## Panel Recommendations

- The Department should develop a formal electronic process for the website information maintenance process, to ensure coherent and documented evidence including statistical information for QA purposes.
- Ensure the mechanism is in place to provide all PSP related information on its website, including information dissemination for its mission and activities, which should be consistent across both language sections (Greek and English).
- The PSP should enhance its autonomous presence on social media platforms, involving its students, as well as, its graduates, if possible.
- The Information on research topics and labs related to the PSP should be more straightforward on its website and all information on resources used for the delivery of the PSP should be within its web pages.

## **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:*

*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*

*the changing needs of society*

*the students' workload, progression and completion of the postgraduate studies*

*the effectiveness of the procedures for the assessment of students*

*the students' expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme*

*the learning environment, support services, and their fitness for purpose for the PSP in question*

*Postgraduate study programmes are reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders. The information collected is analysed and the programme is adapted to ensure that it is up-to-date.*

### **Documentation**

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

## **Study Programme Compliance**

### **I. Findings**

- The PSP has adopted and implements the QA system specified by the University in close cooperation with the Department.
- The Programme, in general, follows international standards and provides many different courses offering three major specializations (i.e. Computer Science Foundations and Applications, Data, Information and Knowledge Management, Computer Systems: Software and Hardware).
- The Institution, the Department and the PSP, appear to put significant effort on the QA process within 2023. From the discussions with students and graduates, the Panel noticed that the aforementioned stakeholders didn't have sufficient feedback on the results of the QA processes and the effects of their contribution on the evolution of the PSP.
- The Panel did not have any relevant info with regards to other external stakeholders (social and other partners). The social partners reviewed were not aware nor involved in the QA

processes. However, all partners expressed their willingness to contribute to PSP's QA processes.

- Although there is a policy on reporting the planning, design and delivery of the curriculum, as well as, monitoring the overall coherence of the academic provision and monitoring student outcomes, limited evidence exists for the conformance to these policies and regulations.
- Students' participation in the courses' assessment (based not only on the limited information provided, but mainly on feedback from all internal stakeholders) remains very low, raising questions about the effectiveness of internal evaluation processes.
- Following graduates' feedback, as well as, the number of candidate students registered to attend the PSP, it appears that despite the QA issues identified, the PSP has a very positive market reputation and is quite efficient for its students. To that end, the Department and staff have fully declared their commitment to further extend QA processes, detailed action plans, and documentation, in order to assure the regular monitoring, review and continuous improvement of the Programme.

## **II. Analysis**

- The internal stakeholders expressed their commitment towards the full deployment of the QA System with the continuous support of the Institution and the Department.
- The PSP must increase its efforts and assure the existence of records for all internal QA related meetings with at least their conclusions and recommendations for continuous improvement. There are slight indications of such steps, as defined in the < A8. "Αποτελ. εσωτ. αξιολ. από ΜΟΔΙΠ"> document.
- Since feedback to students and graduates, on the results of the QA regular processes, is currently limited, the PSP is encouraged to increase the provision of feedback and focused documentation of all stakeholders' contribution to the evolution of the PSP.
- Student's participation in the courses' assessment process remains very low and appears to be in line with the low levels of participation, as reported from previous external Panels in terms of the earlier institutional and departmental evaluation/ accreditation reports (2015, 2018 and 2019).
- No input from industry was identified by the Panel, as no such partners were invited in the online meetings with EEAP and such evidence was not provided. However, it appears that such QA contributions are currently not organized and considered.
- Despite the popularity of the PSP, the extensive external professional network the staff maintains, and the willingness of all partners met with EEAP to help the PSP if asked, external stakeholders' contribution to the QA processes is too limited -if any-, and only in an ad hoc and unofficial approach.
- Although the PSP operates from 2019, it is quite effective in terms of graduates' appeal to the market. However, evidence upon the QA processes is very limited. It is expected, the PSP to clearly define and set processes and detailed action plans, in order to fully implement and sufficiently document the full cycle of the QA following the results of the current Accreditation review process.

## **III. Conclusions**

- During our meetings with faculty, staff, students and graduates, EEAP noticed the existence of a friendly relationship in the Programme, which should help towards the effective application of the QA. The positive and friendly environment constructs a very promising basis for the success and the future of the PSP, which however, must be reflected in the PSP's review and monitoring of QA processes and available evidence.
- The PSP is encouraged to keep on improving its internal quality assurance procedures, enhance and identify measurable action plans, and document all related activities and

processes. This might also involve its graduates, as early as possible.

- The PSP might consider improving documentation and enhancing communication of actions, expectations and results of stakeholders' participation, including the provision of related feedback to all internal and external stakeholders.
- The PSP must find efficient approaches to increase students' participation in the course evaluations and set this as a top priority for QA improvement (as it should also be the case, for the Institution and the Department, following the aforementioned external Reports' results).



## Panel Judgement

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

## Panel Recommendations

- The PSP should share review results, conclusions and decisions taken, with all internal and external stakeholders, encourage open discussions, raise QA culture and expand all stakeholders' contribution.
- The PSP is encouraged to define and implement mechanisms to ensure the existence of documentation of all QA decisions, objectives and meaningful and measurable KPIs defined, associated preventive/ corrective actions and achieved results, assuring the provision of sufficient QA evidence.
- Implement mechanisms for long-term assessment and adaptation and strengthen data documentation for process efficiency.
- Increase Students' participation in course evaluations; this should be a top priority for the PSP.

## **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**

- Following the online discussions, it appears that all members of the staff have realised the importance of the QA process and its contribution to PSP's continuous improvement.
- All internal stakeholders of the programme, including academic, administrative and support staff, and students, are actively engaged in the current review process with EEAP.
- Following the related online meeting, the Panel could not have any evidence of external stakeholders (social or other partners) involvement in PSP's QA processes and/ or PSP's evolution.
- It appears that the PSP (<A18."Εκθεση Προόδου για το ΠΜΣ Πληροφορική">, 2023), has recently taken into consideration the recommendations related to postgraduate programs included in the Institution's external evaluation Report (November, 2015), as well as, the accreditation report for the NKUA's IQAS (October 2018).
- Following EEAP's discussions in the online meetings with students and graduates and other relevant information found in the NKUA website, it appears that despite the measurements and actions taken, as reported in <A18.> document, there are some important issues earlier reported for improvement, which remain evident in the implementation of the PSP and are not yet resolved, despite the achieved results ("ΕΠΙΤΕΥΧΘΕΝΤΑ ΑΠΟΤΕΛΕΣΜΑΤΑ") mentioned in the <A18> document.
- For example, as is evident also from the published PSP time schedule for the current Semester, a number of postgraduate lectures are still implemented during working hours (even during the morning), which makes the PSP not suitable for working students, although the PSP allows part time attendance. This appears to contradicts the reported achieved results ("ΕΠΙΤΕΥΧΘΕΝΤΑ ΑΠΟΤΕΛΕΣΜΑΤΑ") mentioned in the document <A18.> (Πίνακας 1, #1)!
- Based on the data provided to the Panel, the PSP has also not made any progress towards increasing students' low participation (very low or even zero rates) in the course assessment evaluation process, considering the related recommendations appearing in the previously mentioned external reports, as well as, those comments included in the Department's External accreditation report (September, 2019). This appears to contradicts the reported achieved results ("ΕΠΙΤΕΥΧΘΕΝΤΑ ΑΠΟΤΕΛΕΣΜΑΤΑ") mentioned in the document <A18.> (Πίνακας 1,

#5, Πίνακας 2, #6)!

- Since, this is the first time that the PSP undergoes an external evaluation / accreditation, there are no specific previous recommendations from any external review Body.

## **II. Analysis**

- As already discussed in findings, faculty and staff were sufficiently aware of the importance of the external review and did their best to present relevant information to our Panel in a timely and efficient manner.
- As is described in the material provided (<A1.\_new Πρόταση πιστοποίησης.pdf>), the PSP will consider the accreditation comments and set up and implement an action plan towards the KPIs, which will be defined against the comments. However, limited evidence was provided to document previous and existing QA actions towards the continuous improvement of the programme in terms of the internal review processes. This also leads to misleading information, like the contradictions mentioned in the previous “Findings” section.
- Sufficient evidence, upon specific actions and measurements following the related to PSP activities and responsibilities recommendations, found in the earlier Institutional Evaluation (2015), the Institutional Accreditation (2018) and Department’s Accreditation (2019) reports, was not provided.

## **III. Conclusions**

- Although there was no previous PSP external review, the PSP commitment to the spirit and the processes of Quality Assurance (QA) should be evident in all principles and aspects.
- The PSP should establish formal and well-defined procedures to elicit, use and evaluate feedback from students and external stakeholders (graduates and partners).
- It is strongly suggested that the PSP keeps minutes of relevant meetings / committees for QA purposes. This will enhance the documentation of the QA activities towards the improvement of the programme and provide evidence for monitoring purposes.

## Panel Judgement

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

## Panel Recommendations

- The PSP should establish formal and well-defined procedures to elicit, use and evaluate meaningful and actionable feedback from students and external stakeholders (graduates and partners).
- The PSP is advised to come up with follow-up yearly evidence-based reports that would allow external entities (e.g., the University, the HAHE, etc.) to follow up on the implementation of any submitted recommendations.
- All PSP review actions and meetings should formally be recorded, ending up in documented clearly defined actions, reasonable formal assignments and responsibilities for internal stakeholders and measurable results towards PSP's continuous improvement.

## **PART C: CONCLUSIONS**

### **I. Features of Good Practice**

- Faculty expertise, strong research profile and commitment towards a student-focused learning curriculum with remarkable exposure to applied practices.
- Both academic and administrative staff display a wonderful team spirit that was evident in the meetings during the EEAP visits.
- PSP's very positive market reputation is evident and beneficial for its students. Graduates of the program find themselves well equipped to work in the industry, as well as continue their studies in pursuit of a Ph.D.
- The active involvement of the Department and the PSP faculty in many research projects offers many opportunities for extended training to postgraduate students.
- Wide spectrum of courses offered to students towards their specialization.
- The existence of a well-defined task force with clear assignments for the update of Departmental web pages.

### **II. Areas of Weakness**

- The availability of infrastructure and services is not properly communicated to the students of the MSc Program.
- Measurable Departmental KPIs for Strategic Planning and comparative assessments among the different PSPs offered with national and international competition are absent.
- Due to lack of any related feedback, it appears that there is no industrial and social partner contribution in the Programme.
- Students' participation in the courses' assessment is extremely low, raising questions about the effectiveness of internal evaluation processes.
- Communication and dissemination of course assessment limited results and corresponding actions to students are insufficient.
- Despite the existence of a well-established web maintenance team, the lack of process automation and documentation of the website maintenance is obvious.
- Somewhat weak relations with students, in particular in academic advising and vocational support.
- No organized system for follow up of the program's graduates.

### **III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions**

- Offer workshops or training sessions on effective communication (e.g., email etiquette, constructive feedback, and active listening skills) for both students and teaching staff of the MSc Program.
- Ensure that student feedback on courses and the program is as thorough as possible by encouraging participation and stressing its importance for the benefit of all.
- Make an effort to systematize and document the information collected in relation to the market demand for professional qualifications expected from the program's graduates.
- Ensure that the corrective measures decided during the program's internal evaluation, such as the creation of a complaint hearing mechanism and a system of academic advisors, of improved student social conditions, and attention to the needs of working students have materialized.
- Although the annual audit performed in conjunction with MODIP is well documented, periodic internal reviews carried out by the program administration should be more formalized and better documented.

- EEAP recommends the appointment of academic advisors and the establishment of a complaints handling office have already been made at the recommendation of the internal assessment report. The unit should be alert and respond to the recommendations of the present report in order to alleviate any problems related to the design of the program.
- Efforts should be made towards increased cooperation with external partners, who will come up with ideas for continuous development of the goals and the curriculum of the program.
- Provisions to the effect of differentiating graduate from undergraduate level courses must be made due to possible legal implications.
- Graduate courses should preferably be conducted in afterhours.
- Fostering effective communication between students and teaching staff in an MSc program is crucial for creating a positive and productive learning environment. One step towards that direction could be establishing clear and easily accessible communication channels by utilizing online platforms, such as learning management systems or dedicated program websites, to share important information, announcements, and resources.
- Offering workshops or training sessions on effective communication (e.g., email etiquette, constructive feedback, and active listening skills) for both students and teaching staff could also help. Furthermore, steps could be taken to ensure teaching staff are accessible and approachable. Encouraging them to be available for questions, guidance, and support outside of regular office hours could help. Finally, sharing success stories of students who have benefited from effective communication with teaching staff can serve as inspiration and motivation for others.
- There is an immediate need to create a network with the industry and ask for their participation in the future updates of the program.
- The PSP should make every effort to increase the percentage of student participation in the course evaluation process every semester. Courses with 0% student participation in the evaluation process is unacceptable. It deprives the program of an informative tool to monitor the quality of the courses.
- The PSP and the department leadership are encouraged to establish frequent self-assessment procedures for its faculty. It would be a report of the areas they have excelled, the issues they work on to fix and declare their plans of improvement or maintenance of teaching, research and service. EEAP would also have an easy to glance over tool to extract useful information for the report.
- To inform MSc program students about available infrastructure and services in a regular and systematic way, the MSc Program may consider conducting a comprehensive orientation session at the beginning of each academic year to introduce new students to campus facilities and support services. Sending out periodic reminders and announcements through various channels (e.g., email, social media, notice boards) to keep students informed about important dates, resources, and service updates could also be of help.
- The PSP should develop a formal (independent from the Institution) procedure for collecting, processing and presenting data from student surveys, aiming to ensure QA practices are in place to review the PSP. This procedure should be aligned with any Internal/ External evaluations of the PSP.
- Additional KPIs should be adopted, supported by sufficient documentation, including those associated with students' participation in course assessment, expanding the breadth of periodic QA goals reviewed towards PSP continuous improvement.
- A formal procedure should be created and implemented to systematically promote the active participation of external stakeholders, capitalizing on staff's network of external relations in PSP QA processes.
- The PSP is encouraged to promote and support the formation of an Alumni membership aiming at the active engagement of its graduates in periodic activities (e.g., an industrial Open Day), strengthening the PSP's visibility/promotion and QA processes.
- The Department should develop a formal electronic process for the website information maintenance process, to ensure coherent and documented evidence including statistical information for QA purposes.
- Ensure the mechanism is in place to provide all PSP related information on its website, including

information dissemination for its mission and activities, which should be consistent across both language sections (Greek and English).

- The PSP should enhance its autonomous presence on social media platforms, involving its students, as well as, its graduates, if possible.
- The Information on research topics and labs related to the PSP should be more straightforward on its website and all information on resources used for the delivery of the PSP should be within its web pages.
- The PSP should share review results, conclusions and decisions taken with all internal and external stakeholders, encourage open discussions, raise QA culture and expand all stakeholders' contribution.
- The PSP is encouraged to define and implement mechanisms to ensure the existence of documentation of all QA decisions, objectives and meaningful and measurable KPIs defined, associated preventive/ corrective actions and achieved results, assuring the provision of sufficient QA evidence.
- Implement mechanisms for long-term assessment and adaptation and strengthen data documentation for process efficiency.
- Increase Students' participation in course evaluations; this should be a top priority for the PSP.
- The PSP should establish formal and well-defined procedures to elicit, use and evaluate meaningful and actionable feedback from students and external stakeholders (graduates and partners).
- The PSP is advised to come up with follow-up yearly evidence-based reports that would allow external entities (e.g., the University, the HAHE, etc.) to follow up on the implementation of any submitted recommendations.
- All PSP review actions and meetings should formally be recorded, ending up in documented clearly defined actions, reasonable formal assignments and responsibilities for internal stakeholders and measurable results towards PSP's continuous improvement.

#### IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

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

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: **6 and 9.**

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are: **3 and 7.**

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	Signature
1. <b>Dr. Sotiris Skevoulis (Chair)</b> Pace University, New York, USA	
2. <b>Dr. Paraskevas Dalianis</b> Uni systems AEE, Quest group, Greece	
3. <b>Mr. Rizos-Theodoros Hadoulis</b> Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece	
4. <b>Prof. Yani Skarlatos</b> Boğaziçi University, Turkey	