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

Applied Atmospheric Physics and Electronics

**Department: Physics** 

Institution: University of Patras

Date: 15/06/2024









# **NOTES**

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Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the Postgraduate Study Programme of **Applied Atmospheric Physics and Electronics** of the **University of Patras** 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 Applied Atmospheric Physics and Electronics of the **University of Patras** comprised the following five (5) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

- DIMAKIS NIKOLAOS (NICHOLAS) (Chair)
   Department of Physics and Astronomy, College of Sciences, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV)
- 2. MANOLOPOULOS SPYROS
  University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire (UHCW) NHS Trust
- 3. SKARLATOS YANI Boğaziçi University
- 4. GKAGKAS VASILEIOS
  Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

#### II. Review Procedure and Documentation

The Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE) assembled a highly qualified external evaluation accreditation panel (EEAP) of experts. This panel was tasked with assessing the compliance of the postgraduate study program (PSP) "Applied Physics Studies in Atmospheric Sciences and Electronics" from the University of Patras (UoP). The EEAP was responsible for drafting an accreditation report in accordance with the HAHE Quality Assurance requirements (laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020). The PSP assessment was conducted through document reviews and online interviews with academic staff, PSP students and graduates, and external stakeholders. The method used was an evidence-based process centered on sampling the PSP's activities. It aimed to evaluate the fulfillment of the HAHE requirements of the relevant PSP quality assurance standards and comment on their compliance, effectiveness, and applicability. The information provided by the PSP was assumed to be factually correct. The evaluation and accreditation were conducted remotely using the Zoom platform, including the private meetings with the EEAP members.

The EEAP met online for the first time on Monday 3rd of June 2024, from 15:00 to 16:00 (Eastern European Time-EET) to facilitate acquaintance and establish a working approach for accreditation procedures. On the same day, the EEAP review of the PSP study program formally began at 16:00 EET. During 16:00–17:00 EET, the EEAP met with the Director of the PSP Applied Physics Studies in Atmospheric Sciences and Electronics, Prof. Costas Psychalinos, the Director of the PSP Medical Physics—Radiation Physics, Prof. George Sakellaropoulos, the Heads of the Department of Physics and the School of Medicine Prof. Andreas Kazantzidis and Prof. George Antonakis, respectively, the quality assurance unit (MODIP) members Prof. Konstantinos Stathopoulos and the Deputy Director of the MODIP Fieroula Papadatou, as well as the Steering Committees/internal evaluation unit (OMEA) members Prof. Leonidas Palilis and Associate Prof. Michael Fakis from the PSP Applied Physics Studies in Atmospheric Sciences and Electronics and Prof. George Kagadis and Prof. Vassiliki Zolota from the PSP Medical Physics—Radiation Physics. The Directors of the PSPs gave short presentations of their PSPs' and answered EEAP questions related to these programs.

During 17:00-17:30 EET, the EEAP attended an online tour of various facilities, including

classrooms, lecture halls, libraries, and research laboratories, through various videos that were provided to the EEAP. During this meeting, the EEAP met with PSP Applied Physics Studies in Atmospheric Sciences and Electronics administration staff Margarita Krokou and its teaching staff members Konstantinos Giannakopoulos (Laboratory Teaching Assistant) and Assistant Prof. Dimitrios Bakalis followed by a meeting with Fotis Papathanassopoulos from the PSP Medical Physics—Radiation Physics. The day ended with the EEAP private meeting from 17.30—18:00 EET, where the members discussed their impressions of the first day and prepared for the second day of the online review.

On June 4, 2024, during 15:00–15:45 EET, the EEAP met with the PSP teaching staff, Prof. Spyridon Vlassis, Prof. Vassilis Anastassopoulos, Prof. Athanasios Argyriou, Prof. Spyros Pandis, and Associate Prof. Ioannis Kioutsioukis, to discuss the PSP professional development opportunities, the mobility, and the teaching methods. Later, the same day, during 16:00–16:45 EET, the EEAP met with 10 PSP students to discuss their satisfaction and study experiences, followed by 6 PSP graduates during 17:30–18.15 EET to discuss their experiences and career paths. Afterward, from 18:30–19.15 EET, the EEAP met and discussed with the following employers and social partners: Savvas Sgourenas, RF Group Director, CEVA, Inc., Konstantinos Vryssas, Co-Founder at Argo Semiconductors Ltd, Greece, Ioannis Bassiakos, Commander Meteorologist of the Greek Air Force, Saudi Arabia Meteorological Service Advisor, Nikos Papageorgiou, Administration & Quarries Manager at Titan Cement Company SA, Alexandros Alevizos, Voyage Planner–Risk communicator @ WeatherNews Inc., Anna Mamara, Climatology Director @ Hellenic National Meteorological Service, and Vassilis Tsagaris, CEO Irida Labs.

From 19:30 to 20:00 EET, the EEAP held a private meeting to discuss the virtual visit's outcomes and prepare the debriefing report. The debriefing meeting took place from 20:00 to 20:30 EET, during which the EEAP met with the Director of the PSP, the Head of the Department of Physics, the MODIP, the PSP Steering Committee, and OMEA members. In this final meeting, the EEAP provided an overview of some of the conclusions reached.

During the following days (6–8 June 2024), the EEAP received additional information from MODIP and evaluated the content to complete the draft of the accreditation report.

# III. Postgraduate Study Programme Profile

The PSP was founded by the decision No.811/12740 (Government Gazette Issue 1607/09.05.2018 Vol. B) as approved by the UoP Senate (meeting no.134/20.04.2018) and the Department of Physics faculty (meeting no.13/12.04.2018). It is governed by the provisions of Law 4957/2022 and the Internal Regulations of the UoP (Government Gazette Issue 4272 Vol. B/03.07.2023) for postgraduate Studies. The PSP in Applied Physics Studies in Atmospheric Sciences and Electronics numbers 20 teaching staff, 19 from UoP, as follows: 10 from the Department of Physics, 3 from the Department of Computer Engineering and Informatics, 5 from the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, and 1 from the Department of Chemical Engineering. There is one teaching staff from the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department of the University of Peloponnese.

The PSP is a three-semester 90 ECTS program with three distinct specializations: Electronics—Circuits and Systems, Electronics and Information Processing, and Applied Meteorology and Environmental Physics. Each specialization has its own program of study. The PSP students attend courses for two semesters, and their last semester is used for their mandatory Thesis (30 ECTS).

#### The PSP aims to:

- a. Provide advanced training in Electronics, Atmospheric Physics, and Environment, with a focus on Integrated Circuits and Systems Design and Development, Computer Vision, Machine Learning, Pattern Recognition, and Information Fusion, as well as Atmospheric Physics, Meteorology, Climatology, Satellite Remote Sensing, Weather Forecasting, and Climate Change.
- b. Expand and promote theoretical and applied knowledge in the graduate program's subjects.
- c. Educate scientists capable of pursuing doctoral studies.
- d. Train professionals with strong theoretical backgrounds and advanced skills.
- e. Equip students to work as professional executives in positions of increased responsibility in the private sector and in government.

The maximum number of admitted students to the PSP is about 45 each year, with 15 students for each specialization. However, the actual number of enrolled students is 14–19 for the academic years 2018-19 to 2022-23. PSP Students are only admitted to one specialization. For the specializations of Electronics-Circuits and Systems and Electronics and Information Processing, prospective applicants must have an undergraduate degree in Physics, Electrical Engineering, Computer Science and Engineering, or, at the discretion of the selection committee, an undergraduate degree from another department of Schools of Science or Engineering in Greece or abroad. For the specialization Applied Meteorology and Environmental Physics, prospective applicants must have an undergraduate degree in Physics, Mathematics, or Geology or undergraduate degrees from other STEM areas or Engineering. Additionally, applicants must submit two letters of recommendation and an official certificate of proficiency in a foreign language, the latter if available.

There are no tuition or other fees for this PSP.

An external committee has not evaluated the PSP before.

# 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 organization and structure of the study program align with the teaching objectives of the PSP. The learning objectives, outcomes, and qualifications adhere to the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education at level 7. The program promotes high-quality and effective teaching for students. The curriculum is comprehensive, and courses are taught by experienced staff in the respective subjects.

The PSP Applied Atmospheric Physics and Electronics established its quality assurance policy and published it on the PSP website. The relevant document, in compliance with the quality policy of the UoP, affirms the academic unit's commitment to establish, maintain, monitor, and improve quality assurance and clearly defines its implementation through setting goals for continuous improvement with monitoring and evaluation on an annual basis and collecting and analyzing data relevant to quality assurance.

The PSP does not charge tuition. The Key Performance Indicator (KPI) related to graduation/retention rates in the policy goal setting  $(\sigma \tau o \chi o \theta \epsilon \sigma i \alpha)$  is missing but provided to the EEAP when requested.

# II. Analysis

The information outlined in the relevant documents and provided by administrators and faculty members indicates that the academic unit is committed to implementing the quality assurance policy. The PSP's goals, as they appear in the quality assurance policy and the policy goal setting, indicate an emphasis on research, teaching, and student-related considerations.

The MODIP monitors and enforces quality assurance. The PSP 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.

Most PSP students are graduates of the UoP Department of Physics. They can be employed in the private and public sectors, research institutions, and national agencies. Several PSP's graduates continue with doctoral studies. The job opportunities for PSP graduates indicate the sustainability and market value of the PSP.

A service for hearing complaints from students is being offered by the Department of Physics. A system of Study Advisors has been instituted. However, advising is performed in practice by the entire faculty for each student in an ad hoc fashion.

Measurable goals related to teaching methods, student satisfaction, and learning outcomes have been codified. The degree of attainment of the goals is being audited.

It appears that student feedback on course evaluations has a low response rate. Faculty members mention that they attempt to gather verbal comments from their students throughout the school year. Despite the low participation, the feedback from the questionnaires was reviewed, conclusions were drawn, and recommendations for improvement were provided.

#### III. Conclusions

The PSP has established a quality assurance policy that is monitored and evaluated on a systematic basis. The process provides specific directions for improvement, which is considered necessary for further actions. Several KPIs are included in the policy goal setting, whereas the KPI related to graduation/retention was not found.

# **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	Х
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

# **Panel Recommendations**

- 1. The PSP must ensure that student feedback on courses and the program is as thorough as possible by encouraging participation and stressing its importance.
- 2. The PSP must include KPIs to measure graduation/retention rates.

#### 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 PSP of Applied Physics Studies in Atmospheric Sciences and Electronics is designed to provide training in modern technologies, conduct research, and advance basic and applied knowledge in electronic circuits and systems, electronic information processing, and applied meteorology and environmental physics.

The curriculum, course syllabi, and contents have been developed according to the institution's relevant policies and agree with the ECTS guidelines. All the above are included in the Study Guide ( $O\delta\eta\gamma\dot{o}\varsigma$   $\Sigma\pi$ oυ $\delta\dot{\omega}\nu$ ) and in the Course Outlines.

The program aims to continually enhance educational and research activities and uphold high-quality services in accordance with the HAHE guidelines.

There is no evidence that students, graduates, and external stakeholders actively participate in curriculum changes and improvements.

# II. Analysis

The PSP of Applied Atmospheric Physics and Electronics resembles comparable programs in the EU and the U.S. Its design is based on the needs of the national and international markets in the relevant fields and conforms to the prescriptions of Level 7 of the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education. The program of study, which requires 90 ECTS for the degree (30 ECTS per semester), allows students to start working on their Thesis in the final third semester.

The PSP program of studies consists of several compulsory courses in each field of specialization, with only a few electives aimed at training students for research. A research-based Thesis on a specialized subject concludes the program.

The program's success is evident from the number of graduates who are accepted as Ph.D. candidates in related fields.

# III. Conclusions

The program complies with accepted standards and practices at other institutions in this area of study. The thematic areas offered by the program are adequate to prepare the students for the market. The stakeholders were very enthusiastic about the program's graduates and offered to participate in a feedback mechanism for its continuous improvement.

# **Panel Judgement**

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

# **Panel Recommendations**

1. The PSP should consider establishing a feedback mechanism involving students, graduates, and stakeholders to continuously improve the material taught in the PSP.

# 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 PSP program aims to educate students effectively using various learning methods and has developed regulations to manage student diversity in collaboration with the Psychological Support Office. The PSP has diverse student assessment methods. The EEAP found that the program emphasizes group and individual work.

Students are encouraged to develop individual skills through autonomous study, guidance from their professors and Study Advisors, individual projects, and their Thesis work. Some courses and assessments are conducted in English, and the Thesis can also be written in Greek or English. The program is hands-on, aiding job market entry, and fosters collaboration among students and professors, who are described as highly qualified and approachable.

There is a Study Advisor per student who monitors the student's progress throughout the studies. The results of the PSP course evaluations are not available to the public.

The UoP has a Social Welfare Office and a Psychological and Counselling Support Center.

The evaluation criteria and methods for students are published in advance in the Course Outlines, the Study Guide, and the course's "e-class" webpage. The evaluation process is transparent, with old exam questions, solutions, and previous assignments available online. Results are posted on notice boards or e-class, and instructors offer specific times for students to discuss their evaluations.

The PSP conducts regular student satisfaction surveys to measure teaching effectiveness. Over the past decade, evaluation questionnaires for postgraduate courses have evolved from paper-based to electronic formats. The MODIP processes these anonymous surveys and analyzes the data to improve teaching quality. Annual surveys gather student feedback on various program aspects, including teaching and support.

The PSP has formal mechanisms for handling student complaints and providing guidance through the Study Advisors. Students can submit appeals through a formal process, beginning with immediate resolution attempts and escalating to written complaints to the department general assembly, if needed.

# II. Analysis

The PSP program is designed to provide an effective educational experience using various learning methods.

The program's practical, hands-on nature aids in job market entry, helping students apply their skills in real-world scenarios.

Some courses and assessments, as well as the Thesis, are conducted in English, which enhances the PSP's internationalization.

The students are not well informed about the services offered by the UoP Social Welfare Office and the Psychological and Counselling Support Center.

# III. Conclusions

The PSP program has several strengths, including diverse learning methods, hands-on experiences, and transparent evaluation processes. Thus, it is student-centered.

# **Panel Judgement**

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

# **Panel Recommendations**

- 1. The PSP should increase efforts to inform students about the role of the UoP Social Welfare Office and the Psychological and Counselling Support Center.
- 2. The PSP should increase efforts to enable students to see how their feedback is utilized in student evaluations and to make these results publicly accessible.

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

The PSP Study Guide is available in Greek and has been updated to the 2022-23 version. It contains information about the PSP's aims and objectives and provides a detailed description of the curriculum, including the ECTS points per subject and a timetable for its courses.

The teaching methods for the courses offered are outlined in the Course Outlines.

The PSP Regulations for Studies, Internships, Mobility, and Project Work (Κανονισμός σπουδών, πρακτικής άσκησης, κινητικότητας, και εκπόνησης εργασιών) provide information about the application, admission, and registration process, as well as the duration of the studies, the course structure, syllabus, ECTS per course, assessment methods, progress monitoring, Study Advisor, Thesis process, final degree grades and calculation, graduation ceremony, student obligations and rights, supporting infrastructure, health service provision, accommodation, transport, and sponsorships.

The Diploma Supplement is issued automatically upon graduation in both Greek and English.

The PSP follows the Research Ethics Regulation issued by the UoP.

There is no separate Thesis handbook, but the relevant information is included in the PSP Regulations for Studies, Internships, Mobility, and Project Work.

There are no internships as part of the PSP.

The PSP has hosted international students through the Erasmus+ program, but no PSP students have participated in the Erasmus+ exchange at a foreign university.

Current students had no issues with registration and onboarding but lacked awareness of available scholarships and mobility programs.

# II. Analysis

The PSP regulations provide detailed information on many aspects. While student mobility is acknowledged, there is no evidence to suggest that it is actively encouraged. The chronic lack of participation of home students in the Erasmus+ program is recognized. However, the information provided to new students as part of their onboarding process is somewhat limited in its effectiveness.

#### III. Conclusions

The Study Guide for the PSP and its Regulations for Studies, Internships, Mobility, and Project Work are comprehensive and fully adhere to the requirements set forth by the HAHE. The PSP is in full compliance with Principle 4.

# **Panel Judgement**

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

# **Panel Recommendations**

- 1. The PSP is encouraged to have a new student information guide/welcome pack that includes information for available supportive structures, sports/cultural facilities, and health & wellbeing services.
- 2. The PSP is encouraged to promote student mobility by proactively disseminating information about its students' participation in the Erasmus+ program.

# **PRINCIPLE 5: TEACHING STAFF OF POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES**

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

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

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

# **Documentation**

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

# **Study Programme Compliance**

#### I. Findings

The PSP includes important documentation, such as documents outlining the roles, responsibilities, and performance of teaching staff members. It also contains information about the teaching staff for each course and their research performance. The PSP has established meritocratic criteria and procedures for recruiting teaching staff.

Professional development opportunities for the teaching staff are present. The UoP provides training and development seminars on specialized topics open to all

staff. The PSP faculty members can engage in research projects and gain new knowledge and skills. Initiatives are being taken to increase mobility, communication, and collaboration with staff from other universities in Greece and abroad, promoting professional growth through exchanging experiences and best practices, and thereby enhancing cooperation and networking among teaching staff.

There is a strong connection between teaching and research in the PSP. Faculty members integrate their research activities with teaching, enriching the educational process and providing students with opportunities to engage in research projects. Course content is linked to the latest technological and research developments, and students participate in lectures by invited experts, enhancing their understanding of industry trends. The Thesis often addresses current research topics, leading to scientific publications and collaborations with research institutes to further strengthen this integration.

Students evaluate the teaching staff through anonymous electronic questionnaires at the end of each semester, though completion is optional. The MODIP collects these questionnaires to produce statistical results for each instructor and course, which are, in turn, used to improve the educational process and plan future courses.

#### II. Analysis

The PSP provides multiple opportunities for professional development. Faculty can apply for advancement, attend specialized training seminars, engage in research projects, and participate in initiatives that promote mobility and collaboration with other universities locally and internationally.

The increased workload of the teaching staff can limit research engagement, although the staff remains committed to their research responsibilities. There is a strong integration between teaching and research at PSP. Faculty incorporate their research into teaching, providing students with opportunities to engage in research projects.

The student evaluation response rate is low (3.1-17% for academic years 2020-23), but the students highly rated the PSP in their evaluations.

#### III. Conclusions

The PSP faculty are highly qualified to teach the PSP courses. Students evaluate their instructors for all PSP courses.

# **Panel Judgement**

Principle 5: Teaching staff of postgr study programmes	aduate
Fully compliant	Х
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

# **Panel Recommendations**

1. The PSP must undertake initiatives for greater student participation in the evaluation of the program.

#### **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

There are 3 classrooms, a computing room with enough PCs for each of the PSP's students, and fully equipped laboratories with specialized instruments, such as solar radiation detectors and spectroradiometers. The PCs have specialized software, and the departmental and UoP libraries provide access to scientific journals. The PSP students have access to the supporting resources provided by the university, such as sports/cultural facilities, including indoor sports halls and

swimming pools, outdoor stadiums, radio stations, WebTV, and museums. There is also a career advice office, student care services with catering and accommodation facilities, psychological counseling, and health care. There is also an alumni office. The students have access to the e-class and administrative support online services. Student mobility is provided via the Erasmus+ program.

The students and graduates were unaware of the alumni and the career advice office and its services, as well as the Psychological and Counselling Support Center.

The PSP students reported that although the laboratory equipment is sufficient, some computer equipment needs updating.

# II. Analysis

The PSP provides sufficient infrastructure for the delivery of teaching and training to the student cohort it receives on an annual basis. The classrooms and laboratories comply with basic requirements, such as Wi-Fi and audiovisual facilities for classrooms and infrastructure for laboratories. Some of the equipment (PCs) may need updating.

#### III. Conclusions

The PSP has appropriate and sufficient resources for its students.

# **Panel Judgement**

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

# **Panel Recommendations**

- 1. The PSP should increase efforts to inform its students about the supporting services available by the institution.
- 2. The PSP should increase efforts to make the alumni and career advice office services more effective for its students.

#### **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

Student progression is monitored by a dedicated platform (" $\Psi\eta\varphi\iota\alpha\kappa$ o A $\lambda\mu\alpha$ "). Student evaluation questionnaire surveys, data collection, and analysis take place using a digital system and are collected by MODIP. There is an exit questionnaire filled out by graduates regarding the quality of the PSP's infrastructure and the adequacy of its resources and processes. This is managed by the PSP administrative office. Graduates' employability data are collected. The PSP has access to the national system for quality data (OΠΕΣΠ). The teaching staff publications and citations are available through a digital plαtform("A $\lambda$ εξάνδρεια").

Data exist regarding the PSP's performance for various KPIs against set targets. The OMEA and the MODIP are mainly responsible for operating the quality assurance-associated systems.

Data regarding student registration and graduation rates have been collected on an annual basis since 2018.

The PSP has an equipment registry.

# II. Analysis

The PSP has developed a satisfactory information management system for its current students. KPIs have been established, and learning resources and student support are clearly available. However, the KPI related to graduation/retention rates is missing (provided to the EEAP when requested). The students' evaluations for the courses use questionnaires with formulated questions, and the data is analyzed appropriately.

# III. Conclusions

The PSP collects and analyses all data related to quality assurance and its performance against established KPIs, as well as student evaluation questionnaires and graduate satisfaction surveys.

# **Panel Judgement**

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

#### **Panel Recommendations**

1. The PSP is encouraged to improve the data analysis presentation by including visual aids (e.g., graphs) demonstrating trends and allowing direct interpretation and comparisons to be used.

#### 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 of Physics and the PSP website is available in Greek and English. Both websites are user-friendly and easy to navigate. The Greek version of the PSP website contains a copy of the Internal Regulations of the University of Patras law (Government Gazette Issue number 4272, 3 July 2023), a copy of the PSP internal regulations and Study Guide, a menu link on information about the Study Advisors, the practical training, the code of conduct and research, the quality assurance policy, regulations on student complains, a call for expressions of interest for PSP admission, information on the PSP alumni, an announcement menu, and contact information for the public. Some links from the PSP website's English version point to Greek documents. The EEAP could not find the English version of the PSP Study Guide on the program's website.

The PSP faculty CVs are found on the department website in Greek and English.

# II. Analysis

The PSP website is bilingual, with both Greek and English versions. The English version contains less information than the Greek version. The links to the quality assurance policy, internal regulations, code of conduct, and research documents on the PSP website's English version point to Greek documents, which could be confusing for non-Greek speakers. Moreover, this hinders the PSP's exposure to the non-Greek-speaking population in Greece and abroad.

# III. Conclusions

The PSP provides a bilingual website, and most of the information is common to both websites. However, some important documents, such as the Study Guide, are only in Greek. Thus, the PSP does not fully satisfy Principle 8.

# **Panel Judgement**

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

# **Panel Recommendations**

Please provide your recommendations with regard to issues that need to be addressed, as appropriate.

1. The PSP must provide the exact same information about the program on its website, both in Greek and English, including posting the English version of the Study Guide.

# 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**

# Findings

The PSP self-assessment procedure takes place annually with the support of the MODIP. The quality assurance targets are set annually for all Department of Physics PSPs. The findings of the PSP self-assessment are shared within the academic unit. The PSP is evaluated using students' and graduates' evaluations. The EAAP found no information on surveys from external stakeholders.

# II. Analysis

The PSP collects data, which it uses to improve. The students' and graduates' evaluation surveys serve as an indirect assessment method for the PSP. The lack of satisfaction surveys from the external stakeholders hampers the program assessment. Students, graduates, and other stakeholders do not appear to have been directly involved in the decision-making processes for curriculum improvements.

The number of students participating in the course evaluations is low and is as follows: 17% in Fall 2020, 13.5% in Spring 2021, 8% in Fall 2021, 3.1% in Spring 2022, 7.7% in Fall 2022, 9% in Spring 2023, and 7.4% in Fall 2023. The student survey results showed that the PSP students are very satisfied with the PSP course objectives and the material covered. The policy goal setting reports no participation of the PSP graduates in the program's evaluation (5% is the reported target).

#### III. Conclusions

The PSP is assessed predominantly through student surveys. However, it does not fully satisfy Principle 9 due to the lack of a feedback mechanism from its external stakeholders, the nonparticipation of its graduates in the surveys, and the absence of engagement of students, graduates, and external stakeholders in its improvements.

# **Panel Judgement**

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

#### **Panel Recommendations**

1. The PSP must develop satisfaction surveys for its external stakeholders involved with the program.

- 2. The PSP must assist in increasing the participation of its students and graduates in the satisfaction surveys.
- 3. The PSP may consider developing an Advisory Board with faculty, students, graduates, and external stakeholders to assist in program improvements actively.

#### PRINCIPLE 10: REGULAR EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

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

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

#### **Documentation**

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

# **Study Programme Compliance**

# I. Findings

The PSP has not previously been subjected to an external evaluation for accreditation purposes. However, it provides a progress report on parts of the UoP accreditation, which occurred on December 7-9, 2015, and pertains to the PSP.

# II. Analysis

The current evaluation is the PSP's first external accreditation review. Some recommendations from the 2015 review also apply to the department's PSPs. Since then, several changes have been implemented to the PSP for its improvement following the institution's review. The EEAP found that the PSP faculty and supporting staff were very helpful in answering the panel's questions during the current review. Moreover, they showed that they understand the importance of the accreditation process and the panel's recommendations. The PSP follows a commonly used procedure for utilizing the outcomes of the external evaluation. These outcomes are shared with the PSP Steering Committee, the OMEA, the Head of the Department of Physics, and the MODIP.

# III. Conclusions

An external committee has not previously evaluated the PSP for accreditation purposes. However, the PSP has implemented several recommendations from the 2015 institution's external review. The EEAP found that the PSP is in full compliance with Principle 10.

# **Panel Judgement**

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

#### **Panel Recommendations**

None.

# **PART C: CONCLUSIONS**

# I. Features of Good Practice

- 1. The PSP is known for its high-quality and scientifically sound academic opportunities that pave the way for its graduates' success.
- 2. The PSP profoundly impacts the overall experience of students and graduates, fostering a positive environment. The enthusiasm of students, graduates, employers, and other stakeholders was commendable.
- 3. Several PSP faculty members have international reputations, and all are enthusiastic and dedicated to their mission.
- 4. Employers and social partners praised the PSP and believe there is a clear need for such graduates.
- 5. The presence of this PSP promotes the Department of Physics and the UoP.

#### II. Areas of Weakness

- 1. The PSP KPIs to measure graduation/retention rates are missing.
- 2. There is no feedback mechanism involving students, graduates, and stakeholders for the continuous improvement of the material taught in the PSP.
- 3. The English version of the PSP website does not contain the same information as its Greek counterpart, and some of its web links point to documents in written Greek.
- 4. The Study Guide is only available in Greek.
- 5. No satisfaction surveys exist for the PSP external stakeholders involved with the program.
- 6. The participation of PSP students and graduates in the satisfaction surveys is low.
- 7. The PSP students do not participate in the Erasmus+ program.
- 8. The PSP students are not well-informed about the UoP supporting services.

# III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

- 1. The PSP must include KPIs to measure graduation/retention rates.
- 2. The PSP must increase efforts to enhance the students' and graduates' participation in the satisfaction surveys and develop surveys for its external stakeholders.
- 3. The PSP must provide the exact same information about the program on its website, both in Greek and English, including posting the English version of the Study Guide.
- 4. The PSP should increase efforts to inform its students about the supporting services available by the institution.
- 5. The PSP may consider developing an Advisory Board with faculty, students, graduates, and external stakeholders to actively assist in program improvements.
- 6. The PSP is encouraged to promote student mobility by proactively disseminating information about its students' participation in the Erasmus+ program.

# IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are:

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10.

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are:

8, 9.

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are:

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The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are:

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

# The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname	Signature
Name and Surname	Signature

DIMAKIS NIKOLAOS (NICHOLAS)

MANOLOPOULOS SPYROS

SKARLATOS YANI

**GKAGKAS VASILEIOS**